

Midocean University

College of Management

Master of Risk Management



Enhancing organizational resilience in Saudi government entities The mediating role of business continuity planning in the relationship between national risk management frameworks and crisis response effectiveness

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Academic year:

2026

Introduction

Organizational flexibility in government entities has become a cornerstone for ensuring the sustainability of institutional performance in environments characterized by rapid change, multiple risks, and increasing reliance on digital systems and interconnected services. In Saudi Arabia, this issue is of paramount importance given the administrative, organizational, and digital transformations underway in public sector institutions. These transformations necessitate a growing need to build institutional capacities capable of preparing for risks, containing disruptions, responding effectively to crises, and restoring vital operations and services in a timely manner. Saudi Vision 2030 has emphasized the drive to enhance the efficiency of government agencies, strengthen the effectiveness of institutional performance, and build a more efficient, accountable, and capable government that can address challenges. This makes organizational flexibility a strategic objective that extends beyond mere administrative considerations to encompass ensuring the continuity of public services and safeguarding national interests.

In this context, national risk management frameworks have emerged as important regulatory tools that guide government agencies towards adopting more mature practices in identifying, analyzing, addressing and monitoring risks. The Digital Government Authority has reinforced this trend by issuing the Digital Government Risk Management and Business Continuity Controls, which aim to raise the readiness of digital government entities and enhance their ability to respond to risks and activate governance, evaluation, treatment and continuous improvement processes. The Authority also issued a guide for risk management and business continuity for the digital government to serve as a reference to help government entities comply with regulatory controls and build more consistent corporate practices with national regulatory requirements and relevant standards.

The effectiveness of risk management frameworks lies not only in their systematic existence but also in their ability to be translated into practical operational and administrative practices within government entities. Among the most important of these practices is business continuity planning, a pivotal organizational mechanism that enables institutions to identify critical activities, analyze the impacts of disruptions, develop response and recovery scenarios, and continuously test and update these plans. The Saudi guidelines for business continuity in government entities indicate that these practices aim to support entities in building procedures and processes that enhance their resilience in the face of crises and enable them to resume their services smoothly and efficiently, thus contributing to service continuity and stability.

Recent studies confirm that business continuity management is closely linked to organizational and operational resilience, and that it represents a key link between risk management and the organization's ability to withstand, adapt to and respond to crises. Recent studies have shown that business continuity management contributes to enhancing organizational resilience by providing a systematic framework for preparedness, adaptation, and recovery. Moreover, distinguishing between the concepts of risk management, business continuity, and operational and organizational resilience does not negate their interconnectedness, but rather highlights their greater effectiveness when applied within an integrated organizational framework.

In practical terms, these interconnections are gaining increasing importance within the Saudi government environment, given the unique nature of the public sector, which deals with sensitive public services, high beneficiary expectations, and stringent requirements regarding preparedness, response, and inter-agency coordination. Furthermore, the development of a comprehensive national infrastructure for emergency management and response reflects a growing interest in building a more integrated system for managing risks and crises. In this context, the effectiveness of crisis response is no longer measured solely by the speed of reaction after an event occurs, but is also linked to the degree of prior preparedness, clear roles, integrated plans, efficient communication channels, and the entity's ability to continue performing its vital functions during and after a crisis.

Despite this organizational progress, a deeper understanding of how national risk management frameworks impact crisis response effectiveness within Saudi government entities remains crucial. The relationship between these frameworks and response outcomes is not always direct; it may be influenced by internal mechanisms that explain or reinforce this impact. This highlights the importance of business continuity planning as a potential mediating variable, as it can explain how the requirements of risk management frameworks are translated from the general organizational level to actual institutional practice, and then to the outcomes level, such as improving crisis response effectiveness and enhancing organizational resilience. This approach lends the study significant scientific and applied dimensions, linking national guidelines, institutional practices, and performance outputs during crises within a comprehensive analytical model.

