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# A Meta-Synthesis Analysis of the Role of Resilience in Educational Leadership in Schools

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to analyze the role of school principals' individual resilience and schools' organizational resilience in strengthening educational leadership and improving school performance. The present research employed a meta-synthesis and qualitative-analytical methodology. In the first stage, 110 articles related to resilience and educational leadership were identified, and based on inclusion and exclusion criteria, 27 articles were selected for final analysis. Data were extracted using thematic coding and were subsequently analyzed and synthesized in the form of main themes and sub-themes in order to identify key components of resilience and their relationships with educational leadership styles. The findings indicated that principals' individual resilience—including flexibility, crisis management, sustainable decision-making, emotional resilience, self-awareness, and communication skills—plays a significant role in the effective leadership of schools. Schools' organizational resilience also encompasses supportive networks, a culture of collaboration, organizational learning, task redesign, and psychosocial support, which contribute to strengthening principals' individual resilience and enhancing the quality of student learning. Moreover, ethical, transformational, and participatory leadership styles were found to play a reinforcing role in shaping both individual and organizational resilience. The conclusions of the study suggest that resilience is not merely an individual trait but also an important organizational capability that leads to sustainability, leadership effectiveness, and improvement of the learning environment. The contributions of this research include proposing strategies for principals' professional development, strengthening a supportive organizational culture, and designing managerial policies aimed at enhancing school resilience.

**Keywords:** individual resilience, organizational resilience, educational leadership, organizational learning

## Introduction

In recent years, educational systems worldwide have been exposed to unprecedented levels of complexity, uncertainty, and disruption, arising from global crises such as pandemics, armed conflicts, economic instability, technological acceleration, and profound social change. These conditions have fundamentally altered the context in which schools operate and have placed extraordinary demands on school leadership. As schools increasingly function in environments characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity, the capacity of educational leaders to sustain effectiveness, continuity, and moral purpose has become a central concern in educational management research (1, 2). Within this evolving landscape, resilience

has emerged as a critical construct for understanding how school leaders navigate adversity, manage crises, and foster organizational stability while maintaining educational quality.

Resilience in educational leadership extends beyond the mere ability to endure hardship and refers to a dynamic process through which leaders adapt, recover, and grow in response to stressors and disruptive events. Contemporary scholarship conceptualizes resilience as a multidimensional phenomenon encompassing psychological, emotional, behavioral, and organizational capacities that enable leaders to function effectively under pressure (3, 4). In school settings, resilient leadership is increasingly viewed as a determinant of institutional sustainability, teacher well-being, and student learning outcomes, particularly in periods of systemic crisis (5, 6). Consequently, understanding the mechanisms through which resilience operates in educational leadership has become an urgent scholarly priority.

The growing emphasis on resilience has been accompanied by a shift in leadership paradigms within educational management. Traditional administrative models that prioritized hierarchical control and procedural compliance are increasingly insufficient for addressing the complex challenges facing contemporary schools. Instead, leadership approaches grounded in adaptability, ethical commitment, relational trust, and collective capacity-building have gained prominence (7, 8). Transformational and ethical leadership, in particular, have been identified as critical pathways through which resilience is cultivated at both individual and organizational levels, enabling schools to respond constructively to disruption while preserving shared values and professional integrity.

At the individual level, research consistently demonstrates that principals' personal resilience plays a pivotal role in shaping leadership effectiveness. Psychological resources such as self-awareness, emotional regulation, optimism, self-efficacy, and adaptive coping strategies allow school leaders to withstand occupational stress and sustain motivation in demanding contexts (9, 10). These individual capacities are especially salient during crises, when leaders are required to make high-stakes decisions, manage uncertainty, and provide emotional support to staff and students (11, 12). Studies have shown that principals with higher levels of individual resilience are better equipped to maintain instructional focus, communicate effectively, and inspire confidence among school stakeholders.

Beyond individual attributes, resilience in educational leadership is deeply embedded in organizational contexts. Organizational resilience refers to the collective capacity of schools to anticipate, absorb, adapt to, and recover from disruptive events while continuing to fulfill their educational mission (7, 13). This form of resilience is shaped by structural flexibility, supportive professional relationships, participatory decision-making, and a culture of trust and collaboration. Schools that cultivate organizational resilience are more likely to sustain performance during crises, mitigate teacher burnout, and promote collective efficacy among staff (14, 15).

A significant body of research underscores the interdependence between individual and organizational resilience in educational leadership. Principals' personal coping capacities influence their ability to mobilize organizational resources, foster supportive climates, and lead adaptive change, while organizational structures and cultures, in turn, reinforce or undermine individual resilience (16, 17). This reciprocal relationship suggests that resilience in school leadership cannot be fully understood through a singular lens and must instead be examined as a multi-level, interactive system.

Crisis contexts have provided particularly valuable insights into the dynamics of resilient educational leadership. The COVID-19 pandemic, for example, exposed schools worldwide to abrupt transitions, prolonged uncertainty, and heightened emotional strain, thereby serving as a natural laboratory for examining leadership resilience (6, 18). Empirical studies conducted during this period reveal that resilient principals were able to navigate competing demands, support teacher well-being, and maintain organizational coherence despite severe constraints (5, 12). These findings highlight the importance of proactive crisis management, ethical judgment, and relational leadership in sustaining school systems under stress.

Transformational leadership has been repeatedly identified as a critical enabler of resilience in educational organizations. By articulating a shared vision, fostering intrinsic motivation, and empowering staff, transformational leaders create conditions that support both adaptive capacity and collective commitment (7, 19). In crisis situations, such leadership behaviors facilitate sense-making, reduce uncertainty, and promote coordinated action, thereby enhancing organizational resilience (1, 2). Ethical leadership further complements this process by grounding decision-making in principles of fairness, care, and responsibility, which strengthens trust and moral legitimacy during periods of disruption (8).

Recent qualitative and mixed-methods studies have expanded understanding of how resilience manifests across diverse educational contexts. Case studies from Spain, Ethiopia, Ukraine, and Saudi Arabia illustrate that resilient leadership is shaped by cultural, political, and systemic factors, as well as by leaders' agency and values (13, 20-22). These studies emphasize that resilience is not a uniform construct but is enacted differently depending on contextual constraints, institutional histories, and leadership traditions. Nonetheless, common patterns emerge, including the centrality of relational trust, adaptive decision-making, and moral purpose.

Professional learning and leadership development have also been recognized as essential mechanisms for strengthening resilience in educational leadership. Leadership coaching, reflective practice, and experiential learning enable principals to develop self-regulatory skills, expand adaptive repertoires, and enhance self-efficacy over time (15, 23). Moreover, organizational learning processes facilitate the institutionalization of resilience by embedding adaptive practices into routines, policies, and collective norms (16). These findings suggest that resilience is not a static trait but a capacity that can be cultivated through intentional development and supportive systems.

Despite the growing volume of empirical research on resilience and educational leadership, the literature remains fragmented across theoretical perspectives, methodological approaches, and contextual settings. Existing studies often focus on isolated dimensions of resilience or specific leadership styles, limiting the ability to develop an integrated understanding of how resilience operates within school leadership systems (3). Moreover, the absence of comprehensive syntheses that systematically integrate findings across studies has constrained theory-building and practical application in educational management.

