



## **Organization Theory and Alignment of Organizations' Structure to Their Environment**

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# Organization Theory and Alignment of Organizations' Structure to Their Environment

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore how various schools of thought in organizational theory can assist organizations in highlighting the challenges they face and prescribing suitable structures to deal with those challenges. The research methodology used for this study was a literature review. The researcher reviewed the literature on organizational theory, with a focus on the various schools of thought that exist within this field. The researcher also reviewed the literature on the challenges facing organizations in the modern world. The findings of the study suggest that the various schools of thought in organizational theory can offer valuable insights into the challenges facing organizations and the means by which to deal with them. The researcher found that the following schools of thought are particularly relevant to the challenges facing organizations in the modern world: Contingency theory argues that the most effective organizational structure is contingent on the specific environment in which the organization operates. Resource-based view argues that organizations should structure themselves in a way that maximizes their use of their unique resources and capabilities. Institutional theory argues that organizations are influenced by the institutions in their environment, such as the legal system and the culture. The conclusion of the study is that organizations can benefit from considering the various schools of thought in organizational theory when designing their structures. By doing so, organizations can better align their structures with the challenges they face and the goals they seek to achieve. The researcher recommends that organizations use a contingency approach when designing their structures. This means that organizations should consider the specific environment in which they operate, as well as their unique resources and capabilities, when making decisions about their structure. Organizations should also be aware of the institutional factors that may influence their structure.

**Keywords:** Organization Theory, Alignment, Organizations Structure, Environment

## 1.0 Introduction

In the modern dynamic and competitive business landscape, aligning the structure of an organization with the environment in which it operates and the goals it seeks to achieve has become vital to determining that enterprise's level of success (Daft et al., 2017). According to research conducted by Jones et al. in 2020, companies that successfully adjust their organizational structures to the unique circumstances of their operations have higher levels of both overall performance and adaptability. Organizations are able to get beneficial insights into the difficult circumstances they are confronted with and the means by which to deal with them by taking into consideration the various schools of thought that exist within organizational theory. These schools of thought offer diverse viewpoints on the structure and design of organizations. The environment in which an enterprise functions is one of the most important factors in determining the structure of its organizational hierarchy. According to Wang et al., (2019), developments in technology, increased globalization, and changes in the regulatory framework can significantly affect the ability of a corporate firm to accomplish its goals. It may be possible for organizations that need to align their structures with the external environment to traverse such hurdles and pass over opportunities for growth and competitiveness (Daft et al., 2017). As a result, companies have an obligation to comprehend the impact of their environment on the structure of their organizations and to align themselves effectively with the dynamic operational environment. It is essential to maximize overall performance and make progress toward strategic goals by aligning the organizational structure with the objectives of the organization. Organizational structure, according to Daft, is a framework that specifies formal reporting connections, including the hierarchy's leveling and the authority given to managers and supervisors. In essence, the division of people into departments and divisions into the entire organization is known as the organization structure. Systems that are utilized to promote efficient communication, collaboration, and integration of work across departments are designed as part of a successful organizational structure (Daft et al., 2017).

According to the findings of an investigation conducted by Rajagopal et al. (2022), there is a close connection between strategic alignment and the effectiveness of organizational structures. When the structure of an organization helps it achieve its goals, it improves the organization's overall performance, as well as its internal coordination and communication, which in turn leads to an enhanced standard of performance (Daft et al., 2017). Organizational theories come in a wide variety of schools of thought. These theories can provide businesses with insights that can help them understand the difficulties they face and develop an appropriate organizational structure. According to Wren & Bedeian (2020), the classical school of management, which has its origins in the writings of thinkers such as Max Weber, places an emphasis on the relevance of hierarchical structures and clear lines of authority in order to improve performance and organizational efficiency. This school of thought may, on the other hand, encounter additional obstacles in contexts that are dynamic and unpredictable, where bureaucratic structures might inhibit agility and response. On the other hand, the human relations school of thought emphasizes the importance of interpersonal relationships and employee happiness as key components that contribute to the success of a business (Mishra & Alzoubi, 2023). It brings to light the need for processes that are geared toward groups and decision-making methods that encourage participation. However, businesses that implement this strategy may encounter additional challenging circumstances when attempting to strike a balance between the demands of individuals and the overarching goals of the firm. According to Joseph et al. (2018), contingency theory recognizes the influence that

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external factors have on organizational structure and places an emphasis on the necessity of adapting the structure to the specific conditions of the environment.