Accordingly, this study stems from a research interest in analyzing the relationship between national risk management frameworks and crisis response effectiveness in Saudi government entities, while also examining the mediating role of business continuity planning in this relationship. The importance of this approach lies in its contribution to a more accurate scientific understanding of the factors that enhance organizational resilience in the Saudi government sector. Furthermore, it allows for the extraction of

practical implications that can support decision-makers and government leaders in developing more efficient systems for preparedness, response, and recovery, in line with national objectives aimed at enhancing institutional readiness and achieving sustainability in the delivery of public services.

Problem Statement:

Despite the remarkable progress Saudi Arabia has made in developing national frameworks for risk management and enhancing institutional readiness within government entities, particularly in light of the Saudi Vision 2030's focus on improving the efficiency of government agencies and strengthening the reliability and sustainability of services, the government work environment continues to face increasing challenges stemming from crises, emergencies, operational disruptions, and evolving risks. This necessitates that government entities possess a higher capacity for adaptation, response, and efficient and flexible restoration of vital operations. Saudi Vision 2030 has emphasized the importance of enhancing government performance efficiency, strengthening institutional capacity to address challenges, and improving the quality of public services (Saudi Vision 2030, 2016).

In this context, national risk management frameworks have emerged as crucial organizational tools that guide government entities toward adopting more mature practices in identifying, analyzing, mitigating, and monitoring risks. The Digital Government Authority (DGA) has reinforced this trend by issuing Digital Government Risk Management and Business Continuity Controls, which aim to enhance the readiness of digital government entities and improve their ability to respond to risks, as well as activate governance, assessment, remediation, and continuous improvement processes (Digital Government Authority [DGA], 2025). The DGA has also issued guidance to support government entities in complying with these controls and building institutional practices that are more consistent with national regulatory requirements (DGA, 2024; DGA, 2023).

The effectiveness of risk management frameworks lies not merely in their existence at the systemic level, but in their ability to be translated into practical operational and administrative practices within the government entity. Among the most important of these practices is business continuity planning, a pivotal organizational mechanism that enables institutions to identify critical activities, analyze the impacts of disruptions, develop response and recovery scenarios, and continuously test and update plans. The Saudi guidelines for business continuity in government entities indicate that these practices aim to support entities in building procedures and processes that enhance their resilience in the face of crises and enable them to restore their services smoothly and flexibly, thus contributing to service continuity and strengthening institutional stability (DGA, 2023).

From a theoretical perspective, recent literature confirms that business continuity management is closely linked to organizational and operational resilience, and that it represents a crucial link between risk management and an organization's ability to withstand, adapt to, and respond to crises. De Matteis

(2023) demonstrated that business continuity management contributes to enhancing organizational resilience by providing a systematic framework for preparedness, adaptation, and recovery. Galaitsi et al. (2023) also showed that the concepts of business continuity management, operational resilience, and organizational resilience, despite their overlap, become more effective when operating within an integrated institutional framework. Furthermore, a review by Ali et al. (2023) demonstrated that business continuity practices are linked to planned and adaptive resilience and organizational performance.

On a practical level, this interconnectedness is particularly important in the Saudi government environment due to the unique nature of the public sector, which deals with sensitive public services, high beneficiary expectations, and demanding requirements for readiness, response, and inter-agency coordination. The development of the national organizational structure in the field of risk and business continuity reflects a growing interest in building a more integrated system for managing crises and operational disruptions within government entities (DGA, 2025).

Despite this organizational progress, the research challenge lies in the fact that while many government entities possess regulatory frameworks or formal risk management requirements, the impact of these frameworks on crisis response effectiveness varies from one entity to another, depending on the maturity and integration of business continuity planning with actual organizational practices. In other words, the existence of a national risk management framework does not necessarily guarantee a more effective crisis response unless clear, up-to-date, testable, and implementable business continuity plans are in place within the government entity (General Directorate of Public Administration, 2024; General Directorate of Public Administration, 2025).

