



Institutional Resilience and Public Sector Transformation: A Conceptual Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Public sector organizations increasingly face uncertainty arising from digital disruption, fiscal constraints, climate change, and complex governance challenges. These conditions require governments to move beyond conventional administrative reforms toward adaptive institutional arrangements that sustain public value and long-term organizational performance. Although institutional resilience and public sector transformation have received growing scholarly attention, their relationship remains fragmented in public administration literature. This study aims to develop an integrated conceptual framework positioning institutional resilience as a strategic capability for sustainable public sector transformation. Using a qualitative conceptual approach, the study employs an integrative literature review to synthesize contemporary research on institutional resilience, adaptive governance, organizational learning, collaborative governance, digital capability, and adaptive leadership. The literature was analyzed through thematic synthesis to identify recurring concepts and explain relationships among key dimensions. The findings indicate that institutional resilience is a multidimensional capability that enhances organizational agility, policy innovation, evidence-based decision-making, and public value creation through the interaction of adaptive governance, organizational learning, collaborative capacity, digital capability, and adaptive leadership. The study proposes a conceptual model integrating previously fragmented perspectives into a coherent framework for sustainable public sector transformation. The framework contributes to public administration theory by conceptualizing institutional resilience as an antecedent strategic capability and offers practical insights for strengthening governance adaptability and institutional sustainability. Future research should empirically validate the framework across diverse governmental contexts.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Public sector organizations worldwide are currently operating in an increasingly dynamic, complex, and uncertain strategic environment. Technological disruption, growing fiscal pressures, changing public expectations, global health crises, climate change, and geopolitical risks have fundamentally reshaped the landscape of public administration. Under these circumstances, the success of public institutions is no longer determined solely by their ability to maintain organizational stability, but also by their capacity to adapt, innovate, and continuously transform governance in response to rapidly changing environments (Li et al., 2026; Bagali, 2026; Alibašić, 2024). This shift indicates that the public administration paradigm has moved beyond an approach focused primarily on bureaucratic efficiency toward adaptive, responsive governance oriented toward sustainable public value creation (Mazzucato & Kattel, 2020; Rodríguez Bolívar, 2026).

This paradigm shift has been further reinforced by the increasing frequency and complexity of crises faced by governments in recent years. The COVID-19 pandemic represented a critical turning point, demonstrating that public institutions must possess the capacity to respond rapidly to changing circumstances through cross-sectoral coordination, resource mobilization, accelerated decision-making, and continuous organizational learning (Mazzucato & Kattel, 2020; Rodríguez Bolívar, 2026). Beyond health crises, the public sector is also confronted with *creeping crises*, namely crises that develop gradually but generate systemic impacts, such as climate change, cyber threats, digital disinformation, and the growing complexity of technology-based public services (Nolte & Lindenmeier, 2023; Vatamanu & Tofan, 2025). These conditions demonstrate that contemporary public administration is no longer concerned merely with how to overcome crises, but also with how to build institutions capable of surviving, adapting, and continuously evolving amid disruptions that have become increasingly permanent (Li et al., 2026; Bagali, 2026).

Within this context, *institutional resilience* has emerged as a key concept in contemporary public administration literature. In contrast to traditional perspectives that define resilience as the ability to return to a pre-crisis condition, recent scholarship conceptualizes resilience as a dynamic capability that enables public institutions to anticipate risks, absorb shocks, adjust governance arrangements, reallocate resources, and transform organizational processes without compromising public functions or institutional legitimacy (Li et al., 2026; Bagali, 2026; Afshar & Shah, 2025). Accordingly, resilience is no longer understood merely as a *capacity to survive*, but rather as a *capacity to learn*, a *capacity to adapt*, and a *capacity to transform* in response to increasingly complex environmental changes.

Recent literature also indicates that institutional resilience is developed through the interaction of various mutually reinforcing organizational capabilities. Adaptive capacity depends not only on organizational structural flexibility but also on an institution's ability to develop organizational learning, policy innovation, knowledge management, and governance mechanisms capable of responding rapidly to change without compromising the principles of accountability and transparency (Afshar & Shah, 2025; Rodríguez Bolívar, 2026). Resilient institutions, therefore, are not organizations that are free from crises, but organizations capable of utilizing disruptions as opportunities for institutional renewal, strengthening adaptive capacity, and continuously improving the quality of governance (Li et al., 2026). This perspective positions resilience as a strategic capability that supports the continuity of public administration reform amid an increasingly uncertain environment.