The contingency theory provides a framework for identifying potentially problematic situations and prescribing relevant structural alterations to deal with them. This framework is presented through an analysis of the contexts in which business enterprises operate. However, businesses may require assistance in adapting their structures to changing circumstances and maintaining the optimal alignment in order to be successful. In addition, systems theory views organizations as intricate structures made up of interconnected parts, placing an emphasis on the significance of feedback, adaptation, and flexibility (Mašić et al., 2022). It provides illuminating perspectives on how to handle complexities and interdependencies. On the other hand, businesses may additionally have difficulties in appropriately enforcing and managing the interconnected components of their structures. The degree to which an organization's structure is aligned with its environment and goals is a significant factor in determining the degree to which the company will achieve its goals and be successful (Daft et al., 2017). Organizations are able to gain useful insights into their difficulties and expand appropriate structures to cope with them if they think about the various schools of thought that exist within organizational theory. Organizations are able to optimize their organizational structure, improve their performance, and increase their agility by better understanding the effect of the environment, strategic alignment, and the interaction between different schools of thought (Daft, 2016). This allows businesses to compete successfully in an ever-evolving business landscape.

The external elements and situations that have an effect on the operations and operations of an organization are referred to as the environment in which the organization functions. It takes into account the business sector, the dynamics of the marketplace, the technology advancements, the legal framework, the socio-cultural variables, and the competitive environment. It is crucial to have a solid understanding of the operational environment in which the organization functions since this provides insights into the hard situations and potential outcomes the company may face. The surrounding environment has a significant bearing on the overall performance of the company. For example, advances in technology have the potential to upend conventional approaches to conducting business and open the door to new avenues for innovation (Daft, 2016). Competition is increased as new markets are opened up as a result of globalization. The changing of regulations may necessitate that organizations modify their procedures in order to maintain compliance. It is possible for a firm to fail to achieve its goals and to maintain its competitive edge if it does not comprehend and adapt to the various aspects of its environment. It is vital, in order to achieve the desired outcomes, to align the organizational structure with the goals of the firm. Within an organization, responsibilities, functions, and obligations are organized according to the structure of the organization, which determines the structure. It is possible to improve communication, collaboration, and productivity by ensuring that the organizational structure is in line with the goals. For instance, a company that wants to stimulate innovation and agility can also adopt a more decentralized and flexible organizational structure. This will allow for quicker decision-making and will empower people from a variety of different perspectives. On the other hand, an organization that values free leadership could also adopt a structure that is more centralized and hierarchical in order to simplify processes and achieve economies of scale. When the organizational structure of a company is aligned with its goals, it ensures that the company's

resources and abilities are utilized in the most effective manner possible to support the company's strategic direction.

Both the methodology and the overall results are intricately connected to the organizational structure in question. The structure provides the framework within which the method is carried out. A structure that is properly aligned helps with the implementation of key projects, assists with the allocation of resources in a way that is efficient and beneficial and increases collaboration across a variety of features and departments. For instance, a company that wants to differentiate itself from competitors by providing superior customer service can devise an organizational structure that gives frontline personnel the authority to make decisions and supplies specialized research. In contrast, overall performance can be hindered by a structure that either makes it more difficult to carry out a procedure or is not aligned correctly with it. Inefficiencies, poor response, and missed opportunities may be the result of inconsistent communication, a lack of coordination, and bureaucratic processes. Therefore, it is essential to connect the structure with the approach to maximize performance and progress toward strategic objectives.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