This variation represents the starting point of the study's problem. Although the Saudi national framework strongly encourages the standardization of risk management and business continuity practices and enhances the preparedness of government entities, research evidence directly addressing the mediating role of business continuity planning in the relationship between national risk management frameworks and crisis response effectiveness in Saudi government entities remains limited, particularly within a framework that links these variables under the umbrella of organizational resilience. Therefore, this study addresses the need to clarify how national risk management frameworks contribute to enhancing institutional resilience in Saudi government entities, and whether business continuity planning plays an effective mediating role in strengthening the relationship between these frameworks and effective crisis response. This aligns with the general national direction towards raising the level of institutional readiness, enhancing the efficiency of government performance, and ensuring the sustainability of public services (Saudi Vision 2030, 2016; General Directorate of Administration, 2025).

Significance of the Study:

First: Theoretical Significance

This study derives its theoretical significance from addressing a modern and interconnected topic in public administration: enhancing organizational resilience in government entities. This is achieved by linking national risk management frameworks with crisis response effectiveness, while incorporating business continuity planning as a mediating variable. The value of this approach lies in its avoidance of isolating variables; instead, it offers an interpretive framework for the relationship between them, thus providing a deeper theoretical dimension to understanding the mechanisms for building organizational resilience within the public sector (De Matteis, 2023; Galaitis et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the study contributes to enriching the Arabic and Saudi literature in the field of risk management, business continuity, and organizational resilience. Much of the available literature has focused on private institutions or on general conceptual approaches, while studies addressing this complex relationship within Saudi government entities remain limited. Therefore, this study contributes to scientific knowledge by employing a conceptual framework that links national risk orientations with organizational practices and operational outcomes during crises (DGA, 2024; DGA, 2025).

Its theoretical significance also stems from its ability to clarify the role that business continuity planning can play in explaining the transfer of the impact of risk management frameworks from the general organizational level to the level of actual organizational effectiveness during crises. This contributes to supporting the theoretical framework that the existence of policies and controls alone is insufficient; rather, their impact is enhanced through clear and integrated implementation and planning mechanisms (De Matteis, 2023).

Secondly: Applied Significance

The applied significance of this study stems from its direct relevance to the needs of Saudi government entities in the area of enhancing organizational readiness and improving the ability to deal with crises and operational disruptions. Saudi Vision 2030 has emphasized the importance of developing government performance, raising the efficiency of public agencies, and enhancing their ability to provide sustainable and high-quality services. This makes studying the factors affecting organizational resilience and crisis response of significant practical importance for decision-makers and government leaders (Saudi Vision 2030, 2016).

The study's findings can also benefit government entities in understanding the importance of business continuity planning as a practical tool for translating risk management framework requirements into actionable procedures. This contributes to identifying critical activities, analyzing the impact of disruptions, developing response and recovery plans, and enhancing institutional preparedness. National guidelines issued by the Digital Government Authority (DGA) have clarified that business continuity guidelines aim to help government entities build procedures and processes that increase their resilience in the face of crises and enable them to restore their services smoothly and efficiently (Digital Government Authority [DGA], 2023). Furthermore, the study's practical importance is evident in the potential for policymakers and regulatory bodies to utilize its findings when developing guidelines, controls, and implementation models related to risk management and business continuity in the public sector. The Digital Government Authority's guidance aims to support government entities in complying with the Digital Government's risk management and business continuity controls, improving the efficiency and effectiveness of procedures, and fostering a culture of risk management and business continuity within government agencies (DGA, 2025).

Finally, this study may help administrative leaders in Saudi government entities make more effective decisions regarding enhancing preparedness, developing contingency plans, and increasing the integration between risk management and business continuity. This will lead to faster crisis response, reduced impact, and improved continuity of public services. This aligns with the overall national direction towards building a more efficient, resilient, and prepared government to face future risks and challenges (Saudi Vision 2030, 2016; DGA, 2024).

Study Objectives:

Main Objective: To identify the role of business continuity planning in enhancing organizational resilience in Saudi government entities, by examining its mediating role in the relationship between national risk management frameworks and crisis response effectiveness.

