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ISSN: 2616-8421

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How to cite this article: Daritsu, F., E. (2024). Organization Structure. *Journal of Human Resource & Leadership*, 8(3), 13-23. <https://doi.org/10.53819/81018102t30143>

Abstract

This paper aims to demonstrate the significance of various schools of thought in ensuring that an organisation is strategically aligned with its environment. The paper discusses various schools of thought, such as classical, human relations, systems theory, contingency theory, and resource-dependency theory. The theories have concentrated on various aspects within an organisation, including hierarchy, employees, internal systems, and the organization's alignment with its environment. Researchers have found that various theories have both advantages and disadvantages when implemented within an organisation. They help organisations identify challenges within their systems by focusing on specific issues, which allows them to ensure strategic alignment with their environment and improve overall performance.

Keywords: *Organization, Structure, System Theory, Contingency Theory*

1.0 Introduction

The success of any organization greatly depends on the alignment of its structure according to its environment and objectives. An organizational structure that has been designed appropriately can enhance productivity, efficiency, and adaptability as it addresses an organization's challenges. Organization theory offers individuals valuable insights that allow them to understand the organization's management (Robbins, 1990). Also, it offers organizations a wide range of perspectives and different schools of thought, which guides the design and selection of appropriate structures for different organizations. This essay explores how the different schools of thought present within organization theory allow the organization in having the ability to highlight the challenges that they are facing and offers the best structure to overcome the challenges.

1.1 Background of the Study

In the current complex and ever-evolving business environment, organizations face different challenges that require them to apply the correct form of analysis and strategic decision-making (Eliades et al., 2022). These are challenges that tend to arise from different sources, which may include advances in technology, globalization, changes in the preferences of consumers, intense competition within the market, changes in regulations as well as the expectations of individuals within the society. As a result, organizations must ensure that they are in a position to overcome the different challenges they face. To effectively deal with the different challenges that organizations face, they must ensure that the structure they use aligns with the objectives they want to achieve within their environment (Dees & Anderson, 2003). A proper alignment of the structure of an organization to the environmental conditions is the ability to capitalize on the existing opportunities, overcome obstacles, and adapt to the changes in operational contexts. There are different theories that individuals can employ to ensure that they are dealing with their different challenges. Organization theory provides a great framework to ensure that we understand the intricacies of organizations and thus guide the development of appropriate structures. Daft (2016) described it as a tool allowing individuals to analyze and understand how a great company such as the Lehman Brothers can die and then a company such as the Bank of America can emerge suddenly and become a giant within its industry. Also, it indicates how groups that may tend to be sophisticated can easily survive their challenges, while there are musical groups with a few individuals who do not survive past a few songs. Therefore, through organization theory, individuals can understand what was happening in the past and what can happen in the future. Such information is critical in ensuring that an individual has the capability of managing operations in an efficient manner. This is a capability that organization design offers because it provides individuals with different schools of thought and perspectives towards the issue. Having different perspectives and schools of thought while addressing an issue allows an individual to understand their challenges and employ the most appropriate structure to handle them.

The theories or schools of thought include classical theory, human relation, system, contingency, resource-dependent and institutional theory. The classical school of thought is one of the earliest in organizational theory (Önday, 2016). This early form of management was brought out to run the factories during the industrial age. The school of thought focuses on efficiency and rationality in the design of an organization. It advocates for individuals to employ specialization, division of labor, and a hierarchical structure. The school emphasizes individuals being able to maximize increase authority within an organization through clear lines of authority and control, which allows the organizations to be streamlined and thus achieve an economy of scale. The school of thought

aims to ensure that organizations can run like efficient and well-oiled machines and remains the basis of modern management theory and practices. Despite the school of thought having numerous benefits towards the organization, it can overlook important factors such as the motivation and satisfaction of individuals working within an organization. This, in turn, leads to a decrease in creativity as well as the engagement of employees.

The human relations school of thought arose after the classical framework. The school of thought places a lot of emphasis on the social and psychological aspects of work within the workplace (Boxall & Purcell, 2000). It recognizes that employees within an organization cannot be regarded as interchangeable units of the production process. As a result, it highlights the importance and significance of factors that impact the motivation and efficiency of an employee. These factors include employee satisfaction, motivation as well as effective communication which play a great role in enhancing an organization's performance. The framework encourages businesses to have a participatory and inclusive organizational structure which can encourage employees to ensure that they are involved in the company's activities, thus creating a positive environment for them. Focusing on the human element within an organization offers an organization with insights on how to ensure that they can create structures that would promote the well-being of an employee and increase their productivity. On the other hand, systems are another school of thought that aids in understanding organization. Systems regard an organization as a complex system interacting with the environment (Kimmerle et al., 2015). The theory emphasizes that an organization has interdependencies with different components. According to the theory, an organization must align its structures with the external environment to ensure they efficiently adapt and acquire resources. The school tends to recognize the dynamic nature of an organization and the fact that it requires flexible structures. Adopting such a school of thought, an organization acquires the interrelationship between different departments, teams, and processes. It facilitates a holistic approach to understanding how a change in a single area within an organization can result in changes within the whole organization.