Meta-synthesis approaches offer a valuable methodological strategy for addressing this gap by systematically aggregating and interpreting qualitative and mixed-methods research to generate higher-order conceptual frameworks (3). Through such synthesis, it becomes possible to identify recurring patterns, underlying mechanisms, and conceptual linkages that transcend individual studies and contribute to a more coherent understanding of resilient educational leadership. This approach is particularly suited to complex constructs like resilience, which are shaped by interactions across individual, organizational, and leadership domains.

In the context of educational management, a meta-synthesized conceptual model of resilience in school leadership can provide both theoretical clarity and practical guidance. By elucidating how individual resilience, organizational resilience, leadership styles, crisis management, and professional learning interact, such a model can inform leadership preparation programs, policy design, and school improvement initiatives (24, 25). Furthermore, it can support evidence-based interventions aimed at enhancing leadership capacity and organizational sustainability in schools facing ongoing and future challenges.

Accordingly, the aim of this study is to develop a comprehensive meta-synthesis model of resilience in educational leadership in schools by systematically analyzing and integrating findings from prior research to explain the key dimensions, mechanisms, and relationships that shape resilient school leadership.

## Methods and Materials

This study employed a meta-synthesis approach to comprehensively analyze the role of resilience in educational leadership in schools. In the first stage, previous studies were collected, and a total of 110 relevant studies were identified. Subsequently, based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria, 27 studies were selected for final analysis. The inclusion criteria comprised a focus on resilience and educational leadership, availability of full-text access, and applicability to school contexts, whereas the exclusion criteria included studies concentrating on unrelated fields or on education at secondary and higher education levels. The research was conducted using a qualitative and analytical approach, and data were extracted and examined from each selected study. The data were then analyzed through thematic coding to identify shared patterns and core components of resilience in educational leadership. In the next stage, these themes were integrated into a meta-synthesis conceptual model to illustrate how resilience can influence leadership styles, decision-making, and the effectiveness of school management. To enhance the credibility and rigor of the analysis, cross-checking among researchers was conducted, and findings were compared and refined. The outcome of this methodological process is the presentation of a comprehensive and theoretical portrayal of the role of resilience in improving educational leadership in schools, which can be utilized in planning and professional development programs for school principals.

### Stage One: Formulation of the Research Questions

In this study, to analyze the role of resilience in educational leadership in schools, the research questions were first formulated in accordance with the objectives and scope of the study. The questions were designed based on the theoretical framework of resilience and educational leadership so that they could be addressed through a qualitative and meta-synthesis approach. The aim of this stage was to identify the key dimensions of resilience, examine how it influences educational leadership, and develop a related conceptual model.

**Table 1. Research Questions and the Objectives of Each Question in Analyzing the Role of Resilience in Educational Leadership in Schools**

| No. | Research Question  | Objective  |
|-----|--|--|
| 1   | How does resilience influence leadership styles and the effectiveness of educational leadership in schools?              | Identifying the relationship between resilience and managerial performance |
| 2   | Which components of resilience among principals and teachers play the greatest role in improving educational leadership? | Extracting the key components of resilience                                |
| 3   | What patterns and strategies have previous studies proposed for strengthening resilience in schools?                     | Synthesizing experiences and practical strategies                          |
| 4   | How can a conceptual model of the relationship between resilience and educational leadership be designed?                | Designing a meta-synthesis theoretical framework                           |

These questions guided data collection and analysis in subsequent stages of the study and defined the pathway for theme extraction, coding, and the development of the conceptual model.

### Stage Two: Systematic Review of the Literature

Following the formulation of the research questions, the second stage involved a systematic review of previous studies to identify and collect research related to resilience and educational leadership. The purpose of this stage was to determine the scope and quality of the sources, extract key information, and prepare the data for meta-synthesis analysis.

At this stage, a total of 110 relevant articles were identified. Based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria—namely a focus on resilience and educational leadership, access to full-text articles, and applicability to school contexts—27 articles were selected for final analysis. The extracted information from each study included research objectives, type of leadership, resilience components examined, research methodology, and key findings. During this stage, the researcher used reputable scientific databases and platforms, including international databases such as Taylor & Francis, Elsevier, Emerald, and Google Scholar,

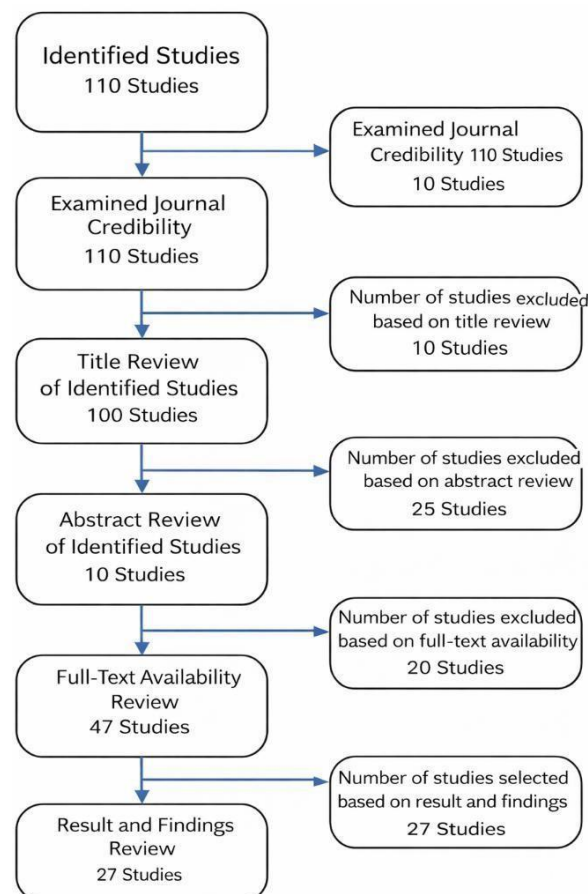
as well as Persian-language specialized journals in management and educational leadership such as NoorMags, SID, and Civilica. The criteria for selecting sources included relevance to resilience and educational leadership, recency of studies (recent years), research quality, availability of full-text articles, a focus on primary and secondary education, and the feasibility of data extraction for meta-synthesis analysis. Based on these criteria, out of the 110 identified articles, 27 high-quality and relevant studies were selected for final analysis.

### Stage Three: Searching and Selecting Appropriate Sources

After defining the research questions and conducting the systematic review of the literature, the third stage involved searching for and selecting appropriate sources for the meta-synthesis analysis. The aim of this stage was to ensure the comprehensiveness and quality of the data used in the analysis and to extract patterns of resilience in educational leadership. At this stage, the researcher initially reviewed all identified articles (110 articles). Subsequently, based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 27 articles were selected for final analysis.

The criteria for selecting appropriate sources included the following:

1. Relevance to resilience and educational leadership in schools.
2. Publication between 2020 and 2025 to ensure the currency of information.
3. Availability of full-text articles and analyzable data.
4. Research quality and scientific credibility of the studies.
5. A focus on primary and secondary education to ensure consistency in educational level.