Public sector transformation is fundamentally a systemic and continuous process of change that extends beyond organizational restructuring or the modernization of administrative procedures. Such transformation encompasses changes in governance models, organizational culture, leadership, decision-making mechanisms, policy innovation, and the ways in which governments create and distribute public value to society (Rodríguez Bolívar, 2026). In the context of contemporary public administration, the success of transformation is no longer measured solely by improvements in bureaucratic efficiency, but also by an institution's ability to strengthen adaptive capacity, enhance institutional legitimacy, and maintain the quality of public services amid rapidly changing environmental conditions (Li et al., 2026; Bagali, 2026). Public sector transformation should therefore not be viewed as a temporary reform project, but as an ongoing process of institutional learning.

Consistent with these developments, digital transformation has become one of the major drivers of institutional change in the public sector. The adoption of *big data*, artificial intelligence (AI), cloud computing, and digital platforms has created opportunities for governments to improve administrative efficiency, accelerate decision-making, integrate public services, and expand citizen participation in governance processes (Dunleavy & Margetts, 2023; Newman et al., 2021; Vatamanu & Tofan, 2025). Nevertheless, digital transformation is not merely a matter of technology adoption. Its success depends heavily on institutional readiness to develop organizational capabilities, strengthen human resource competencies, establish adaptive digital governance, and ensure that technological innovation remains aligned with the principles of transparency, accountability, and public interest (Brunetti et al., 2020; Rodríguez Bolívar, 2026). Without adequate institutional capacity, digitalization may generate new challenges, including cybersecurity threats, algorithmic bias, digital inequality, and ethical concerns in data-driven decision-making (Chandra & Feng, 2025; Vatamanu & Tofan, 2025).

In addition to digital capabilities, public sector transformation is increasingly influenced by the development of *collaborative governance*. The complexity of multidimensional public problems no longer allows governments to act as the sole actors responsible for addressing societal challenges. Instead, public value creation requires the involvement of multiple stakeholders, including the private sector, civil society organizations, higher education institutions, and local communities, through collaborative mechanisms based on trust, coordination, and shared objectives (Voets et al., 2021; Bianchi et al., 2021). Various studies have demonstrated that cross-sectoral collaboration can improve the quality of policy innovation, strengthen organizational capacity, accelerate learning processes, and enhance the legitimacy of public decisions (Lopes & Farias, 2020; Torfing & Ansell, 2021). Moreover, the meta-narrative review conducted by Li et al. (2026) identifies collaborative networks as one of the key determinants of institutional resilience in the public sector.

Another equally important factor is *adaptive leadership*. In environments characterized by uncertainty, public sector leaders are required not only to manage organizations administratively but also to develop a vision for change, foster organizational learning, facilitate innovation, and cultivate a work culture that is responsive to environmental dynamics (Alibašić, 2024; Chughtai et al., 2023). Adaptive leadership enables public organizations to manage uncertainty more effectively by empowering human resources, promoting learning-based decision-making, and strengthening institutional capacity. Furthermore, the influence of leadership on organizational performance becomes increasingly significant when supported by managerial innovation and adequate adaptive capacity, thereby strengthening the success of public sector reform and transformation in a sustainable manner (Danso & Opoku, 2025).

Although numerous studies have identified the importance of digital transformation, collaborative governance, adaptive leadership, and organizational innovation in supporting public sector reform, these strands of research have generally developed as relatively separate streams of inquiry. Research on institutional resilience has primarily focused on organizational preparedness, recovery, and adaptive capacity in responding to crises (Li et al., 2026; Bagali, 2026), whereas studies of public sector transformation have tended to emphasize the implementation of digital technologies, bureaucratic reform, or public service innovation without adequately explaining the institutional mechanisms that enable such transformation to be sustained over time (Chandra & Feng, 2025; Rodríguez Bolívar, 2026). This fragmentation has resulted in a limited understanding of how institutional resilience functions as a strategic capability that integrates adaptive capacity, digital transformation, collaborative governance, organizational learning, and leadership to produce sustainable public sector transformation.