In today's fast-paced and ever-changing business environment, a company's organizational structure must be in harmony with its surroundings in order to remain viable and adaptable (Daft et al., 2017). Several empirical studies have looked into how the organization theory can help firms achieve this alignment. The key findings and insights from empirical research are summarized in this review of the relevant literature. The contingency theory states that the external environment should be considered when determining the optimal organizational structure. Researchers have used empirical methods to investigate how organizations can adapt their structures to the conditions of their surroundings. Khandwalla (1972) conducted a study on how organizations adapt their organizational structure to varying degrees of environmental uncertainty. He discovered that groups tend to become more hierarchical. The study concluded that companies dealing with excessive uncertainty require more organic systems characterized by decentralization and variable roles. The Resource Dependence Theory emphasizes the importance of successfully managing one's interactions with external resource dependencies. The goal of this empirical research was to look into the organizational structures that organizations use to manage their aid dependencies and ensure that they are in sync with their surroundings.

Ranson et al. (1980) confirmed that government agencies are actively looking for ways to gain control over critical resources. This has resulted in specific structural changes, such as the formation of alliances and joint ventures, among other possibilities. Institutional theory is the study of how organizations behave in response to social norms and expectations. Empirical research has focused on aligning a company's structure to promote legitimacy and societal acceptance. Meyer and Rowan (1977), for example, concluded that in order to achieve legitimacy and ensure their own survival, organizations should model their success on the success systems of their surroundings. Population ecology theory studies the birth, survival, and death of organizations within an ecological framework. Within the confines of this theoretical framework, a number of studies have looked into how organizations change their organizational structure to accommodate a specific demographic or ecological niche. Hannan and Freeman (1977) conducted a seminal study that showed how organizations with similar structures have a better chance of surviving and thriving in a specific ecological area of interest. Organizational learning theory studies how



organizations acquire and apply expert knowledge to improve their structure and overall performance. Empirical research was conducted to investigate the role that becoming familiar with mechanisms plays in aiding structural alignment. Levitt and March's 1988 study highlighted the importance of organizational routines and learning strategies in the process of adapting structures to changes in the surrounding environment (Annosi et al., 2020).

Empirical research that applies organization theory to the process of aligning organizational structure with its environment can help both researchers and practitioners. While contingency theory emphasizes the importance of adaptability and flexibility, resource dependence theory emphasizes managing a system's external dependencies (Phonkaew, 2001). The institutional approach prioritizes legitimate authority, whereas the population ecology concept investigates how organizations can thrive in their natural environments. Finally, Organizational Learning Theory emphasizes knowledge acquisition location and variety (Rashman et al., 2009). Corporations can use more information on the best way to match their organizational structure with their environment for long-term success if they draw from relevant theories and empirical studies, as well as draw inspiration from them. The classical school of thought in organizational theory emerged at some point in the late 19th and early twentieth centuries, with Max Weber and Henri Fayol as key contributors (Wren & Bedeian, 2020). This school of thought emphasizes the concepts of bureaucracy and a hierarchical structure within organizations (Ehiobuche & Tu, 2012). The classical school of thought advocates for a bureaucratic organizational structure characterized by clean hierarchical levels, formal rules and methods, and a division of labor (Wren & Bedeian, 2020). This structure promotes efficiency, performance, coordination, and manipulation within the corporation. The classical school of thought specializes in maximizing efficiency by dividing responsibilities into specialized roles and allocating them to individuals based on their expertise (Grant, 1996). The division of labor guarantees that every actor plays precise duties, enhancing productivity and common organizational overall performance.

Additionally, the classical school of thought emphasizes clear lines of authority and a proper chain of command, which allows to establish subject, accountability, and optimal decision-making approaches. While the classical school's principles have influenced the efficiency and organizational structure, they will face demanding situations in dynamic and uncertain operating environments. Bureaucratic structures, characterized by rigid rules and approaches, may additionally evolve fast to modifications within as well as outside the organization's surroundings (Wren & Bedeian, 2020). The need for bureaucratic approval and hierarchical decision-making procedures can avoid agility, responsiveness, and innovation. Organizations working in rapidly changing industries or going through unpredictable market situations can also find it difficult to align their structure with the dynamic surroundings and the usage of classical concepts alone.

