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Teaching guidelines

Understanding Women's Entrepreneurial Resilience in Central Europe

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Material information

This teaching material introduces the concept of entrepreneurial resilience in the context of the contemporary polycrisis, emphasizing the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in Central and Eastern Europe. Developed primarily for bachelor's students in management, entrepreneurship, and international business, the material begins by explaining the notion of polycrisis as a convergence of geopolitical, economic, technological, and social disruptions that increasingly shape business environments. It discusses how resilience can be understood from multiple perspectives - individual, organizational, and societal - and highlights the unique role of entrepreneurs as actors operating at the intersection of these dimensions.

To provide a practical context for theoretical discussion, the material focuses on women entrepreneurs, examining how entrepreneurship intersects with gender-specific opportunities and barriers. Students are introduced to the major challenges affecting women-owned businesses, including access to finance, networking opportunities, gender stereotypes, work-life balance, and technological capabilities. These issues are presented as important contextual factors influencing entrepreneurial resilience and business adaptation during periods of sustained uncertainty.

The resource further explores the theoretical foundations of entrepreneurial resilience by integrating the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Dynamic Capabilities Theory. Students learn how organizational resources, particularly human and technological capabilities, contribute to the development of dynamic capabilities such as sensing, seizing, and reconfiguring opportunities in rapidly changing environments. Rather than focusing exclusively on theoretical concepts, the material demonstrates how these frameworks can be translated into empirical research examining resilience under conditions of environmental turbulence.

A substantial part of the material is devoted to presenting an empirical research study conducted among 1,113 women entrepreneurs in Germany, Poland, and Slovakia. Using Covariance-Based Structural Equation Modelling (CB-SEM) as an illustrative methodological example, the material demonstrates how complex relationships between digital capabilities, collaboration, dynamic capabilities, leadership identity, and entrepreneurial resilience can be investigated. The emphasis is placed on research design, model development, hypothesis testing, and interpretation of structural relationships rather than on statistical computations alone.

The teaching resource concludes by discussing the practical implications of the research findings. Students learn that entrepreneurial resilience is shaped not only by digital technologies but also by collaboration, adaptive strategic capabilities, and leadership characteristics associated with women entrepreneurs. By combining conceptual foundations with a contemporary empirical case, the material enables learners to understand how resilience can be developed and studied in highly uncertain environments characterized by overlapping crises.

While designed primarily for undergraduate courses in entrepreneurship, strategic management, international business, and business fundamentals, the material can also serve as supplementary content for bachelor's modules in innovation management, sustainability, organizational behavior, and gender and diversity in business.

Learning objectives and outcomes

This teaching material focuses on entrepreneurial resilience in the context of the contemporary polycrisis, examining how women entrepreneurs develop the capabilities needed to adapt, respond, and thrive in environments characterized by overlapping economic, geopolitical, technological, and social disruptions. Its core objective is to help students understand the theoretical foundations of entrepreneurial resilience, the role of digital and human capabilities, and the contribution of dynamic capabilities to organizational adaptation. Through the integration of conceptual frameworks and an empirical research example, the material demonstrates how resilience can be studied in contemporary management research while encouraging students to critically evaluate the factors that enable businesses to navigate uncertainty and sustain long-term competitiveness.

Learning outcomes are categorized as follows:

Knowledge

- Student is able to explain the concept of entrepreneurial resilience and its importance in the context of a polycrisis.
- Student is able to describe the main barriers and opportunities influencing women entrepreneurs in contemporary business environments.
- Student is able to identify the key theoretical frameworks, including the Resource-Based View and Dynamic Capabilities Theory, used to explain organizational resilience.

Skills

- Student is able to analyze the factors influencing entrepreneurial resilience using theoretical concepts and empirical research findings.
- Student is able to interpret the relationships between digital capabilities, collaboration, dynamic capabilities, and organizational resilience.
- Student is able to evaluate how contemporary business challenges affect entrepreneurial decision-making and organizational adaptation.

Social Competences

- Student is able to recognize the importance of resilience, adaptability, and continuous learning in responding to complex business challenges.
- Student is able to demonstrate awareness of the social and ethical dimensions of entrepreneurship, including the challenges and contributions of women entrepreneurs in rapidly changing environments.

Overview

The provided teaching materials - comprising a PowerPoint presentation and a video lecture - are designed to support undergraduate instruction in entrepreneurship, management, and international business, with a particular focus on entrepreneurial resilience in the context of the contemporary polycrisis. Both materials follow an identical structure, allowing instructors to deliver the content either during classroom sessions or through asynchronous learning formats.

The lecture begins by introducing the concept of a polycrisis, explaining how overlapping geopolitical, economic, technological, and social disruptions have transformed the contemporary business environment. It discusses different perspectives on resilience - from individuals and organizations to societies and governments - and explains why entrepreneurs occupy a unique position in responding to uncertainty. Particular attention is given to women entrepreneurs, whose experiences illustrate the interaction between entrepreneurial opportunities and gender-specific challenges.

The next section examines entrepreneurial resilience from both practical and theoretical perspectives. Students are introduced to the key dimensions of resilience, including psychological resilience, strategic flexibility, resource orchestration, and capability development. The lecture also discusses the barriers commonly faced by women entrepreneurs, such as limited access to finance, networking opportunities, technological resources, and persistent gender stereotypes, demonstrating how these factors influence business adaptation during periods of disruption.

The core section presents the theoretical foundations of entrepreneurial resilience by integrating the RBV and Dynamic Capabilities Theory. Students learn how organizational resources - particularly human and technological capabilities - support the development of sensing, seizing, and reconfiguring capabilities, enabling firms to respond effectively to rapidly changing environments. Rather than presenting these theories in isolation, the material demonstrates how they complement one another in explaining resilience as a dynamic organizational capability.