**Figure 1. Process and Procedure for Screening and Selecting Relevant Articles and Studies**

The figure illustrates the systematic process of selecting research sources for the meta-synthesis method. This process begins with the initial identification of 110 studies. In the next stage, all 110 studies were evaluated in terms of journal credibility, and

10 studies were excluded due to insufficient credibility or non-compliance with journal standards, leaving 100 studies. Subsequently, by reviewing the titles of the 100 studies, 25 studies were excluded due to a lack of direct relevance to the topic, and 75 studies proceeded to the next stage. In the fourth stage, based on abstract screening, an additional 28 studies were excluded, resulting in 47 remaining articles. In the following step, 20 studies were excluded due to the unavailability of full-text content, and ultimately, 27 studies reached the final stage for the review of results and findings to be used for data extraction and coding in the meta-synthesis. This step-by-step process ensures the adequacy and quality of sources required to achieve a comprehensive conceptual model.

#### Stage Four: Extraction of Results

After selecting 27 articles related to the topic “*A Meta-Synthesis Analysis of the Role of Resilience in Educational Leadership in Schools,*” this stage involved extracting key data from each study in order to identify patterns, components, and relationships associated with resilience in educational leadership. The extracted data included the following elements:

- Type of leadership examined (e.g., transformational, ethical, crisis-oriented).
- Identified components of resilience (e.g., flexibility, stress management, resilient decision-making, social support).
- Key research findings (main results and contributions of each study).
- Outcomes related to the effectiveness of educational leadership (e.g., impacts on school performance, teachers’ job satisfaction, and students’ learning quality).

**Table 2. Extraction of Results from the 27 Selected Articles**

| No. | Authors and Year                                     | Article Title  | Key Findings  |
|-----|--|--|---|
| 1   | Sayahpour, Zareei-Matin, Taheri, Mohammadian (2025)  | Resilient Leadership: An Analysis of Studies Using a Meta-Synthesis Approach   | Analysis of prior studies resulted in 169 sub-themes grouped into six main themes: antecedents, conceptual definitions, characteristics of resilient leaders (personal traits and positive/negative attributes in relation to followers), drivers of resilient leadership (leader-related and context-related), barriers and challenges (leader-related and follower-related), and outcomes (short-term positive, long-term positive, and negative consequences).   |
| 2   | Eghbaljou Gharaghshlaghi, Shirzad-Asl, Sayyad (2024) | The Role of Distributed-Transformational Leadership of School Principals in Enhancing Educational and Organizational Resilience in Crisis Conditions                   | Distribution of leadership responsibilities, development of collective capacity, and transformational inspiration enhance organizational resilience through strengthened cohesion, organizational learning, and support networks. Both international and Iranian studies confirm the role of distributed leadership and resilience components in schools. Practical recommendations include strengthening participatory structures, mid-level leadership training, psychosocial support programs, and resilience assessment indicators. |
| 3   | Alizadeh-Yami, Doustabadi, Namjoo, Foroozesh (2024)  | Resilience Management in Schools: Principals’ Preparedness for Future Educational Crises   | Findings indicate that school resilience requires strengthening crisis leadership and rapid decision-making skills, empowering professional and communication networks, investing in technological infrastructure and equitable access, and continuous attention to mental health and social support.   |
| 4   | Bagheri, Sadeghi, Abolghasemi, Fazlollahi (2021)     | A Model of Primary School Principals’ Resilience: A Qualitative Study Based on Experts’ Perspectives   | Open coding yielded 180 initial codes, which were organized into 20 thematic categories through axial coding. Selective coding identified principals’ resilience as the core category. The resulting model provides a valuable conceptual map for guiding a wide range of educational system services.  |
| 5   | Shirooye, Mahdian, Goudarzi (2022)                   | Examining the Relationship Between Time Management, Perfectionism, and the Level of School Principals’ Resilience  | Positive relationships were found between time management and its components with perfectionism. However, delegation showed no relationship with perfectionism. Time management components (goal setting, prioritization, communication management, meeting management) were positively related to resilience, while operational planning and delegation were not.  |
| 6   | Alshamlan (2023)                                     | Resilient Leadership: A Study on the Link Between Saudi Vision 2030 and Higher Education   | Resilient leadership plays a fundamental role in enabling university leaders to adapt to changes driven by Saudi Vision 2030. Universities revised educational programs and leadership practices, and leaders employed coping strategies, positive mindsets, and adaptive practices to manage stress from systemic change.  |
| 7   | Bissessar (2023)                                     | An Autoethnographic Exploration of My Experiences in Planning and Implementing Teacher Professional Development During COVID-19: Implications for Resilient Leadership | Experiences during the pandemic fostered personal, behavioral, and social dimensions of resilient leadership. Analysis across individual, unit, and community levels highlighted flexibility, symbolic interaction, and reflective practice as key coping and adaptation mechanisms.  |