2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative conceptual research design based on an integrative literature review. Rather than generating empirical findings, the study aims to develop a conceptual understanding of the relationship between institutional resilience and public sector transformation by synthesizing and critically interpreting existing scholarly knowledge. A conceptual approach is appropriate because the relationship between these constructs remains theoretically fragmented across the fields of public administration, governance, organizational resilience, and digital government. Through conceptual synthesis, this study seeks to identify key dimensions, clarify theoretical relationships, and formulate an integrated framework that can provide a foundation for future empirical research.

Research Design

The study adopts an integrative literature review approach, which enables the combination and critical interpretation of diverse theoretical perspectives to generate new conceptual insights (Torraco, 2005; Snyder, 2019). Unlike traditional narrative reviews, which primarily summarize previous studies, an integrative review emphasizes comparison, critical evaluation, and theoretical integration to explain complex phenomena. This approach is particularly suitable for conceptual research because it allows researchers to synthesize evidence from multiple streams of literature and construct a comprehensive explanatory framework.

Data Sources and Literature Selection

The data used in this study consist exclusively of secondary data derived from peer-reviewed scientific publications. The literature was selected from internationally recognized academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Taylor & Francis Online, and Emerald Insight, with Google Scholar used as a complementary source for identifying relevant publications.

The literature search focused primarily on publications published between 2020 and 2026 to capture recent developments in institutional resilience and public sector transformation. Earlier seminal works were included when necessary to establish the theoretical foundations of the study.

The search strategy employed combinations of the following keywords:

“institutional resilience”

“organizational resilience”

“public sector transformation”

“public administration”
“adaptive governance”
“digital transformation”
“collaborative governance”
“adaptive leadership”
“public value”

The literature selection was guided by four inclusion criteria:

1. The publication discusses institutional resilience, organizational resilience, governance resilience, or public sector transformation.
2. The publication is peer-reviewed and published in reputable scientific journals or academic books.
3. The study provides theoretical, conceptual, or empirical contributions relevant to public administration.
4. The publication is available in full text for comprehensive analysis.

Conversely, publications lacking direct relevance to the research focus, conference abstracts without full papers, opinion articles, duplicate records, and non-scholarly documents were excluded from the review.

Data Analysis

The selected literature was analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring concepts, theoretical perspectives, and relationships among the principal constructs. The analytical process consisted of four sequential stages.

First, the selected literature was systematically examined to identify the central arguments and theoretical propositions of each study. Second, key concepts were coded according to recurring themes related to institutional resilience, adaptive governance, organizational learning, collaborative governance, digital capability, adaptive leadership, and public sector transformation. Third, similarities, differences, and complementarities among these themes were compared to identify emerging patterns across the literature. Finally, the synthesized findings were integrated into a conceptual framework explaining how institutional resilience functions as a strategic capability that enables sustainable public sector transformation.

To enhance analytical rigor, the synthesis emphasized conceptual convergence across multiple studies rather than relying on isolated findings. This comparative approach enabled the proposed framework to reflect the dominant theoretical patterns identified in contemporary public administration literature.

Conceptual Development

The conceptual framework proposed in this study was developed through an iterative synthesis of the reviewed literature. The framework positions institutional resilience as the central strategic capability influencing public sector transformation. Institutional resilience is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct comprising adaptive governance, organizational learning, collaborative capacity, digital capability, and adaptive leadership. These dimensions interact dynamically to strengthen institutional adaptability, innovation, organizational responsiveness, and public value creation, ultimately supporting sustainable transformation within public sector organizations.

Accordingly, this study does not seek to empirically test causal relationships but rather to construct a theoretically grounded framework that can guide future quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods research examining institutional resilience across different governmental contexts.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Evolution of Institutional Resilience in Public Administration

The synthesis of the reviewed literature demonstrates a significant evolution in the conceptualization of institutional resilience within public administration. Earlier perspectives predominantly viewed resilience as the capacity of public organizations to withstand shocks and restore organizational functions following crises. This perspective emphasized organizational continuity, emergency preparedness, and post-crisis recovery as the principal indicators of resilient institutions. Such an understanding was largely influenced by disaster management and crisis governance literature, where resilience was interpreted as an organization's ability to maintain operational stability during periods of disruption (Bagali, 2026; Li et al., 2026).