The lecture subsequently introduces an empirical research study conducted among 1,113 women entrepreneurs operating in Germany, Poland, and Slovakia. Students are guided through the research design, including the formulation of research questions, conceptual model development, and the application of Covariance-Based Structural Equation Modelling (CB-SEM) to examine the relationships between digital capabilities, collaboration, dynamic capabilities, leadership identity, and entrepreneurial resilience. The emphasis is placed on understanding research design, hypothesis testing, and interpretation of findings rather than on statistical calculations.

The session concludes by discussing the practical implications of the research findings. Students learn how digital collaboration, strategic adaptability, and dynamic capabilities contribute to organizational resilience, while also recognizing the importance of inclusive leadership and the unique strengths of women entrepreneurs. Through the integration of contemporary theory and empirical evidence, the lecture demonstrates how businesses can develop resilience and sustain competitiveness in an increasingly uncertain and rapidly changing environment.

Pre-lecture preparation

No pre-lecture preparation is required. The teaching material is designed as a self-contained introduction to entrepreneurial resilience in the context of a polycrisis and provides all key concepts, theoretical foundations, and empirical examples needed to follow the lecture. While a basic understanding of management and entrepreneurship may facilitate comprehension, the lecture introduces all essential terminology and frameworks, making it fully accessible to undergraduate students without prior preparation.

Suggested usage

The provided teaching materials can be used both in traditional classroom settings and as asynchronous learning resources, allowing students to engage with the content at their own pace. The combination of a presentation and a recorded lecture gives instructors flexibility in how the material is incorporated into undergraduate courses in entrepreneurship, management, and international business.

The material is best used as an introductory module to topics related to entrepreneurial resilience, business adaptation, and strategic management in uncertain environments. It provides students with a conceptual understanding of resilience, polycrisis, and the theoretical foundations of organizational adaptation before they engage with more advanced topics in entrepreneurship, innovation, or strategic management.

Depending on the course structure, the content can be delivered during a single lecture session as an overview of entrepreneurial resilience or spread across multiple classes. In the latter case, individual sections can be supplemented with discussions on women entrepreneurship, digital transformation, dynamic capabilities, business adaptation, and the interpretation of empirical research findings.

Because the lecture combines contemporary theoretical perspectives with a real-world empirical study, it provides students with both conceptual knowledge and practical insights into how resilience can be examined in management research. This flexibility makes the material suitable for undergraduate courses in entrepreneurship, strategic management, international business, organizational behavior, and innovation management, where students are expected to understand and critically discuss the factors influencing organizational resilience in rapidly changing business environments.

Engagement activities

This lecture can be supplemented with a range of interactive activities designed to enhance student engagement and deepen understanding of the topic. These activities are flexible and can be used either before the lecture to activate prior knowledge, or after to reinforce key concepts and encourage critical thinking. They are suitable for both live and asynchronous teaching formats.

Activity	**Description**
Mapping resilience drivers	**Objective:** To help students identify and categorize the factors that contribute to entrepreneurial resilience during a polycrisis. **Activity**: Students work in small groups to create a mind map of the factors influencing entrepreneurial resilience. They classify the factors into categories such as psychological, strategic, technological, organizational, and environmental, using examples from the lecture. After presenting their maps, groups compare similarities and differences, discussing which factors are most critical for business survival in times of uncertainty.
Women entrepreneurs in a polycrisis - case discussion	**Objective:** To develop students' ability to apply theoretical concepts to real-world entrepreneurial challenges. **Activity:** Students are presented with a short case describing a woman entrepreneur facing multiple disruptions (e.g., supply chain interruptions, inflation, labor shortages, or digital transformation). Working in small groups, they identify the main challenges, discuss which dynamic capabilities (sensing, seizing, or reconfiguring) are required, and propose practical strategies for increasing resilience. Each group presents its recommendations and justifies them using concepts introduced during the lecture.
Resilience strategy workshop	**Objective**: To encourage students to develop practical solutions for enhancing organizational resilience. **Activity:** Each group assumes the role of a management team responsible for improving the resilience of a small or medium-sized enterprise operating in a polycrisis environment. Based on the lecture, students prepare a short resilience strategy that includes actions related to digital capabilities, collaboration, resource management, and leadership. The activity concludes with a class discussion comparing the proposed strategies and evaluating their feasibility.

Post-lecture activities

Depending on the depth at which entrepreneurial resilience was discussed during the lecture, a natural follow-up activity is to explore how resilience strategies differ across organizational contexts. Students can compare the challenges faced by entrepreneurs, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and large corporations during periods of polycrisis, considering differences in resource availability, organizational flexibility, decision-making processes, and capacity to respond to external shocks. This comparison encourages students to critically reflect on how organizational characteristics shape resilience.

Another valuable extension is to investigate cross-country differences in entrepreneurial resilience. Students can examine how institutional environments, public policies, digital infrastructure, economic development, or cultural factors influence the ability of entrepreneurs to adapt to crises in different countries. Such discussions help students appreciate that resilience is shaped not only by firm-level capabilities but also by the broader national and regional context.

Students may also explore women's entrepreneurship in greater depth by examining the structural barriers and opportunities influencing women-owned businesses. Possible topics include access to finance, professional networking, leadership styles, work-life balance, digital transformation, and the role of public support programs. Comparing the experiences of women and men entrepreneurs across different industries or countries can further enhance students' understanding of diversity and inclusion in entrepreneurship.

As a final activity, students can select a contemporary business disruption—such as artificial intelligence, geopolitical tensions, climate-related risks, or supply chain disruptions—and analyze how different entrepreneurial capabilities contribute to resilience in that context. This exercise reinforces the importance of connecting theoretical concepts with real-world challenges while encouraging students to critically evaluate strategies for building resilient organizations.