|    |                                    |  |  |
|----|------------------------------------|--|--|
| 8  | Chance (2022)                      | Resilient Leadership: A Phenomenological Exploration of How Black Women in Higher Education Leadership Confront Cultural Adversities | Black women leaders face challenges such as lack of role models, glass ceilings, intersectional discrimination, and tokenism. Identified as “superwomen,” they leverage resilience to transform adversity into leadership capacity, drawing motivation from family, mentoring, and cultural identity support.                            |
| 9  | Dunn et al. (2024)                 | Becoming an Authentic and Resilient Leader: An Interactive Workshop to Enhance Leadership Capabilities                               | Skills such as self-awareness, emotion regulation, authenticity, and empathy contribute significantly to enhancing leadership resilience.  |
| 10 | Halivni & Shachter (2023)          | Resilient Leaders: Determinants of Resilience Upon Entry into the School Principalship   | In the first year of principalship, resilience is weakened by heavy workloads, complex stakeholder interactions, limited administrative knowledge, staff acceptance issues, and COVID-19 challenges, while strengthened by lived experience growth, short-term successes, supportive environments, student energy, and staff acceptance. |
| 11 | Almo-Extermera et al. (2022)       | Resilient Leadership Among School Principals: Case Studies of Challenged Schools in Spain  | Principals with strong resilient leader identities transformed problems into opportunities for institutional growth and improvement, supported by motivation, commitment, and a service-oriented mindset.  |
| 12 | Zadok, Ben-Eliel, Shachter (2024)  | Organizational Resilience and Transformational Leadership for Managing Complex Educational Systems                                   | Collective teacher self-efficacy fully mediates the relationship between transformational leadership of middle leaders and organizational resilience. Enhancing transformational leadership and collective efficacy significantly strengthens institutional resilience.  |
| 13 | Wolde et al. (2022)                | Challenges of Educational Leadership and Its Resilience in Secondary Schools of the Kelem Wollega Zone, Ethiopia                     | Schools face high levels of disorder, student disciplinary problems, intense external pressures—especially political expectations—and lack of leadership commitment under difficult conditions.  |
| 14 | Frost (2025)                       | Resilient Leadership: Guiding Schools Through Crisis and Uncertainty   | Resilient leadership is essential for principals to guide educational communities with strength, flexibility, and empathy. Cultivating resilience and adopting crisis leadership strategies enhance organizational resilience while maintaining focus on learning and student well-being.  |
| 15 | Walsh et al. (2024)                | Building Resilient Leadership: A Study of Leadership Development in Conditions of Uncertainty  | SME leaders prioritize learning and development opportunities with tangible organizational benefits. Networking, partnerships, and relationship-building enhance resilience and inform effective resilience development initiatives.   |
| 16 | Chung et al. (2024)                | Cultivating Resilience During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Perspectives of School Principals in the United States                          | Principals’ resilience emerged from interactions among systems, relationships, mental health, and ethical–spiritual principles, enabling balance between equity, educational quality, accountability, and stakeholder well-being.  |
| 17 | Herman (2024)                      | Educational Leadership in Crisis and Conflict: A Case Study of Ukrainian Educational Leadership and Institutional Adaptation         | Ukrainian educational leaders fluidly navigate roles of victim, perpetrator, liberator, and peace-builder. Leader agency is central in prioritizing resilience and adaptive responses under war conditions.  |
| 18 | Ramos-Pla et al. (2021)            | Leadership in Times of Crisis: School Principals Confronting COVID-19  | Principals played a critical role during and after lockdowns, maintaining high personal leadership resources and adapting effectively to crisis, despite reductions in some contextual resources.  |
| 19 | Lazaridou (2020)                   | Personality Traits and Resilience of Preschool Principals: A Replication Study   | Greek preschool principals exhibited distinctive patterns of personality and resilience, suggesting unique professional development needs. Resilience and personality traits remain key determinants of leadership success.  |
| 20 | De Bruin & Mistry (2020)           | The Voice of Resilience: Female School Principals, Leadership Skills, and Decision-Making Techniques                                 | Female principals require theoretical, practical, and psychological preparation. Leadership skills training and mentoring are critical for professional and personal resilience.   |
| 21 | Hill-Berry & Brace-Melville (2025) | When the Going Gets Tough: Educational Leadership and Resilience in Times of Crisis  | Crisis leadership requires proactive planning, effective communication, teamwork, emotional intelligence, and comprehensive leadership training for managing future disruptions.   |
| 22 | Çetin & Aydın (2025)               | Resilient School Leadership and Change Management  | Principals strengthen mental, emotional, physical, social, and moral resilience through reflective practices, social support, health care, and ethical commitment. Personal resilience is directly linked to organizational resilience.  |
| 23 | Orley, Orley, Smith (2020)         | Crisis, Stress, and Human Resilience   | Leadership success and resilience depend on a clear vision, decisive action, open communication, and adherence to an ethical compass that builds trust.  |
| 24 | Elomaa et al. (2025)               | Resilient School Leadership in Crisis and the Role of Job Redesign: Perspectives of Finnish School Principals                        | Individual and collective processes such as sensemaking, guidance, and collective interaction—supported by communication and mental health factors—enhance crisis leadership. Challenging job redesign strengthens confidence and adaptability.  |
| 25 | Rong, Zhao, Sogilon (2023)         | Developing Resilient Educational Leaders: The Impact of Leadership Coaching on Leaders’ Resilience and Self-Efficacy                 | Leadership coaching significantly improves principals’ coping capacity, confidence, job performance, communication skills, decision-making, and organizational adaptability.   |
| 26 | Bouskila, Chen-Levi, Cain (2024)   | Resilient Leadership During the COVID-19 Era   | School leaders employed proactive creativity, meaning-making, goal setting, and emotional climate management to sustain staff and student <u>motivation and mental health.</u>   |

|    |                                     |  |   |
|----|-------------------------------------|--|---|
| 27 | Clapper, McCallum, Mansfield (2020) | Principal Self-Care to Strengthen Teacher Resilience | Principals' self-care and mindful focus are crucial for enhancing teacher resilience. Principals' emotional states directly influence staff morale, and self-aware, self-compassionate leaders exert more positive organizational impact. |
|----|-------------------------------------|--|---|

### Stage Five: Analysis and Synthesis of the Findings

The fifth stage of the study—analysis and synthesis of the findings—involved an in-depth examination of the results extracted from the 27 selected articles in order to identify key patterns, components, and relationships of resilience in educational leadership in schools. At this stage, using thematic analysis and meta-synthesis procedures, the researcher first coded the data and identified resilience components and leadership styles. The codes were then aggregated into major themes such as individual resilience, organizational resilience, transformational leadership, ethical leadership, and crisis management. Subsequently, the relationships among these themes were examined. The results indicated that educational leaders' individual resilience is associated with improved decision-making, more effective crisis management, and increased staff motivation, while schools' organizational resilience correlates with enhanced school stability and efficiency and reduced teacher burnout. In addition, ethical and transformational leadership were found to have a direct relationship with leaders' resilience and to strengthen trust, teamwork, and a positive school culture. Overall, the synthesis demonstrated that resilience is not only an individual attribute but also an organizational capability that directly influences the effectiveness of educational leadership and provides the necessary foundation for developing a meta-synthesis conceptual model of resilience in school leadership.

### Stage Six: Quality Control of the Extracted Codes

The sixth stage of the study—quality control of the extracted codes—was conducted to ensure the accuracy, precision, and internal consistency of the data obtained. In this stage, the codes and themes extracted from the 27 selected articles were re-examined to verify alignment with the research objectives and the rigor of the analysis. First, each code was carefully cross-checked against the original text of the corresponding article to ensure semantic congruence and to confirm that no key points had been omitted. Next, themes and sub-themes were reviewed to avoid redundancy and ambiguity in the coding structure and to ensure a coherent and logical integration suitable for the final analytical stage. Furthermore, to enhance credibility and trustworthiness, inter-researcher agreement procedures and peer debriefing were employed to ensure that the coding process was conducted objectively and in a reproducible manner. This stage ensured the scientific quality and reliability of the findings and prepared the groundwork for presenting the conceptual model and the final analysis.

In Stage Six, MAXQDA software was used to control the quality of the extracted codes and to organize the data. This software enabled the researcher to conduct article coding, develop themes and sub-themes, and systematically examine overlaps and relationships among codes. Using MAXQDA, codes were precisely matched to the article texts, themes were reviewed and refined, and the identification of repetitive or ambiguous codes was facilitated. In addition, the software supported comparative analyses across researchers and peer review procedures, thereby enhancing the credibility and dependability of the data and preparing the extracted material for designing the meta-synthesis conceptual model.

## Findings and Results

### 1. Initial Extraction and Coding Process

At this stage, the findings of the 27 selected articles were examined and coded with the aim of identifying components and patterns of resilience in educational leadership. Each article was analyzed to extract key concepts related to individual and organizational resilience, managerial skills, and leadership styles. The extracted codes included principals' personal characteristics, communication skills, crisis management capabilities, social support, and organizational factors, which served

as the foundation for developing themes and sub-themes in the meta-synthesis conceptual model. Table 3 presents the codes extracted from each article and provides a comprehensive overview of resilience components in educational leadership.