However, contemporary public administration scholarship has substantially broadened this perspective. Recent studies argue that institutional resilience should no longer be interpreted merely as the ability to "bounce back" after crises but rather as the capability to anticipate, adapt, innovate, and transform in response to continuously changing governance environments (Afshar & Shah, 2025; Li et al., 2026). This conceptual shift reflects the recognition that governments increasingly operate within conditions characterized by persistent uncertainty rather than isolated crisis events. Consequently, resilience is evolving from a reactive organizational attribute into a proactive governance capability that enables institutions to continuously improve their structures, processes, and decision-making mechanisms.

This evolution is closely associated with the increasing complexity of contemporary public governance. Governments are simultaneously confronted with multiple interconnected challenges, including digital disruption, climate change, demographic transitions, fiscal constraints, cyber threats, misinformation, and growing public expectations regarding transparency and service quality (Nolte & Lindenmeier, 2023; Vatamanu & Tofan, 2025). Unlike conventional crises that have relatively clear beginning and end points, many of these challenges represent continuous systemic pressures requiring long-term institutional adaptation rather than temporary emergency responses. Under such conditions, resilience becomes inseparable from institutional learning and continuous organizational transformation.

Li et al. (2026), through their meta-narrative review of resilience in public administration, identify several recurring dimensions that consistently characterize resilient public institutions. These dimensions include adaptive governance, organizational learning, collaborative capacity, leadership adaptability, institutional flexibility, resource mobilization, and innovation capability. Rather than operating independently, these capacities interact dynamically to strengthen an institution's ability to respond effectively to environmental uncertainty. Similarly, Bagali (2026) argues that resilient public organizations are distinguished not by the absence of crises but by their capability to continuously reorganize governance arrangements, coordinate stakeholders, and redesign institutional processes in response to emerging disruptions.

An important finding emerging from the synthesized literature is the increasing convergence between resilience and organizational learning. Afshar and Shah (2025) demonstrate that adaptive capacity represents one of the strongest antecedents of organizational resilience because learning

enables institutions to accumulate knowledge from previous experiences, evaluate policy failures, and redesign governance mechanisms for future challenges. In this regard, resilience is not an end state but a continuous institutional learning process through which organizations improve their strategic capabilities over time. This perspective is further reinforced by Rodríguez Bolívar (2026), who argues that learning-oriented institutions are more capable of integrating technological innovation, governance reform, and citizen participation into sustainable public sector transformation.

The literature also indicates that resilience has become increasingly intertwined with governance innovation. Rather than maintaining rigid bureaucratic structures, resilient institutions demonstrate higher levels of administrative flexibility, experimentation, and policy innovation. Adaptive governance enables public organizations to revise institutional arrangements rapidly, redistribute organizational resources efficiently, and establish collaborative mechanisms capable of responding to complex public problems (Bagali, 2026). Consequently, resilience functions not only as a defensive mechanism against external shocks but also as a strategic driver of institutional innovation.

Another notable trend concerns the growing role of digitalization in shaping institutional resilience. Advances in artificial intelligence, big data analytics, digital platforms, and integrated information systems have significantly enhanced governments' capacities to monitor environmental changes, anticipate risks, and coordinate responses across organizational boundaries (Dunleavy & Margetts, 2023; Newman et al., 2021). Nevertheless, digital transformation simultaneously introduces new institutional vulnerabilities, including cybersecurity threats, algorithmic bias, ethical concerns, and digital inequality (Chandra & Feng, 2025; Vatamanu & Tofan, 2025). Accordingly, technological advancement contributes to resilience only when supported by appropriate governance arrangements, adaptive leadership, and organizational capabilities.

The synthesis further reveals that institutional resilience is increasingly understood as a multidimensional governance capability rather than a single organizational characteristic. Across the reviewed studies, five dimensions consistently emerge as the primary foundations of resilient public institutions:

Table 1. Principal Dimensions of Institutional Resilience		
Dimension	Strategic Role	Key References
Adaptive governance	Enhances institutional flexibility and responsiveness to environmental change	Bagali (2026); Rodríguez Bolívar (2026)
Organizational learning	Facilitates continuous adaptation, knowledge creation, and policy improvement	Afshar & Shah (2025); Li et al. (2026)
Collaborative capacity	Strengthens interorganizational coordination and resource sharing	Voets et al. (2021); Lopes & Farias (2020)
Digital capability	Supports evidence-based decision-making and service innovation	Dunleavy & Margetts (2023); Vatamanu & Tofan (2025)
Adaptive leadership	Encourages innovation, organizational change, and institutional learning	Alibašić (2024); Chughtai et al. (2023)

Table 1 illustrates that institutional resilience is best understood as a configuration of mutually reinforcing organizational capabilities rather than as an isolated organizational outcome. Each

dimension contributes differently to institutional adaptability; however, sustainable resilience emerges only when these capabilities operate in an integrated manner. This finding represents an important departure from earlier resilience literature, which frequently emphasized individual organizational capacities without adequately considering their systemic interactions.