The contingency theory is an important theory that builds on the idea that there is no universal approach when addressing the design and management of an organization. It argues that no single most suitable structure and practices tend to depend on an organization's specific circumstances and requirements (Otley, 2016). The theory suggested that organization should align their structures with external as well as internal contingencies, which include the industry that they are operating within, the size of the business, the technological approach as well as the goals of the organization. Through an organization's ability to recognize its specific approaches, the contingency theory allows the business to tailor structures that fit an organization's unique needs, enhancing its capability to respond to challenges appropriately. The resource dependence theory is a theory that focused on external resources which organizations rely on to function effectively. The school of thought recognizes that organizations tend to be interdependent with their environment and thus must ensure that they manage the relationship to ensure that they secure the necessary resources for the functioning of their organizations (Isaboke, 2018). The theory suggested that organizations should ensure that they are structuring themselves to minimize dependence on external entities and establish mechanisms that ensure a stable supply of resources. Through an organization ensuring that it understands and manages resources correctly, it has the capability of coming up with structures that enhance its ability to acquire resources and mitigates the risks that tend to be associated with the scarcity of resources or the organization depending on particular entities.

2.0 Review of Empirical Studies

The review of empirical studies would contain works with different themes that can show the effectiveness of the different schools of thought and their impact on an organization. As a result, the main focus would be on the impact of different issues on organizational structure, behavior, and effectiveness studies. In the organizational structure, the main focus would be on hierarchical structure and decision-making efficiency, specialization and employee satisfaction. Organizational behavior would address the leadership style of leaders and employee motivation alongside the factors that influence the effectiveness of employees and organizational effectiveness studies would focus on strategic alignment and organization performance alongside the factors that influence innovation within an organization. The different factors are critical in further understanding the different schools of thought in organizational structure and their effectiveness.

2.1 Strategic Alignment of an Organization

Strategic alignment is the process of harmonizing the goals of an organization, resources and actions. It involves an individual ensuring they align their internal resources, activities and capabilities with the available external opportunities and challenges (Ayoub et al., 2016). When an organization gains the capability of achieving strategic alignment, it tends to ensure that all the aspects that are present within an organization can work in harmony towards achieving a similar purpose, thus allowing an organization to have the ability to maximize its efficiency, effectiveness and its ability to adapt to different situations.

2.1.1 Impact of Strategic Alignment Towards Effectiveness

Strategic alignment has several effects on an organisation, including establishing a clear direction and focus, optimising resources, improving decision-making capabilities, and increasing agility and adaptability (Aker et al. 2016). When an organisation is strategically aligned, it has a clear direction, ensuring that all employees understand the company's goals, strategies, and priorities. This allows employees to align their efforts and make more informed decisions, resulting in greater overall effectiveness. It also allows for the most efficient allocation and utilisation of resources within an organisation. When an organisation aligns its resources with its strategic priorities, it avoids duplication. Instead, the organisation strives for a more efficient process and allocates resources to areas that will help it achieve its goals. When resources within an organisation are optimised in this way, the organization's performance improves. Furthermore, because the method ensures that all individuals understand an organization's goals and objectives, it aids in the development of an understanding of the organization's goals and values. Such a level of understanding is critical in enabling all employees at various levels of the organisation to make decisions that are consistent with the overall direction of the organisation. As a result, decision-making and outcomes are improved. With such effectiveness in an organization's decision-making process, it increases its agility, allowing it to respond to external changes and challenges in a timely manner (Gerow et al. 2015). Thus, strategically aligned organisations tend to adapt quickly to their structures, strategies, and processes, allowing them to capitalise on the various opportunities that arise, ensuring that they become effective in the long run and therefore sustainable.