**Table 3. Codes Extracted from the 27 Selected Articles**

| No. | Authors and Year                                     | Extracted Codes   |
|-----|--|---|
| 1   | Sayahpour, Zareei-Matin, Taheri, Mohammadian (2025)  | Antecedents of resilient leadership, definitions of resilient leadership, personal characteristics of resilient leaders, contextual and environmental factors, leadership barriers and challenges, short - and long-term outcomes (positive and negative) |
| 2   | Eghbaljou Gharaghshlaghi, Shirzad-Asl, Sayyad (2024) | Distributed leadership, transformational leadership, collective capacity building, organizational cohesion, organizational learning, support networks, educational-organizational resilience  |
| 3   | Alizadeh-Yami, Doustabadi, Namjoo, Foroozesh (2024)  | Crisis leadership, rapid decision-making, empowerment of professional networks, technological infrastructure, equitable access, psychosocial support  |
| 4   | Bagheri, Abolghasemi, Fazlollahi (2022)              | Primary school principals' resilience, open and axial resilience codes, conceptual model of principal resilience, adaptability, managerial competencies   |
| 5   | Shirooye, Mahdian, Goudarzi (2022)                   | Time management, goal setting, prioritization, communication management, meeting management, relationship between time management and resilience  |
| 6   | Alshamlan (2023)                                     | Resilient leadership, adaptation to macro-level changes, positive mindset, coping strategies, leaders' stress management  |
| 7   | Bissessar (2023)                                     | Individual resilience, behavioral resilience, social resilience, flexibility, self-reflection, social interaction   |
| 8   | Chance (2022)  | Women leaders' resilience, coping with multiple discrimination, cultural identity, support networks, intrinsic motivation   |
| 9   | Dunn et al. (2024)                                   | Self-awareness, emotion regulation, leadership authenticity, empathy, enhancement of leadership resilience  |
| 10  | Halivni & Shachter (2023)                            | Resilience-depleting factors, resilience-enhancing factors, occupational stress, supportive environment, short-term successes   |
| 11  | Almo-Extermera et al. (2022)                         | Resilient leader identity, transforming crisis into opportunity, motivation, commitment, service-oriented attitude  |
| 12  | Zadok, Ben-Elie, Shachter (2024)                     | Transformational leadership of middle leaders, teachers' collective self-efficacy, organizational resilience, school performance improvement  |
| 13  | Wolde et al. (2022)                                  | Disciplinary challenges, political pressures, environmental instability, weak leadership commitment   |
| 14  | Frost (2025)   | Crisis leadership, leadership flexibility, staff well-being support, school organizational resilience   |
| 15  | Walsh et al. (2024)                                  | Leadership development, organizational learning, networking, professional partnerships, multi-level resilience  |
| 16  | Chung et al. (2024)                                  | Principals' mental health, ethical and spiritual resilience, supportive relationships, stress management  |
| 17  | Herman (2024)  | Leadership agency, institutional adaptation, fluid leadership roles in crisis, resilience in conflict   |
| 18  | Ramos-Pla et al. (2021)                              | Crisis adaptation, personal leadership resources, leadership style change in crisis, managerial resilience  |
| 19  | Lazaridou (2020)                                     | Principals' personality traits, individual resilience, leadership style, professional development   |
| 20  | De Bruin & Mistry (2020)                             | Psychological preparedness of female principals, leadership skills training, mentoring, professional resilience   |
| 21  | Hill-Berry & Brace-Melville (2025)                   | Proactive planning, effective communication, team-based approach, emotional intelligence, resilience training   |
| 22  | Çetin & Aydin (2025)                                 | Mental, emotional, physical, social, and moral resilience, change management, linkage between individual and organizational resilience  |
| 23  | Orley, Orley, Smith (2020)                           | Leadership vision, decisiveness, open communication, ethical compass  |
| 24  | Elomaa et al. (2025)                                 | Crisis sensemaking, collective guidance, communication, mental health, job redesign   |
| 25  | Rong, Zhao, Sogilon (2023)                           | Leadership coaching, leaders' self-efficacy, coping with pressure, improvement of communication skills  |
| 26  | Bouskila, Chen-Levi, Cain (2024)                     | Proactive and creative approach, meaning-making, goal setting, management of school emotional climate   |
| 27  | Clapper, McCallum, Mansfield (2020)                  | Principal self-care, self-awareness, self-compassion, principals' emotional impact on teacher resilience  |

Analysis of the codes extracted from the 27 selected articles indicates that resilience in educational leadership consists of two main dimensions: principals' individual resilience and schools' organizational resilience. Individual resilience refers to a set of psychological, emotional, and behavioral capacities that enable principals to maintain effective and sustainable performance when facing pressures, challenges, and crisis situations. The most salient components of this dimension include

flexibility, adaptability to change, crisis management, informed and sustainable decision-making, emotional resilience, self-efficacy, self-awareness, leadership authenticity, and effective communication skills, all of which contribute to staff motivation and engagement.

In contrast, schools' organizational resilience refers to the structural, cultural, and interactive capacities and mechanisms through which principals' individual resilience is reinforced and positive outcomes for school performance and sustainability are generated. Key components of this dimension include establishing and strengthening support networks, active staff participation, proactive planning and crisis anticipation, development of a culture of collaboration, trust and organizational learning, task redesign and increased flexibility in organizational structures, as well as psychosocial support and the promotion of self-care among teachers and staff.

Moreover, the findings indicate that ethical, transformational, and participatory leadership styles play mediating and reinforcing roles in the formation and enhancement of resilience. Educational leaders, by creating supportive environments, strengthening teacher motivation, facilitating effective communication, and managing crises intelligently, can simultaneously enhance individual and organizational resilience. Accordingly, resilience in educational leadership is not merely an individual attribute but a dynamic and constructed organizational capability that emerges from the interaction between leaders' individual skills and the school's supportive structures, cultures, and practices. This integrated set of codes and categories provides a coherent basis for extracting sub-themes and main themes and, ultimately, for developing a meta-synthesis conceptual model of resilient school leadership.

## 2. Formation of Concepts and Sub-Themes (Axial Coding)

During the axial coding stage, the codes extracted from the 27 selected articles were examined in detail to identify similar and related concepts and to categorize them into sub-themes. This process involved grouping similar codes, forming initial concepts, and then integrating them to generate the main sub-themes. The purpose of this stage was to reduce data complexity and to provide a coherent framework for analyzing resilience and educational leadership. The sub-themes reflect the individual, organizational, and behavioral dimensions of resilience, as well as various components of transformational, ethical, and managerial leadership, and they provide a foundation for designing the meta-synthesis conceptual model. Table 4 presents the sub-themes and the related codes for each of the 27 selected articles.

**Table 4. Sub-Themes and Related Codes Extracted from the 27 Selected Articles**

| No. | Authors and Year                                     | Sub-Themes   | Related Codes  |
|-----|--|--|--|
| 1   | Sayahpour, Zareei-Matin, Taheri, Mohammadian (2025)  | Dimensions and outcomes of resilient leadership          | Antecedents of resilient leadership, leaders' personal characteristics, environmental factors, barriers and challenges, positive and negative outcomes |
| 2   | Eghbaljou Gharaghshlaghi, Shirzad-Asl, Sayyad (2024) | School organizational resilience                         | Distributed leadership, transformational leadership, collective capacity, organizational learning, support networks                                    |
| 3   | Alizadeh-Yami, Doustabadi, Namjoo, Foroozesh (2024)  | Educational crisis preparedness and management           | Crisis leadership, rapid decision-making, professional networks, technological infrastructure, psychosocial support                                    |
| 4   | Bagheri, Abolghasemi, Fazlollahi (2022)              | Model of school principals' resilience                   | Principals' individual competencies, adaptability, coping skills, social support   |
| 5   | Shirooye, Mahdian, Goudarzi (2022)                   | Managerial skills enhancing resilience                   | Time management, goal setting, prioritization, communication management  |
| 6   | Alshamlan (2023)                                     | Leadership adaptation to macro-level changes             | Positive mindset, coping strategies, change management, leadership adaptability  |
| 7   | Bissessar (2023)                                     | Development of leaders' individual and social resilience | Flexibility, self-reflection, social interaction, behavioral resilience  |
| 8   | Chance (2022)  | Women's resilience in educational leadership             | Coping with discrimination, cultural identity, support networks, motivation  |
| 9   | Dunn et al. (2024)                                   | Internal skills of resilient leaders                     | Self-awareness, emotion regulation, leadership authenticity, empathy   |
| 10  | Halivni & Shachter (2023)                            | Factors influencing novice principals' resilience        | Occupational stress, supportive environment, experiential learning, short-term successes   |