Overall, the literature synthesis demonstrates a clear conceptual transition from viewing resilience as an organizational recovery mechanism toward understanding it as a strategic governance capability that enables continuous institutional adaptation, innovation, and transformation. This transition provides a stronger theoretical foundation for positioning institutional resilience as the principal enabler of public sector transformation. Consequently, resilience should no longer be regarded as the final objective of administrative reform but rather as the dynamic institutional capability through which governments sustain reform, generate public value, and maintain governance effectiveness in increasingly uncertain environments.

Institutional Resilience as a Strategic Capability for Public Sector Transformation

The synthesis of the literature indicates that institutional resilience can no longer be understood merely as an organization's capacity to survive (*survival capability*) after experiencing disruption. Rather, it should be conceptualized as a strategic capability that enables public institutions to maintain performance while simultaneously transforming themselves in response to continuously changing environments (Li et al., 2026; Bagali, 2026). This shift in perspective is important because contemporary public governance environments are characterized by persistent uncertainty, making approaches focused solely on post-crisis recovery increasingly inadequate. Public institutions are therefore required to develop the capacity to anticipate change, respond adaptively, and engage in continuous learning in order to remain relevant and responsive to societal needs.

Unlike conventional bureaucratic reform approaches, which tend to emphasize structural efficiency, institutional resilience places adaptive capacity at the center of institutional advantage. Afshar and Shah (2025) emphasize that adaptive capacity enables organizations to identify environmental changes, develop policy alternatives, and undertake institutional adjustments before disruptions escalate into more severe crises. Accordingly, resilience functions not only as a mechanism for protecting institutions against risks but also as a driver of institutional innovation that enables organizations to develop new solutions under conditions of uncertainty.

Furthermore, the synthesis indicates that this strategic capability is developed through the interaction of five key dimensions: adaptive governance, organizational learning, collaborative capacity, digital capability, and adaptive leadership. These dimensions do not operate independently; rather, they mutually reinforce one another in shaping an institution's ability to respond rapidly to change while maintaining public legitimacy and accountability. For example, digital transformation is unlikely to generate sustainable performance improvements without adaptive leadership and an organizational learning culture. Conversely, innovative leadership without collaborative capacity and flexible governance mechanisms is likely to produce fragmented and unsustainable change (Rodríguez Bolívar, 2026; Chughtai et al., 2023; Voets et al., 2021).

These findings demonstrate that institutional resilience is multidimensional and integrative and therefore cannot be reduced to the capacity to cope with crises. Instead, resilience functions as a mechanism that connects organizational learning, innovation, digital transformation, and interorganizational collaboration within an adaptive governance system. From this perspective,

resilient public institutions are not merely capable of maintaining organizational stability; they are also capable of developing new institutional capacities that improve service quality, strengthen public trust, and generate sustainable public value (Bagali, 2026; Li et al., 2026).

Based on this synthesis, this study argues that institutional resilience constitutes an antecedent capability for public sector transformation. Sustainable transformation is determined not merely by technology adoption, organizational restructuring, or policy reform, but primarily by an institution’s ability to integrate learning, adaptation, collaboration, and innovation into everyday governance practices. In other words, public sector transformation is a consequence of institutional resilience rather than the other way around. This argument extends the existing literature, which has predominantly viewed resilience as an outcome of reform, by positioning resilience as a strategic foundation that enables reform to occur effectively and sustainably.

Table 2. Institutional Resilience as a Strategic Capability

Strategic Capability	Institutional Function	Contribution to Public Sector Transformation
Adaptive Governance	Institutional flexibility and responsive decision-making	Accelerates governance reform and policy adaptation
Organizational Learning	Knowledge creation and continuous improvement	Strengthens innovation and organizational change
Collaborative Capacity	Cross-sector coordination and resource integration	Improves policy effectiveness and public value creation
Digital Capability	Data-driven governance and digital service delivery	Supports digital transformation and service innovation
Adaptive Leadership	Strategic direction and change management	Builds organizational commitment and supports long-term transformation

Source: Synthesized and developed from Li et al. (2026), Afshar and Shah (2025), Rodríguez Bolívar (2026), Bagali (2026), Chughtai et al. (2023), and Voets et al. (2021).