2.1.2 Organizational Structure Studies

Sarker and Khan (2013) focused on the classical school of thought. The main aim of his work was to examine the role of the classical approach, understand its contribution, compare it to the neoclassical theory and outline problems with the theory. In his work, he notes that the classical

approach has three main thrusts: scientific management, admirative theory and bureaucratic management. The scientific management aspect of the theory had a lot of emphasis on the employees within an organization and how they would be able to improve their productivity. The administrative aspect focused on making the whole organization function efficiently. The bureaucratic aspect of eliminating inconsistencies within the management which emphasized the position instead of an individual and an organization would continue even when an individual leaves. As a result, the theory focuses on having a clear distinction between operative and managerial activities. Also, it identified the application of scientific methods to the problems facing management and highlighted the need for cooperation between employers and their employees. In the work, the author notes that the approach is too formal and can only work for a stable and simple organization instead of today's dynamic and complex one. Also, its procedures are not appropriate for different settings.

2.1.3 Human Relations

Atiku et al. (2022) study focused on the impact of human resources in increasing the effectiveness of banks. Specifically, the main focus is banks' impact on enhancing human resources and attaining an organization's strategic goals, such as a commercial bank. To understand its impact, the researchers employed a cross-sectional survey design. The quantitative approach was essential in objectively showcasing the impact that organizational learning tends to have towards human resources effectiveness via path analysis. From the study results, it was clear that learning within an organization is essential for enhancing the effectiveness of human resources. Specifically, team learning was vital in the horizontal alignment of the strategic objectives and enhancing how business units perform. The study showcases that human relations and teams within an organization play a critical role in how an organization performs. As a result, it is important to focus on the individuals within an organization to enhance its effectiveness. Patrick and Mazhar (2019) asserted that human resources are among the most important components of a company's success. This is because a gifted workforce and effectively managed human resources within an organization can deal with business problems while managing the employees, who are an important component of an organization.

2.1.4 Systems Theory

Chikere and Nwoka's (2015) study analyzed the systems theory of management in modern-day organizations. In the work, he describes the theory and categorizes it into two areas of thought: cybernetic and closed systems. To define the theory well, the researchers utilize a survey to conduct their research in Port Harcourt, which comprises different systems. Their research found that systems, like any other organization, tend to operate in an environment with constant interchanges. As a result, complex interactions and interrelationships exist within the system's boundaries. Therefore, for an organization to survive and grow, it has to ensure that it achieves a dynamic equilibrium instead of simply returning to a steady state. The study's findings strongly suggest that organizations should consider employing the systems theory to ensure they can grow and become profitable. This is because it bridges the classical and human relations theory. Also, focusing on the different systems allows an organization to function effectively without experiencing any friction. This is because an organization's chains of command and lines of authority tend to be spelt out clearly. Therefore, the research shows that focusing on systems is critical in solving most issues an organization can face regarding profitability and even the relationship between individuals.

2.1.5 Contingency Theory

Donaldson (2006) work with employees to analyze different research works to showcased the effectiveness of the contingency theory. Their research notes that contingency theory plays a role within an organization by specifying the structures that fit different circumstances. From the research, they note that a relationship exists between fit and performance while focusing on the theory. As a result, it is a great theory when it comes to informing managers to have the ability to identify misfits that exists between their structures and contingencies such as diversification which are usually part of an organization's strategy. Given the fact that there are always different aspects of an organization's structure and each may have different contingencies that are misfits or fits, it means that there are many misfits that can occur within an organization and each of them would have a negative impact towards its performance. Since there is a possibility of having multiple misfits in an organization as well as different cases of organizational performance, each of the misfits would have an impact towards the overall performance of an organization (Vidal et al., 2017). Therefore, if an individual rectifies the different misfits or most of them, the organization is bound to achieve substantial gains. Therefore, the school of thought points out rectifying different issues affecting an organization to ensure that the organization can improve.

2.1.6 Resource dependent

Jiang et al. (2023) focused on the resource dependence theory widely applied in international business. Their work reviews the literature and studies conducted on the theory over the last 40 years. In their work, they conclude that the level of research is enough to understand how multinational corporations tend to take a large portion of the array of resource-dependence actions and how they manage their resources in different situations. In their framework, they note that international companies tend to depend on three dimensions which include location, inter-organizational and intra-organizational dependencies, as well as three resource development themes that include dependence solutions to be able to manage resource dependencies, dependence managing outcomes of the solutions as well as macro-environmental conditions of dependence effects on solutions and dependence managing outcomes. Their findings conclude that the method adds knowledge and insights to business management.