In essence, therefore, the classical school of thought in organizational principle emphasizes bureaucracy, hierarchical systems, performance, department of labor, and clear authority. While these principles have contributed to organizational effectiveness in solid environments, they will pose challenges in dynamic and uncertain contexts. Organizations must consider other schools of thought and strategies to cope with the weaknesses of the classical school and design structures that can effectively address the challenges posed by unexpectedly changing and unpredictable surroundings.

### **2.1.2 Human Relations School**

Human Relations is a giant school of thought in organizational concepts that emerged within the mid-twentieth century as a reaction to the classical school's focus on structure and performance (Wren& Bedeian, 2020). This school emphasizes the significance of interpersonal relationships, motivation, and worker satisfaction in achieving organizational success. The Human Relations School recognizes that groups are composed of people with their own individual needs, motivations, and aspirations (Guillén, 1994). It highlights the importance of fostering effective interpersonal relationships in the administrative center, creating a supportive and collaborative environment. This school emphasizes the function of employee delight, motivation, and engagement as drivers of personal and organizational overall performance. While the Human Relations School locations emphasize meeting individual desires and enhancing employee pride, companies can also face demanding situations in balancing employees' pastimes and the company's overall goals. Ensuring that individual dreams align with organizational dreams is vital to preserve coherence and drive collective efforts closer to shared objectives. Organizations must find methods to reconcile employees' needs, motivations, and aspirations with the bigger organizational context and objectives. The Human Relations School encourages the adoption of team-oriented systems that promote collaboration, communication, and mutual support among employees. It emphasizes the importance of participative decision-making, wherein employees are concerned about the decision-making procedure and have a sense of ownership and empowerment. Team-based systems and participative decision-making strategies foster a high-quality work environment, improve employee morale, and facilitate expertise sharing and innovation. In a nutshell, the Human Relations School of thought emphasizes the significance of interpersonal relationships, motivation, and employee satisfaction in achieving organizational success. While it acknowledges the importance of employees' wishes and encourages team-orientated structures and participative choice-making, organizations must carefully align individual pursuits with the general goals of the organization (Wren& Bedeian, 2020). By thinking about the concepts of the Human Relations School, organizations can lay out structures that foster a high-quality working environment, promote worker engagement, and align employees and organizational goals, thereby addressing challenges related to employee job satisfaction and motivation in pursuit of overall organizational success.

### **2.1.3 Contingency Theory**

Contingency theory is a school of thought in organizational theory that emphasizes recognizing the impact of external elements on organizational design and the need to suit the organizational structure to the specific surroundings and objectives of the organization (Van de Ven et al., 2013). Contingency theory acknowledges that organizations perform within numerous and dynamic external environments. Factors including industry traits, market conditions, technological advancements, and regulatory frameworks drastically impact a company's operations and consequences. This school of thought emphasizes the importance of understanding those external elements and their impact on the enterprise's structure and layout. The contingency theory posits that there is a no one-size-suits-all technique to the creation of an effective organizational structure. Instead, the simplest organizational structure relies upon the specific situations and needs of the employer's surroundings and goals. This theory indicates that agencies need to examine their external environment, perceive the demanding situations and possibilities, and lay out a structure

that aligns with those conditions. Businesses can enhance their performance and flexibility by matching the structure to the surroundings and goals. While the contingency theory provides precious insights into matching organizational structure to the surroundings, businesses may additionally encounter demanding situations in adapting their structure to changing situations. As the external environment evolves, groups need to be proactive in assessing the effect of those modifications on their structure and making essential adjustments. The capability to flexibly adjust the structure to accommodate new needs and possibilities, even as preserving alignment with organizational objectives, is critical. However, this can require organizational flexibility, employee buy-in, and powerful trade control strategies. Contingency theory highlights the significance of identifying the effect of external factors on organizational design and matching the structure to the precise surroundings and objectives. By thinking about the standards of contingency theory, businesses can take advantage of insights into their challenges and prescribe suitable structural modifications to deal with them. However, adapting the shape to changing situations poses challenges, and businesses must be proactive and flexible in ensuring ongoing alignment between structure, environment, and goals. By adopting a contingency-based theory, organizations can enhance their ability to navigate demanding situations, capture opportunities, and attain long-term fulfillment in an ever-changing commercial enterprise environment.