Integrating Institutional Resilience and Public Sector Transformation: A Conceptual Framework

The synthesis of the literature indicates that the relationship between institutional resilience and public sector transformation has largely been conceptualized as two reform agendas developing in parallel. Research on resilience has generally focused on organizational capacity to cope with crises, whereas studies of public sector transformation have primarily emphasized digitalization, service innovation, or bureaucratic reform as separate areas of inquiry (Li et al., 2026; Chandra & Feng, 2025; Rodríguez Bolívar, 2026). Consequently, there remains a limited number of conceptual frameworks explaining how institutional resilience functions as a connecting mechanism that enables public sector transformation to occur in an adaptive and sustainable manner while generating public value.

Based on the synthesis conducted, this study proposes that institutional resilience functions as an enabling capability that connects organizational resources with successful public sector transformation. Resilience enables institutions to identify environmental changes at an early stage, integrate new knowledge into decision-making processes, and coordinate multiple actors to develop faster and more effective policy responses (Afshar & Shah, 2025; Bagali, 2026). Accordingly, public sector transformation is not viewed as the outcome of a single factor, such as digitalization

or organizational restructuring, but rather as a consequence of the interaction among multiple mutually reinforcing institutional capabilities.

Within the proposed framework, adaptive governance functions as a mechanism for enhancing institutional flexibility in responding to policy changes. Organizational learning ensures that organizational experiences are translated into knowledge that supports continuous innovation. Collaborative capacity strengthens cross-sectoral coordination, enabling resources and expertise to be collectively mobilized to address complex public problems. Digital capability provides information and analytical infrastructure that supports evidence-based decision-making, while adaptive leadership directs the overall transformation process through strategic vision, human resource empowerment, and the strengthening of an innovation-oriented organizational culture (Voets et al., 2021; Dunleavy & Margetts, 2023; Alibašić, 2024).

The synthesis further demonstrates that these five dimensions do not operate linearly but constitute a system of interdependent capabilities. Weakness in one dimension may reduce the effectiveness of the others. For example, investment in digital technology is unlikely to produce optimal transformation without adaptive leadership and an organizational learning culture. Conversely, strong collaborative capacity may not generate policy innovation when governance arrangements remain rigid and are not supported by data-driven analytical capabilities. Therefore, public sector transformation is more appropriately understood as the outcome of integrating multiple dimensions of institutional resilience rather than merely implementing administrative reforms.

Based on this analysis, the study proposes the following conceptual propositions:

Proposition 1. Institutional resilience functions as the primary enabling capability that determines the sustainability of public sector transformation.

Proposition 2. Adaptive governance, organizational learning, collaborative capacity, digital capability, and adaptive leadership constitute mutually reinforcing dimensions of institutional resilience.

Proposition 3. The higher the level of institutional resilience, the greater the capacity of public organizations to generate sustainable public sector transformation and long-term public value.

Conceptually, these three propositions extend the public administration literature by positioning institutional resilience not as an end product of reform, but as a strategic foundation that enables institutional reform to proceed continuously. This perspective provides a more comprehensive explanation of why some public organizations are able to sustain the momentum of transformation amid uncertainty, whereas others experience stagnation despite having relatively similar levels of resources and technological support.

Proposed Conceptual Model

Based on a critical synthesis of the literature, this study proposes a Conceptual Model of Institutional Resilience for Public Sector Transformation, which positions institutional resilience as a core strategic capability connecting internal organizational capacities with successful public sector transformation. The model is grounded in the argument that sustainable transformation cannot be driven solely by structural reform or technology adoption but depends on an institution's ability to integrate learning, collaboration, innovation, and adaptive leadership into its governance system.

Within the proposed model, institutional resilience is constituted by five mutually reinforcing dimensions: adaptive governance, organizational learning, collaborative capacity, digital capability, and adaptive leadership. Together, these dimensions strengthen an institution's capacity to anticipate change, respond effectively to disruption, and continuously renew its organizational capabilities. These capabilities subsequently contribute to greater policy innovation, improved public service quality, enhanced organizational agility, and evidence-based decision-making, which collectively generate more adaptive, inclusive, and sustainable public sector transformation.