2.1.7 Hierarchical Structure and Decision-Making Efficiency

In many organisations, decision-making is one of the most important factors in determining success and effectiveness. The hierarchical structure of an organisation has a significant impact on decision-making. The hierarchical structure refers to how an organisation arranges its channels and authority, which creates the framework that individuals can use to make decisions (Zhang and Parker, 2019). A hierarchical structure in an organisation promotes clear lines of reporting, specialisation and expertise, delegation, coordination, and effective communication. A hierarchical structure has clear reporting lines because it defines how information flows within an organisation and how decision-making authority is delegated from top management to lower levels. Because the structure creates clarity within an organisation, it allows individuals at the top to make decisions, thereby streamlining how information flows within an organisation and ensuring there is no confusion or potential delays when making decisions. The division of labour within the structure ensures that individuals who are experts in a specific domain and well-informed have the opportunity to lead, resulting in an efficient decision-making process. Furthermore, communication is generally clear because the structure's clear communication paths allow individuals to share information and collaborate appropriately.

2.1.8 Organizational Behavior

Organizational behavior plays a critical role in understanding the dynamics present within the workplace and identifying factors that lead to the motivation of employees. Kljajić-Dervić and Dervić's (2017) study focused on the motivation of employees and regards them as one of the most important aspects of any organization. Given that they are important, a business has to ensure that they are managed appropriately and motivated to ensure that an organization performs appropriately. The authors note that leadership is one of the main influences to ensure that individuals within an organization are motivated. This is because it is an art and a process that can impact individuals and those affected would voluntarily create new values within an organization. As a result, the manager within the workplace must understand the complex nature of individuals depending on specific circumstances and apply the proper reward systems and motivational techniques to ensure that the individuals behave desirably to achieve their own goals and those of their organizations.

3.0 Theoretical Framework

As seen in the background and literature review, organizational theory and the different schools of thought within the theory are essential when it comes to allowing an organization to determine the issues that an organization is facing and come up with solutions to the different challenges that affect it. This easily occurs in the organization as the different theories offer an individual a different perspective and insights towards how they look at issues within their organization. From the different studies over the years, the different schools have value towards allowing an organization to be strategically aligned towards its environment despite having some drawbacks, which is expected since no specific solution can deal with all the issues that can face a company in the ever-changing environment.

The classical school provides an organization with the foundation for understanding the challenges related to the hierarchical structure, coordination and efficiency within an organization. From the background, the theory emphasizes that an organization should have clear lines of authority and control, allowing an organization to run efficiently (Sarker & Khan, 2013). As a result, while looking at an organization from such a school of thought, an issue such as an increase in bureaucracy, communication breakdowns as well as a rigid decision-making process would be easily identified as it allows an individual to assess their hierarchical structure and whether it has an impact towards achieving effective decision within the company and the potential areas of improvement that an individual can make to change the situation within the organization. For instance, if an organization has a communication issue among employees and challenges in reporting information, this is an issue that the classical school can face with its emphasis on a clear line of authority and communication channels within a hierarchical structure. As a result, the organization can easily structure its communication to have a clear line and specific individuals to handle the issues. In addition to enhancing the organization's communication channels, it would allow specialists in different departments who can easily handle the challenge to look at it before it reaches the top management. As a result, individuals within the company would easily collaborate, thus preventing issues that can arise due to miscommunication or a lack of communication. Therefore, the organization would easily ensure that it is strategically aligned with its environment, thus using its resources which include time to focus on growing the organization.

The human relations theory allows an organization to be strategically aligned as it brings attention towards the organization's social and psychological aspects, which greatly impacts its

performance. From Atiku et al. (2022) study, it is clear that humans are one of the most important units in an organization and they play a critical role towards allowing organizations to have the ability to achieve their objectives. Therefore, while an organization is focusing on the theory, it can easily uncover the challenges related to employees' morale, engagement levels, and lack of motivation within a company. Gupta and Subramanian (2014) noted that there tends to be a lot of pressure in most organizations due to globalization, diversity, and organizational changes. The study shows that this is one of the major challenges that organizations are bound to face daily with the ever-changing dynamics in the workplace. When organizations consider the human relations perspective, they tend to gain the capability of the impact of their employees' psychological well-being towards the organization's performance. As a result, they tend to recognize the importance of ensuring that within the organization, individuals have positive relationships and thus come up with ways to address the factors that can impact their well-being. For instance, employees may feel motivated or just workers when they do not participate in an organization's decisions. The human resources perspective can allow an organization to look into such an issue and it may be the challenge that results in it not being able to get the best results due to the lack of motivation from the employees. These would allow the organization to ensure that all individuals are involved in the decision-making process, have input towards different issues, and share their ideas with the organization. Studies show that when employees are involved in such a manner, they tend to feel valued and their motivation increases, thus fostering a positive work environment that supports the decision-making within an organization. Focusing on the psychological factors that affect the employees would ensure the organization has positive interpersonal relationships within a company and thus allow it to achieve its goals.