|    |                                     |  |   |
|----|-------------------------------------|--|---|
| 11 | Almo-Extermera et al. (2022)        | Transforming crisis into organizational opportunity        | Resilient leadership identity, motivation, commitment, supportive orientation           |
| 12 | Zadok, Ben-Elieel, Shachter (2024)  | Transformational leadership and organizational resilience  | Transformational middle leadership, collective self-efficacy, organizational resilience |
| 13 | Wolde et al. (2022)                 | Contextual barriers to leadership resilience               | Political pressure, disciplinary problems, weak leadership commitment                   |
| 14 | Frost (2025)                        | Resilient leadership in crisis                             | Leadership flexibility, staff well-being support, maintaining educational focus         |
| 15 | Walsh et al. (2024)                 | Leadership development under uncertainty                   | Organizational learning, networking, professional partnerships, multi-level resilience  |
| 16 | Chung et al. (2024)                 | Psychological-ethical dimensions of principals' resilience | Mental health, ethical resilience, supportive relationships                             |
| 17 | Herman (2024)                       | Leadership agency and adaptation in crisis                 | Fluid leadership roles, agency, institutional adaptation                                |
| 18 | Ramos-Pla et al. (2021)             | Leadership style change in crisis                          | Personal leadership resources, adaptability, situational leadership                     |
| 19 | Lazaridou (2020)                    | Individual characteristics and resilient leadership style  | Personality traits, individual resilience, professional development needs               |
| 20 | De Bruin & Mistry (2020)            | Professional resilience of female principals               | Psychological preparedness, leadership training, mentoring                              |
| 21 | Hill-Berry & Brace-Melville (2025)  | Leadership preparedness for crisis                         | Proactive planning, effective communication, emotional intelligence                     |
| 22 | Çetin & Aydin (2025)                | Multiple dimensions of principals' resilience              | Mental, emotional, physical, social, and moral resilience                               |
| 23 | Orley, Orley, Smith (2020)          | Values-based leadership in crisis                          | Clear vision, decisiveness, open communication, ethical compass                         |
| 24 | Elomaa et al. (2025)                | Job redesign and leadership resilience                     | Acceptance of challenging tasks, self-confidence, adaptability                          |
| 25 | Rong, Zhao, Sogilon (2023)          | Coaching and development of leaders' resilience            | Leadership coaching, self-efficacy, communication skills                                |
| 26 | Bouskila, Chen-Levi, Cain (2024)    | Meaning-making and emotional management in crisis          | Proactive approach, goal setting, emotional climate leadership                          |
| 27 | Clapper, McCallum, Mansfield (2020) | Leader self-care and teacher resilience                    | Self-awareness, self-compassion, leaders' emotional impact                              |

Table 4 presents the sub-themes and codes extracted from the 27 selected articles, which constitute the basis of the meta-synthesis analysis in the present study. This table represents both the initial coding and axial coding stages in the meta-synthesis process and illustrates how raw concepts and conceptual data derived from prior studies were systematically organized into meaningful sub-themes within the domain of resilience and educational leadership in schools.

Examination of the table content indicates that principals' individual resilience has the highest frequency among the reviewed studies. This sub-theme is represented by codes such as self-awareness, emotion regulation, flexibility, self-efficacy, leadership authenticity, effective communication skills, and sustainable decision-making. The dominance of these concepts reflects the extensive emphasis in the research literature on the role of school principals' individual characteristics, competencies, and skills in coping with occupational pressures, leadership challenges, and crisis situations in educational environments.

Alongside this, schools' organizational resilience emerged as one of the most frequently identified sub-themes, represented by codes such as organizational trust, staff participation and alignment, job motivation, support networks, constructive human relations, positive morale, and managerial flexibility. These findings indicate that resilience at the organizational level extends beyond principals' individual capacities and is strongly dependent on supportive structures, the quality of human interactions, and the school's organizational culture, all of which play a crucial role in sustaining school performance and effectiveness.

The sub-theme of crisis management also appeared in a substantial proportion of the reviewed articles and was identified through codes such as proactive and emergency planning, crisis anticipation and management, risk management, resource organization, and staff support. This sub-theme represents the operational and executive dimension of resilience and

demonstrates that timely response capacity, effective decision-making, and school guidance under conditions of uncertainty are essential components of resilient leadership in educational systems.

In addition, sub-themes related to transformational and strategic leadership were highlighted in several studies, accompanied by codes such as guiding change, informed and strategic decision-making, fostering organizational alignment, strengthening staff motivation, and institutionalizing resilience within schools. The presence of these sub-themes underscores the decisive role of leadership styles in directing, integrating, and sustaining resilience processes in schools.

Finally, professional learning and leadership development were identified as reinforcing and dynamic sub-themes, represented by codes such as experiential learning, practice-based experience, professional reflection, leadership capacity development, and coaching. These findings suggest that resilience among principals and schools is not a static or episodic phenomenon but is gradually and sustainably strengthened through continuous learning, accumulated experience, and ongoing professional development.

Overall, the results presented in Table 4 indicate that the sub-themes and codes extracted from previous studies coherently and consistently cover the individual, organizational, and leadership dimensions of educational resilience, in line with the analytical approach of the present research. This table provides the necessary theoretical and empirical foundation for abstracting the main themes and designing the final meta-synthesis conceptual model, and it establishes a clear linkage between the primary data of prior studies and the final conceptual structure of the present research.

### **3. Extraction of the Main Themes (Selective Coding)**

At this stage of the study, the sub-themes extracted from the 27 selected articles were analyzed in a systematic and comparative manner in order to identify dominant core patterns, conceptual relationships, and explanatory mechanisms. The primary aim of this analytical stage was to focus on the foundational concepts that played the most significant roles in the literature on resilience and educational leadership in terms of frequency, conceptual importance, and explanatory power. To this end, overlapping or conceptually proximate sub-themes were integrated through an analytical process so as to reduce conceptual fragmentation and enable deeper abstraction and explanation of the final themes.

The outcome of this analytical process led to the identification of five main themes that represent the key dimensions of resilience and educational leadership in schools. These themes include principals' individual resilience, schools' organizational resilience, transformational and ethical leadership, crisis management and resilient decision-making, and professional learning and leadership development. Each of these themes encompasses a set of interrelated components that, through their interaction, shape and strengthen the school's overall resilience capacity.

Based on the revised conceptual model, principals' individual resilience was identified as the core of the model. Principals' psychological and behavioral competencies—such as flexibility, emotion regulation, self-awareness, and self-efficacy—constitute the foundation for the formation of other dimensions of resilience and exert a direct influence on decision-making quality, crisis management capability, and staff motivation levels. This dimension plays an initiating and activating role in triggering resilience mechanisms at the organizational level.