#### **2.1.4 Systems Theory**

Systems theory is a school of thought in organizational theory that views companies as complicated systems with interdependent components (Kast & Rosenzweig, 1972). It emphasizes the significance of information on the interactions and interdependencies among diverse factors in the corporation. The systems theory acknowledges that organizations are composed of more than one interconnected factor, such as human beings, strategies, technology, and systems. It emphasizes the interdependencies and relationships among those elements and highlights the need to view the organization as an entire instead of focusing totally on single components. By viewing the organization as a complicated system, organizations can become more aware of the challenges they face and their underlying causes.

Systems theory places a strong emphasis on the significance of feedback loops within an organization. Feedback provides information about the efficacy of organizational tactics and helps organizations to make necessary adjustments based on that information. It underscores the necessity for organizations to be adaptable and flexible, able to respond to alterations both within and outside the company. Organizations are able to find areas for improvement, modify their structure, and improve their performance and effectiveness when they regularly track and study comments. While systems theory can provide valuable insights into the management of organizational complexity, firms may still encounter challenges in effectively integrating and controlling the interrelated pieces that make up its form. The interdependencies that exist between the remarkable components of the organization might give rise to complications, which need careful coordination and thorough integration. It can be challenging to effectively manage these interdependencies while also ensuring that corporate goals are met. In addition, adopting changes to the structure that are predominately based on system-wide concerns also encounters opposition or challenges in the process of implementation.

The systems theory emphasizes the linked nature of organizations as well as the significance of having a solid grasp of the complexity of their structures. Companies are able to get insights into



challenging situations and prescribe appropriate structural changes if they embrace a theory of systems and use it to guide their operations (Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993). The ability to receive and act on feedback, as well as adapt to changing circumstances, are critical components of a good organization. However, groups need to be able to successfully negotiate the hurdles presented by coping with complexity and interdependencies in order for their shape to successfully match with the environment and targets. Corporations can increase their potential to control complexity, optimize interdependencies, and achieve success in a more interconnected and dynamic commercial enterprise landscape by taking into consideration the concepts of the systems concept.

## **2.2 Challenges and Adaptations in Modern Business Environment**

In the rapidly changing world of commercial enterprise that exists today, businesses confront the problem of trying to keep up with the advancements in technology as well as the disruptions that occur in business. Emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, automation, and block chain are reshaping sectors and giving rise to both new opportunities and challenges. The ramifications of those breakthroughs on the structure of organizations need to be recognized and accounted for before adaptation can take place. For instance, they need to incorporate newly developed technologies into their overall strategy, restructure their roles and duties, and cultivate an environment that encourages creativity and the acquisition of new information. Because of globalization, corporations are now more successful than they were before, which presents both opportunities and problems. Companies compete in a wide variety of markets, each of which has its own unique cultural, economic, and legal environment. The challenges of managing global operations, being informed about the dynamics of local markets, and navigating cultural differences all provide obstacles to the structure of a business. Organizations aspire to establish structures that allow for effective coordination and communication across international borders, that encourage the sharing of knowledge, and empower local organizations to evolve strategies to suit the specific requirements of their own markets.

It is necessary for organizations to traverse the complex environment of regulatory and legal regulations, which can have a substantial impact on both the activities of the organization and its overall form. Whenever there is a change in the regulations, guidelines, or compliance requirements, it is necessary for firms to modify their organizational structure in order to maintain compliance without sacrificing performance or efficiency. In order for organizations to effectively deal with challenging circumstances, they need to monitor and comply with changes in regulatory requirements, establish proper governance systems, and cultivate a culture that values compliance. In conclusion, teams are confronted with a wide variety of environmental challenges that have an effect on their structure and demand alignment with their objectives. Some of the most significant challenges that companies face today include technological advancements and disruptions in their respective industries, globalization and an increase in the number of markets, as well as changes in regulatory and legal frameworks. Businesses are able to identify the specific issues they face and prescribe appropriate structural modifications to effectively handle those challenges when they take into consideration the demanding situations they face as well as the insights provided by the different schools of thought within organizational theories. It is essential to align the structure of the business with its environment and goals in order to achieve fulfillment. This also enables firms to successfully navigate and survive in the ever-evolving terrain of commercial enterprise.