Unlike previous studies that tend to position digitalization, innovation, or leadership as independent determinants (Dunleavy & Margetts, 2023; Chandra & Feng, 2025; Alibašić, 2024), the proposed model conceptualizes these factors as interdependent components that collectively constitute institutional resilience. Accordingly, successful public sector transformation is not determined by the strength of a single dimension but by the degree to which organizational capabilities are integrated to establish adaptive governance arrangements. This perspective extends public administration scholarship by positioning resilience as an integrative mechanism that bridges institutional reform and public value creation.

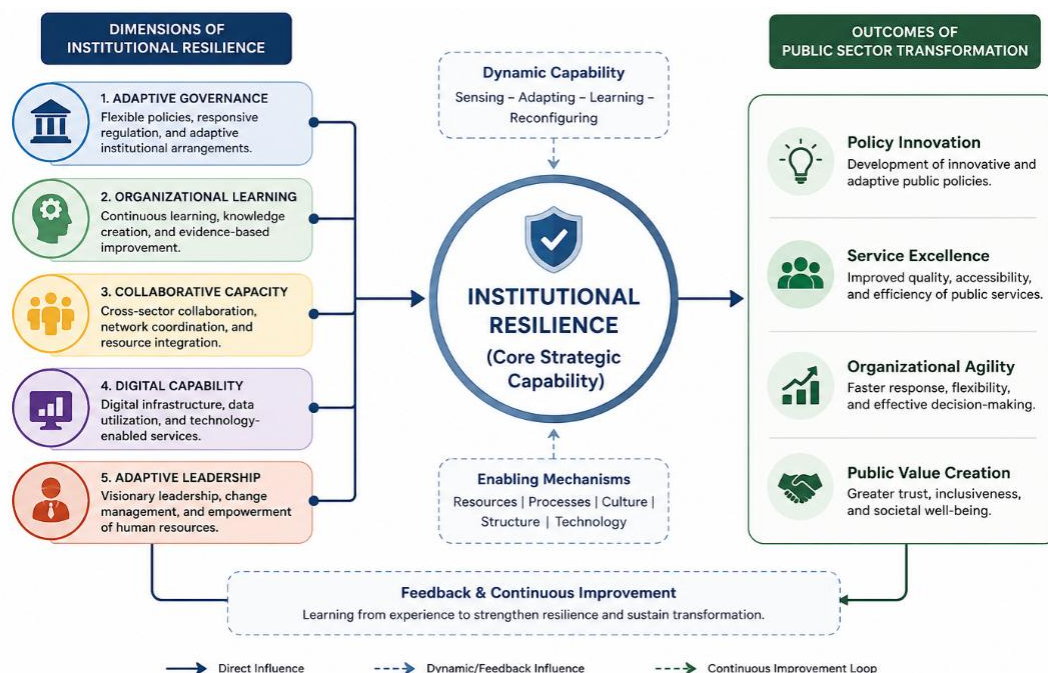


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Institutional Resilience for Public Sector Transformation

Source: Developed by the authors based on a synthesis of Li et al. (2026), Bagali (2026), Rodríguez Bolívar (2026), Afshar and Shah (2025), Voets et al. (2021), Dunleavy and Margetts (2023), and Alibašić (2024).

The conceptual model generates two major implications. First, institutional resilience should be viewed as a strategic capability that must be systematically developed through strengthening governance, organizational learning, collaboration, digital transformation, and adaptive leadership. Second, public sector reform should no longer be evaluated solely on the basis of successful program implementation or service digitalization, but also according to an institution's ability to maintain its capacity for adaptation, learning, and innovation in response to continuous environmental change.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The conceptual findings of this study provide a new perspective on the relationship between institutional resilience and public sector transformation. Unlike much of the existing literature, which positions resilience as a consequence of institutional reform or successful crisis management (Li et al., 2026; Bagali, 2026), this study argues that institutional resilience is a strategic capability that precedes and enables public sector transformation. Accordingly, transformation is not understood merely as the result of technology adoption or organizational restructuring, but as a consequence of an institution's ability to integrate adaptive governance, organizational learning, collaboration, digital capabilities, and adaptive leadership into public governance processes.