Schools' organizational resilience reflects the collective capacity of the school to adapt, sustain performance, and grow under challenging and crisis conditions. Support networks, staff participation and synergy, task redesign, structural flexibility, and psychosocial support for teachers are among the mechanisms through which principals' individual resilience is transferred to the organizational level, leading to increased organizational stability, reduced teacher burnout, and improved school performance.

Within this framework, transformational and ethical leadership functions as a linking and directional dimension in the conceptual model. Through trust-building, fostering intrinsic motivation, guiding change processes, strengthening justice, and

shaping a positive school culture, this leadership style establishes a synergistic relationship with both individual and organizational resilience and amplifies their effects. Transformational and ethical leadership provides the necessary context for resilience to evolve from an individual capacity into a collective and institutionalized value within the school.

Crisis management and resilient decision-making constitute the operational dimension of the model and reflect the ability of principals and schools to anticipate crises, make timely decisions, manage uncertainty, and dynamically adapt to changing conditions. This dimension connects individual and organizational resilience capacities to the school's actual performance in crisis situations and ensures the practical effectiveness of the conceptual model.

Finally, professional learning and leadership development play a supportive and reinforcing role throughout the model. Leadership coaching, organizational learning, professional reflection, the use of individual experiences, and continuous development of managerial competencies enhance principals' individual resilience, strengthen organizational resilience, and sustain effective leadership over the long term.

Overall, the revised conceptual model demonstrates that resilience and educational leadership in schools operate as a dynamic, interactive, and multi-level system—a system in which individual, organizational, and leadership dimensions mutually influence one another and provide a coherent framework for theoretical explanation, empirical analysis, and the design of developmental interventions in the field of educational leadership.

#### **4. Final Meta-Synthesis Model of the Study**

The conceptual model of the present study is the result of a systematic meta-synthesis of the findings of 27 studies related to resilience and educational leadership, and it conceptualizes resilience as a multidimensional, dynamic, and interactive construct within the school context. The model demonstrates that resilience in educational leadership is not merely an individual attribute but rather the outcome of continuous interaction among individual, organizational, and leadership dimensions—dimensions that are simultaneously and reciprocally activated under both normal and crisis conditions.

In this model, principals' individual resilience occupies a central position and serves as the foundation for the formation of other dimensions of resilience. Characteristics such as psychological skills, flexibility, emotion regulation, and self-efficacy enhance principals' capacity to cope effectively with pressures, ambiguities, and complex challenges in the educational environment. This dimension plays an initiating role in activating resilience mechanisms at the organizational level and directly influences decision-making quality and crisis management capability.

At the organizational level, schools' organizational resilience represents the school's ability to maintain functioning, adapt, and regenerate under uncertain and changing conditions. This dimension is realized through mechanisms such as support networks, active staff participation, task redesign, and psychosocial support. The conceptual model indicates that organizational resilience is strongly influenced by principals' individual resilience and operates as a mechanism that transforms individual resilience capacities into collective outcomes, including organizational stability, reduced teacher burnout, and improved school performance.

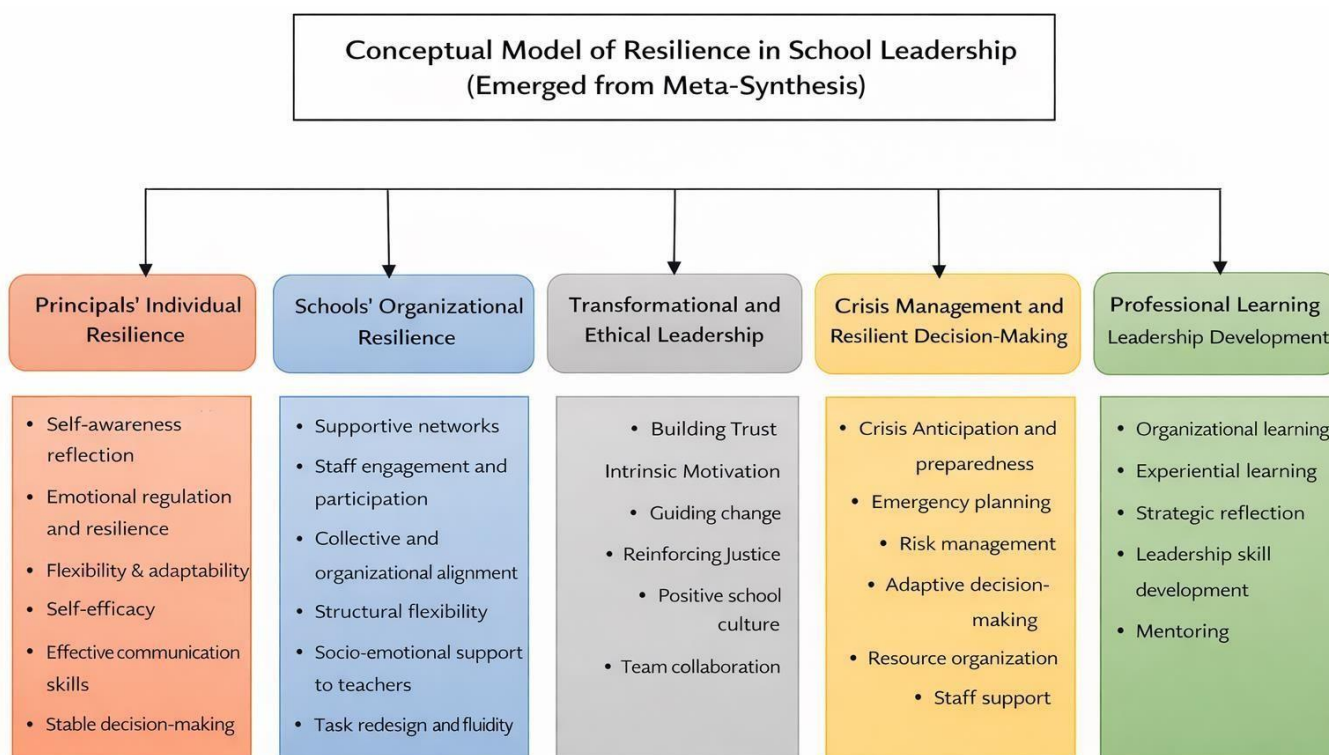
Transformational and ethical leadership assume a linking and directional role within this model. By emphasizing trust-building, intrinsic motivation, effective change leadership, and the development of a positive school culture, this form of leadership provides the necessary foundation for strengthening and institutionalizing both individual and organizational resilience. According to the model, transformational and ethical leadership not only draws upon principals' resilience but also synergistically expands the scope and depth of resilience effects across the entire organization.

Crisis management and resilient decision-making form the operational dimension of the conceptual model and illustrate how resilience capacities are enacted in practice. This dimension includes the ability to anticipate crises, make timely decisions, manage emergency situations, and dynamically adapt to rapid environmental changes. In the research model, crisis management

functions as the connecting link between individual and organizational resilience and the school’s actual performance in crisis contexts.