Sub-Objectives:

1. To identify the level of implementation of national risk management frameworks in Saudi government entities.
2. To measure the level of business continuity planning in Saudi government entities.
3. To examine the impact of national risk management frameworks on crisis response effectiveness in Saudi government entities.
4. To examine the mediating role of business continuity planning in the relationship between national risk management frameworks and crisis response effectiveness.

Research Questions

Main Question: What role does business continuity planning play in enhancing organizational resilience in Saudi government entities, through its mediating role in the relationship between national risk management frameworks and crisis response effectiveness?

Sub-questions:

1. What is the level of implementation of national risk management frameworks in Saudi government entities?
2. What is the level of business continuity planning in Saudi government entities?
3. What is the impact of national risk management frameworks on crisis response effectiveness in Saudi government entities?
4. Does business continuity planning play a mediating role in the relationship between national risk management frameworks and crisis response effectiveness in Saudi government entities?

Study Hypotheses:

Main Hypothesis: Business continuity planning plays a statistically significant mediating role in the relationship between national risk management frameworks and crisis response effectiveness in Saudi government entities.

Sub-hypotheses:

1. National risk management frameworks have a statistically significant effect on crisis response effectiveness in Saudi government entities.
2. National risk management frameworks have a statistically significant effect on business continuity planning in Saudi government entities.
3. Business continuity planning has a statistically significant effect on crisis response effectiveness in Saudi government entities.
4. Business continuity planning plays a statistically significant mediating role in the relationship between national risk management frameworks and crisis response effectiveness in Saudi government entities.

Previous Studies:

Recent literature has addressed business continuity management and its relationship to risk management, organizational resilience, and crisis response from multiple perspectives. However, most studies have focused either on the relationship between business continuity and organizational performance, or on organizational resilience as a general outcome, without clearly examining the mediating role of business continuity planning in the Saudi government environment. The following is a review of the most prominent related studies:

The study by Al Ameri and Musa (2021), titled "The Impact of Business Continuity Management on the Performance of Public Organizations in the UAE," aimed to examine the relationship between business continuity management and performance in public organizations in the United Arab Emirates. The study employed a quantitative approach, focusing on variables such as management support, external requirements, organizational readiness, and risk management within the context of public organizations. Its findings demonstrated a positive relationship between business continuity practices and improved performance in public organizations, supporting the idea that proactive preparation and structured planning contribute to enhanced performance during disruptions. While this study contributes to current research on the link between business continuity and organizational performance outcomes in the government sector, it did not address the mediating role of business continuity planning within a model that links national risk management frameworks to effective crisis response.

De Matteis's 2023 study, "Business Continuity Management and Organizational Resilience: A Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) Perspective," examined the relationship between business continuity management and organizational resilience from both theoretical and applied perspectives. The study concluded that business continuity management is a crucial mechanism for enhancing organizational resilience, as it helps organizations prepare, respond, and recover more effectively. This study is relevant to the current research because it provides a clear theoretical foundation for the relationship between business continuity and organizational resilience. However, it was conducted in a context different from the public sector and did not examine the relationship with national risk management frameworks or the effectiveness of crisis response in the Saudi Arabian context.

The study by Ali et al. (2023), titled "Systematic Literature Review of Business Continuity Management (BCM) Practices: Integrating Organisational Resilience and Performance," is a systematic review that aimed to analyze research trends in business continuity management and demonstrate its relationship to organizational resilience and performance. The study indicated that business continuity management

is a strategic practice that helps organizations respond effectively to crises and mitigate the effects of unforeseen events. It also confirmed that the literature supports a growing correlation between business continuity practices and both organizational performance and resilience. This study contributes to the current research by confirming the theoretical dimension linking business continuity and resilience. However, it remains a general review that does not focus on Saudi government entities or the mediating role of business continuity planning in the relationship between risk and response.