The systems theory can allow an organization to easily identify challenges arising from the complex interactions between different parts of the organization's system. Through adopting such a system, an organization can recognize that challenges in an organization tend to arise from the complex interactions within the different sections of its system (Chikere & Nwoka, 2015). For instance, while applying the theory, an organization can determine and correct a challenge such as information overload. In a large organization, there tend to be numerous operations which can be complex, thus leading to information overload, affecting the business's decision-making capabilities since its different interconnected components usually process larger amounts of information. The individuals responsible for making decisions within the company may get overwhelmed with the excess information, which can lead to struggles in identifying data relevant to the companies' operations and thus reduce their capabilities to decide promptly. In turn, the organization would arrive at poor quality decisions and miss opportunities. While using the systems theory, the organization would easily focus on how the systems are working and identify an issue with the communication management within the different systems as they strive to ensure that they work efficiently within the organization. Thus, the organization can use a strategy such as feedback loops to develop an appropriate feedback loop that meets the organization's needs. Therefore, it shows that focusing on the independent systems of an organization can allow it to strategically align itself towards achieving its objectives as decisions would be made appropriately.

On the other hand, the contingency theory's ability to emphasizes that an organization matches its structures towards its practices towards the specific context in which they operate allows it to identify challenges (Donaldson, 2006). As a result, the theory allows an organization to gain insights into its different structures; hence when there is a lack of fit between one of its structures and the environment, the organization would easily identify it. As seen through Donaldson's (2006)

research, the organization can recognize the different issues, including the hierarchical structure not aligned with the changing market, lack of appropriate technology within a given period, or the industry's unique characteristics. The theory allows the organization to deal with different problems, each at a time to ensure it is well aligned with its structure. Hence, the theory can allow an organization to easily determine problems that result in it not functioning appropriately within its environment. When such problems are identified within the company in different areas, the theory allows the organization to ensure it corrects all these issues simultaneously. Hence, it ensures that an organization can easily get out of the challenges that hinder it from achieving its goal and objectives. This change allows an organization to fit and perform well in its environment. Hence, it greatly ensures that an organization is well-fitted to serve its needs towards individuals in a particular area.

The resource-dependent theory perspective sheds light on specific challenges an organization faces regarding the acquisition of resources, allocation, and management. The literature review shows that the theory tends to place a lot of focus on an organization's external environment and that they tend to depend on its external resources, allowing it to thrive and survive (Jiang et al., 2023). Through utilizing the theory, an organization can easily analyze their resource dependencies and thus have the capability to easily identify the potential challenges they are facing when it comes to securing and maintaining its resources. For instance, a company can notice that it depends on a single supplier to deliver one of its critical products, thus highlighting the vulnerabilities within its supply chain and thus, they would respond to the issue by diversifying its sources and thus minimizing its risk. Hence, the theory allows an organization to gain deeper insights into managing, controlling, and acquiring resources. Focusing on the theory allows an organization is well prepared for numerous capabilities of the company, including the external opportunities that can arise, such as an increase in demand, since it can solve the risk of depending on only a single supplier to the company. At the same time, this issue ensures that an organization does not make numerous losses when their supply becomes low and their most reliable supplier cannot meet their demand. Such a level of preparedness ensures that the organization can perform well in different situations due to applying the theory. Hence, it can easily prescribe a great organization structure for an organization.

4.0 Conclusion

As seen in the paper, there are different schools of thought that individuals can use to create a great organizational structure for their organizations that aligns with their environment. The different schools of thought include the classical school of thought, human relations theory, systems theory, contingency theory, resource-dependent theory and institutional. All the different theories focus on different aspects of an organization. The classical school of thought focuses on the hierarchical structure, which includes the lines of authority and communication. The human relations theory places a lot of emphasis on the people within an organization, including the employees. The systems theory focuses on the different systems within an organization. On the other hand, the contingency theory focuses on the different structures present within a company and if they are fit. Finally, the resources-dependent theory places a lot of emphasis on how an organization acquires and manages its resources. All the different theories have a great impact towards ensuring that an organization performs appropriately as a result of their diverse focuses. The classical theory allows organizations to determine issues within their hierarchical structure. Human relations look at challenges that can arise as a result of how individuals are treated in an organization, while the

resource dependence theory greatly places a lot of emphasis towards issues that can arise within an organization's supply structure. As a result of the different insights that the theories offer, an individual can have a deeper look into an organization and make changes while basing on the theories. This allows the company to align with its environment and thus perform appropriately strategically.

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