Finally, professional learning and leadership development operate as reinforcing and sustaining factors throughout the model. Coaching, organizational learning, reflective practice on professional experiences, and continuous development of managerial competencies enhance the resilience capacity of both principals and the school organization. This dimension ensures the long-term sustainability and dynamism of the model and enables the reproduction and enhancement of resilience in the face of future challenges.

Overall, the conceptual model of the study demonstrates that resilience in educational leadership in schools emerges from a dynamic, non-linear, and multi-level interaction among individual, organizational, and leadership dimensions. These interactions provide a coherent framework for a deeper understanding of resilience, analysis of relationships among components, and the design of effective interventions for the development of educational leadership.



**Figure 2. Conceptual Model of Resilience in Educational Leadership in Schools (Derived from the Meta-Synthesis of Studies)**

**Discussion and Conclusion**

The findings of the present meta-synthesis provide a comprehensive and integrative understanding of resilience in educational leadership by revealing how individual, organizational, and leadership dimensions interact dynamically to shape school capacity in both routine and crisis conditions. The results indicate that principals’ individual resilience constitutes the core and initiating dimension of resilient educational leadership, a finding that is strongly aligned with prior research emphasizing the central role of leaders’ psychological and emotional resources in navigating complex educational environments (3, 9). Across the analyzed studies, individual resilience consistently emerged through components such as self-

awareness, emotional regulation, flexibility, self-efficacy, and adaptive coping, which together enable principals to maintain functional decision-making and emotional stability under pressure. This supports the argument that resilience is not merely a reactive capacity but a proactive leadership resource that shapes how challenges are interpreted and addressed (4).

The results further demonstrate that individual resilience is closely associated with decision-making quality and crisis responsiveness, particularly in uncertain and high-stakes contexts. Principals with higher resilience capacities were reported to engage in more timely, reflective, and ethically grounded decisions, even when operating under incomplete information or competing demands. This finding is consistent with evidence from crisis-oriented studies conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, which showed that resilient leaders were better able to balance instructional continuity, staff well-being, and organizational stability (11, 12). The present synthesis extends these findings by showing that such decision-making capacities are not isolated skills but are embedded within a broader constellation of psychological competencies that activate resilience mechanisms at the organizational level.

At the organizational level, the findings highlight school organizational resilience as a critical mediator between principals' individual capacities and sustained school performance. Organizational resilience was consistently reflected in supportive networks, participatory structures, collective efficacy, and flexible organizational routines. This aligns with prior research demonstrating that schools with strong relational capital and collaborative cultures are better positioned to absorb shocks and adapt constructively to disruption (7, 13). Importantly, the results indicate that organizational resilience does not operate independently of leadership but is significantly shaped by principals' ability to translate personal resilience into collective practices, norms, and structures. This reinforces the view that resilience is a socially constructed and institutionally embedded capability rather than a solely individual trait (16).

The synthesis also reveals a strong relationship between organizational resilience and teacher well-being and burnout reduction. Schools characterized by high organizational resilience were reported to experience lower levels of teacher exhaustion and higher levels of professional commitment, even during prolonged crises. This finding is consistent with studies showing that supportive leadership, shared responsibility, and psychological safety serve as protective factors for teachers under stress (5, 6). By integrating these findings, the present study underscores the indirect but substantial role of resilient leadership in sustaining teacher motivation and instructional quality through organizational mechanisms rather than through individual effort alone.

A central contribution of this study lies in clarifying the role of transformational and ethical leadership as a linking and amplifying dimension within the resilience framework. The findings show that transformational leadership behaviors—such as vision articulation, empowerment, and intellectual stimulation—enhance both individual and organizational resilience by fostering shared meaning and intrinsic motivation. This is consistent with empirical evidence demonstrating that transformational leadership strengthens collective efficacy and adaptive capacity in complex school systems (7, 19). Ethical leadership further complements this process by embedding resilience within a moral framework grounded in fairness, care, and trust, which is particularly salient during crises when leaders' decisions carry heightened ethical implications (8).

The results also emphasize crisis management and resilient decision-making as the operational dimension through which resilience is enacted in practice. Effective crisis leadership was characterized by anticipatory planning, flexible resource allocation, and rapid yet reflective decision-making. These findings align with research indicating that resilient school leaders are distinguished not by the absence of uncertainty but by their capacity to manage ambiguity constructively and maintain organizational coherence (1, 2). The meta-synthesis extends this literature by demonstrating that crisis management effectiveness depends on the alignment of individual resilience, organizational structures, and leadership values rather than on procedural preparedness alone.

Another significant insight from the findings concerns the role of professional learning and leadership development as a sustaining mechanism for resilience. Leadership coaching, reflective practice, and experiential learning were repeatedly identified as processes that strengthen principals' resilience over time. This aligns with studies showing that resilience is developmental and can be cultivated through intentional learning opportunities rather than being fixed or innate (15, 23). The present synthesis highlights that professional learning operates across levels by enhancing individual coping capacities, reinforcing organizational learning cultures, and supporting the long-term sustainability of resilient leadership practices.

The findings also reveal that resilience in educational leadership is context-sensitive, shaped by cultural, political, and systemic conditions. Studies from diverse contexts—including Iran, Spain, Ethiopia, Ukraine, Saudi Arabia, and the United States—illustrate that while the core dimensions of resilience are broadly consistent, their expression and prioritization vary depending on institutional constraints and societal expectations (20-22). This supports the view that resilience models must be flexible and adaptable rather than prescriptive, allowing leaders to respond to local realities while maintaining overarching principles of adaptive and ethical leadership.

Overall, the discussion of findings demonstrates that resilience in educational leadership operates as a dynamic, multi-level system in which individual psychological capacities, organizational structures, and leadership styles interact continuously. This systemic perspective advances existing research by integrating previously fragmented findings into a coherent explanatory framework and by emphasizing the interdependence of resilience dimensions. In doing so, the study contributes to both theory development and practical understanding in educational management, offering a robust foundation for future research and leadership development initiatives (3, 24).

Despite its contributions, the present study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the meta-synthesis relied on studies published within a specific temporal and linguistic scope, which may have excluded relevant research conducted in other languages or unpublished formats. Second, although the synthesis integrated diverse methodological approaches, variations in study design and contextual focus may have influenced the interpretation and comparability of findings. Third, as with all qualitative syntheses, the results are interpretive in nature and depend on the analytical judgments of the researchers, which may introduce a degree of subjectivity despite systematic procedures.

Future research could build on the present findings by empirically testing the proposed conceptual model using quantitative or mixed-methods designs across different educational systems. Longitudinal studies would be particularly valuable for examining how resilience develops over time and how leadership interventions influence resilience trajectories. Additionally, future studies could explore the role of policy environments and governance structures in shaping organizational resilience in schools, as well as investigate resilience among different leadership roles beyond principals, such as middle leaders and instructional coaches.

From a practical perspective, educational authorities and leadership preparation programs should prioritize resilience as a core leadership competency by integrating psychological skills training, ethical decision-making, and crisis leadership into professional development curricula. Schools should invest in building organizational structures that promote collaboration, trust, and shared responsibility, thereby translating individual resilience into collective capacity. Finally, policymakers and practitioners should view resilience not as an individual burden placed on leaders but as an organizational and systemic responsibility that requires sustained support, reflective learning, and adaptive leadership cultures.

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### Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

### Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

### Ethical Considerations

All ethical principles were adhered in conducting and writing this article.

### Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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