The study by Boudi and Alshaikhmubarak (2024), titled "Business Continuity and Sustainability in Government Organisations," is one of the studies most closely related to the current research topic. It aimed to examine the impact of business continuity management practices on the organizational performance of government entities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The study relied on an online questionnaire distributed to 200 participants in Saudi Arabia. The results showed a significant correlation between business continuity management practices and both planned resilience and adaptive resilience, as well as organizational performance. This study strongly supports the current research because it confirms the importance of business continuity in the Saudi governmental context. However, it focused on organizational performance as an outcome variable and did not directly examine the effectiveness of crisis response, nor did it study national risk management frameworks as an independent variable or the mediating role of business continuity planning.

The study by Cedergren and Hassel (2025), titled "Business Continuity Management in Public Sector Organizations: Development, Challenges, and Ways Forward," focused on business continuity management in public sector organizations, discussing its development, challenges, and future trends. The significance of this study lies in its explicit focus on the public sector and its demonstration that business continuity management has become increasingly important in public organizations to ensure the continuity of essential functions and services during crises. The current study benefits from this paper in supporting the governmental context of the research topic, but it tends towards a general analytical character and did not provide a field test in the Saudi environment of the relationships between risk management frameworks, business continuity planning, and crisis response effectiveness.

The study by Ali et al. (2025), titled "Beyond Crisis: The Critical Role of Business Continuity Management Practices in Shaping Adaptive and Planned Resilience," explored the relationship between business continuity management practices and adaptive and planned resilience. Its findings confirmed that business continuity practices play a crucial role in shaping an organization's ability to proactively and strategically adapt to disruptions, reinforcing the view that business continuity planning is not merely an operational tool but a strategic mechanism for enhancing preparedness and resilience. While this current

study supports the explanatory dimension of the expected mediating role of business continuity planning, it does not focus on Saudi government entities or on crisis response effectiveness as a direct dependent variable.

Review of Previous Studies

Previous studies indicate a general consensus on the positive relationship between business continuity management and organizational resilience and institutional performance in various environments. Furthermore, some studies in the public sector have emphasized the importance of business continuity in enhancing organizational preparedness and ensuring the continuity of core functions during crises. Recent Saudi studies also demonstrate that business continuity practices are linked to planned and adaptive resilience within government entities. However, previous studies, to the best of their ability, have not provided a comprehensive empirical model that examines the mediating role of business continuity planning in the relationship between national risk management frameworks and crisis response effectiveness in Saudi government entities. This gap is what the current study seeks to address.

Distinguishing Features of the Current Study from Previous Studies

The current study differs from previous studies in that it:

1. Focuses on Saudi government entities as a direct application context.
2. Links national risk management frameworks and crisis response effectiveness within a single model.
3. Examines business continuity planning as a mediating variable, rather than simply an independent or descriptive variable.
4. It addresses organizational flexibility as the conceptual framework governing the relationship between variables.

Theoretical Foundations of the Study:

This study is based on a key theoretical assumption: that organizational resilience in government entities does not spontaneously develop during crises, but rather is built gradually through the integration of organizational frameworks, risk management practices, proactive business continuity planning mechanisms, and efficient response and recovery. In the Saudi context, this perspective aligns with national objectives that emphasize building a more efficient, effective, and prepared government, and improving the reliability and continuity of government services. This constitutes a general theoretical foundation for the current study (Saudi Vision 2030, 2016; Digital Government Authority [DGA], 2025).

The first premise of the study is based on the enterprise risk management approach, which views risks as an inherent element of the organizational environment. This approach necessitates identifying, analyzing, evaluating, and addressing risks within a structured governance framework. According to this approach, national risk management frameworks are not merely organizational documents, but rather a guiding system that helps government entities enhance their preparedness, improve decision-making processes, and reduce the likelihood of disruption and losses during crises. The regulatory guidelines issued by the Digital Government Authority indicate that the digital government's risk management and business continuity controls aim to enhance the maturity of institutional practices, promote the continuity of digital government services, and improve the user experience (DGA, 2025).