Theoretically, the proposed model extends the public administration literature by connecting several streams of scholarship that have largely developed independently, namely institutional resilience, digital public governance, collaborative governance, and organizational learning (Rodríguez Bolívar, 2026; Chandra & Feng, 2025; Voets et al., 2021). This integration provides a more comprehensive conceptual framework for explaining how public institutions develop adaptive capacity in response to increasingly complex uncertainty. Therefore, this study not only contributes to the discourse on institutional resilience but also provides a conceptual foundation for future empirical research examining the relationships among resilience dimensions across different governmental contexts.

From a practical perspective, the model indicates that successful public sector reform requires a more holistic approach than merely accelerating digitalization or restructuring bureaucratic organizations. Policymakers need to develop strategies that simultaneously strengthen organizational learning capacity, expand cross-sectoral collaboration, enhance the digital competencies of public officials, and foster adaptive and innovation-oriented leadership. Such an approach can produce institutions that are not only capable of responding effectively to crises but also equipped to undertake continuous transformation and generate long-term public value (Alibašić, 2024; Dunleavy & Margetts, 2023; Afshar & Shah, 2025).

Based on this synthesis, the study proposes four conceptual propositions that may serve as an agenda for future research:

- P1. Adaptive governance positively strengthens institutional resilience.*
- P2. Organizational learning, collaborative capacity, digital capability, and adaptive leadership collectively strengthen institutional resilience.*
- P3. Institutional resilience mediates the relationship between organizational capabilities and the success of public sector transformation.*
- P4. The higher the level of institutional resilience, the greater the capacity of public organizations to generate policy innovation, improve public service quality, and create sustainable public value.*

These four propositions provide a conceptual foundation for future quantitative research and case studies. Thus, this study goes beyond a synthesis of the existing literature by providing a research agenda that can be used to empirically examine and validate the proposed model across different levels of government, including national and local contexts, as well as in both developing and developed countries.

4. CONCLUSION

This conceptual study demonstrates that institutional resilience should be understood not merely as an organizational capacity to recover from crises, but as a strategic capability that enables sustainable public sector transformation. The synthesis of contemporary literature indicates that resilient public institutions are characterized by their ability to anticipate environmental change, adapt governance arrangements, promote continuous organizational learning, strengthen collaborative networks, leverage digital capabilities, and exercise adaptive leadership. Rather than functioning as isolated organizational attributes, these dimensions operate as an integrated institutional system that enhances organizational agility, policy innovation, service quality, and long-term public value creation. Accordingly, this study argues that institutional resilience constitutes the foundational capability through which governments can sustain reform efforts and respond effectively to increasingly complex governance challenges.

The primary contribution of this article lies in the development of an integrated conceptual framework that positions institutional resilience as the principal enabler of public sector transformation. By integrating previously fragmented perspectives on resilience, digital transformation, collaborative governance, organizational learning, and adaptive leadership, the proposed framework extends contemporary public administration literature and offers a more comprehensive explanation of institutional transformation under conditions of continuous disruption. From a practical perspective, the framework provides strategic guidance for policymakers and public managers by emphasizing that sustainable transformation requires simultaneous investment in adaptive governance, institutional learning, cross-sector collaboration, digital capability, and leadership development. Nevertheless, this study is limited by its conceptual nature and the absence of empirical validation. Therefore, future research is encouraged to examine the proposed framework using quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method approaches across different governmental contexts, administrative levels, and national settings to evaluate its explanatory power and refine its applicability in contemporary public governance.

DECLARATIONS

Author Contributions

Nurhaida: Literature review and synthesis, analysis and interpretation, writing original draft, and writing review and editing.

Leonas: Conceptualization, methodology, visualization, writing, review and editing, supervision, and project administration.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval

Ethical approval was not required because this study is a conceptual research based on systematic literature review and conceptual synthesis and did not involve human participants, animals, or the collection of primary data.

Data Availability

No new primary data were generated or analyzed in this study. The study was based on the analysis and synthesis of published literature and publicly available scholarly sources.

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AI-Assisted Tools Disclosure

The authors used AI-assisted tools to support the preparation of Figure 1 and limited language refinement of the manuscript. All AI-assisted outputs were reviewed, edited, and verified by the authors, who remain fully responsible for the accuracy, originality, interpretation, and final content of the manuscript

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