Internal obstacles frequently arise in organizations, which can have an effect on their structure and need for careful alignment with the organization's environment and goals. Inertia on the cultural and structural fronts, as well as rapid growth or collapse, mergers, and acquisitions, all contribute to these issues. The challenge for businesses that are undergoing rapid expansion is to preserve a structure that is able to adequately accommodate the increased demands and complexity of the business environment. As the organization grows, new positions and responsibilities are created, and it becomes increasingly difficult to coordinate everyone's efforts. It's also possible that the current structure has to be improved, which would result in bottlenecks, communication breakdowns, and a reduction in efficiency. Organizations have to anticipate the demanding circumstances that come with rapid expansion and respond to them by assessing and altering their organizational structure, creating new divisions, streamlining methods, and putting in place clearer lines of authority.

### **3.0 Conclusion**

One of the most critical factors that will determine whether or not an organization is successful is whether or not its structure is aligned with its surroundings and its goals. Research has repeatedly shown that businesses that successfully adapt their organizational structures to the specifics of their operating environments experience significant improvements in both their performance and their flexibility. Groups can get priceless insights into challenging situations and establish appropriate strategies to cope with them if they think about the various schools of thought that can be found within the realm of organizational ideas. The operating environment of an organization is one of the most important factors that contribute to the formation of its organizational structure. The ability of a corporate firm to accomplish its objectives may be significantly hindered by external factors such as, to name only a few examples, technological improvements, globalization, and changes in the regulatory framework. Therefore, in order for companies to be successful, they need to understand the effect that their surroundings have on their structure and adapt it accordingly. In addition, to maximize performance and progress toward strategic objectives, it is essential to connect the organizational structure with the goals. When the structure of an organization contributes to the accomplishment of its goals, it bolsters efficacy, coordination, and communication with the intention of achieving an average level of overall performance. In the field of organizational theory, there are numerous schools of thought that each presents a unique perspective on the topics of structure and layout. The classical school places an emphasis on hierarchical systems and the elimination of any visible signs of authority in order to adorn efficiency. The human relations theory focuses primarily on the role that positive interpersonal interactions and contented employees play in the overall performance of a business. The contingency theory acknowledges the influence that external events have on organizational structure and places an emphasis on the necessity of adapting organizational architecture to specific environmental circumstances.

Organizations can recognize the demanding situations they are in and prescribe proper structures to cope with them if they use the various schools of thought that are available to them. A few instances of how these theories might assist organizations in effectively addressing challenging circumstances include conducting an analysis of the surrounding environment, implementing a strategy that is team-oriented, thinking about contingency considerations, and coping with complexity. In the end, one of the most important factors that determine whether or not an

organization is successful is whether or not its structure is aligned with its environment and its goals. The many schools of thought within organizational theory provide organizations with helpful insights and frameworks to concentrate on challenging circumstances and prescribe appropriate organizational structures to handle these challenges. These insights and frameworks may be found in organizational theory. Organizations are able to improve their structure, as well as their performance and their adaptability, in an organizational landscape that is constantly shifting as long as they have an awareness of the effect that the environment has, they have reached strategic alignment, and they have considered the interplay among various schools of thought.

#### 4.0 Recommendations

Based on the study, firms should regularly assess and modify their organizational structures to take into account external elements including legislative changes, globalization, and technology improvements. Performance and adaptability will improve if the organization's structure is aware of how these external factors affect it. The study further suggests that aligning the organizational structure with the business's strategic goals will improve coordination, efficiency, and communication. This alignment will support successful performance as a whole. The study suggests as well Organizations can learn a lot by researching and using the various schools of organizational theory, such as the classical school, the human relations school, and the contingency theory. They can develop a distinct viewpoint that enables them to manage challenging situations and provide appropriate frameworks.

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