The second premise is based on business continuity theory, which posits that an organization is more resilient when it pre-identifies its critical functions, analyzes the impact of disruptions, and develops clear plans for response, recovery, and communication during crises. According to the Saudi guidelines, business continuity management aims to establish standards and plans for incident preparedness and ensure effective controls and capabilities for managing crises and disruptions, enabling the government entity to continue or restore its operations within acceptable timeframes (DGA, 2022, 2023). Therefore, business continuity planning in this study is not viewed merely as an operational procedure, but as a strategic mechanism that links risk management requirements with the outcomes of actual response during crises. Related to this is the third approach, the perspective of organizational resilience, which focuses on an organization's ability to prepare for, absorb, adapt to, recover from, and learn from disruptions. Recent literature clarifies that organizational resilience does not simply mean returning to the previous state after a crisis, but also includes maintaining vital functions during disruption, adapting to changes, and enhancing future crisis management capabilities. In this context, De Matteis (2023) argues that business continuity management is one of the most effective organizational processes for supporting organizational resilience because it provides a systematic framework for preparedness,

continuity, and recovery. Galaitsi et al. (2023) also explained that business continuity management, operational resilience, and organizational resilience are interconnected concepts and become more effective when understood within an integrated framework that combines risk management with operations during both normal and crisis conditions.

The theoretical framework of this study also stems from the premise that effective crisis response represents the most prominent practical outcome of integrating these elements. The effectiveness of a response depends not only on the existence of national directives or regulations, but also on the extent to which these directives are translated into realistic plans, periodic testing, clear roles, effective communication channels, and implementable recovery procedures. Therefore, this study posits that the relationship between national risk management frameworks and crisis response effectiveness is not merely direct, but can be enhanced through business continuity planning as an intermediary variable that explains how the impact of regulatory frameworks is translated into practical organizational practice (DGA, 2025; De Matteis, 2023).

Accordingly, the current study is based on an integrated theoretical framework that combines risk management, business continuity, and organizational resilience perspectives to demonstrate that Saudi government entities are better equipped to respond effectively to crises when national risk management frameworks are activated within structured organizational practices, with business continuity planning being a primary component. From this perspective, enhancing organizational resilience is understood as the result of the interaction of three interrelated levels: the level of national and organizational guidance, the level of corporate business continuity planning, and the level of response and recovery during crises.

The theoretical foundations of the study can be summarized in four pillars:

1. National risk management frameworks represent the organizational basis that guides government entities toward preparedness for risks and crises (DGA, 2025).
2. Business continuity planning represents the implementation tool that translates risk management requirements into practical plans and procedures (DGA, 2022, 2023).
3. The effectiveness of crisis response is a practical indicator of the extent to which an entity succeeds in activating planning and institutional readiness (DGA, 2025).
4. Organizational resilience represents the end result of integrating risk management, business continuity, and effective response (De Matteis, 2023; Galaitsi et al., 2023).

Methodology and Research Methods:

The descriptive analytical approach is the most suitable for this study, as it helps to describe the reality of national risk management frameworks, business continuity planning, and crisis response effectiveness in Saudi government agencies, and then to analyze the relationships between these variables and test the mediating role.

Study Population:

All employees in Saudi government entities who are involved in risk management, business continuity, crisis management, or organizational preparedness.

Study Sample:

A suitable sample of employees in Saudi government entities, selected in accordance with the nature and objectives of the study.

Study Tools:

A questionnaire will be used in this study, as it is the most suitable for measuring the opinions of the sample members regarding:

1. The level of implementation of national risk management frameworks
2. The level of business continuity planning
3. The level of effectiveness of crisis response
4. The level of organizational resilience

Study Scope:

Subjective Scope

This study is limited to investigating the enhancement of organizational resilience in Saudi government entities by analyzing the relationship between national risk management frameworks and crisis response effectiveness, with a focus on business continuity planning as a mediating variable in this relationship.

Human Scope

The study is limited to employees in Saudi government entities, including administrative leaders, supervisors, and staff involved in risk management, business continuity, and crisis management, or whose tasks relate to organizational readiness and crisis response.

Geographical Scope

This study is applied within government entities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Temporal Scope

The study is limited to the period during which data collection and fieldwork are conducted.

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