

Midocean University

College of Management

Master of Project Management



The Impact of Role Clarity and Organizational Structure on Agile Team Effectiveness in Saudi Organizations

أثر وضوح الأدوار والمسؤوليات و الهيكل التنظيمي على فعالية فرق "أجايل" في المؤسسات السعودية

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Year:

2026

Abstract

This study will examine the impact of role clarity and organizational structure on Agile team effectiveness in Saudi organization. Within Agile teams, defined roles and responsibilities will be the foundation of coordination and accountability, while organizational structure affects the velocity of decision-making processes and team independence. In traditional hierarchical environments, the effectiveness of Agile practices may be restricted structurally.

The study will use a quantitative research approach to distribute a digital structured questionnaire to 150-300 members of Agile teams in Saudi organizations. The collected data will be statistically analyzed through SPSS to explore the relationships between the study variables.

The researcher seeks to enrich the understanding of the Agile practices and improve the effectiveness of Agile teams to optimize practical outcomes in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia context.

Keywords: Agile Project Management, Role Clarity, Organizational Structure, Agile Team Effectiveness, Saudi Organizations.

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1. Introduction

In recent years, organizations worldwide have increasingly adopted Agile project management to cope with rapidly changing business environments and to improve efficiency and the responsiveness of project teams. In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the National Transformation Program (Vision 2030) has acted as a motivational factor, allowing both public and private sectors to embrace operational flexibility and innovation.

Despite its advantages, many Agile teams face obstacles and challenges related to role clarity and organizational structure which can limit their progression and effectiveness. In Saudi organizations, where adopting Agile is a futuristic plan, there is limited studies on how unclear roles and how the organizational hierarchy is structured affect team performance.

This study aims to explore how role clarity and organizational structure impact Agile team effectiveness in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia context, providing insights that are both meaningful and useful for organizations seeking to enhance their Agile practices.

2. Problem Statement

Many Saudi organizations in the process of fully transitioning to Agile frameworks, a significant number of Agile teams in Saudi organizations often faces obstacles that affects performance, which are as follows:

- **Unclear roles and undefined responsibilities**, leading to miscommunication, confusion, duplicated efforts, and delays.
- **Agile principles are misaligned with organizational structures**, where solid hierarchies restrict decision-making.
- **Reduced team effectiveness**, which affects project timelines, quality of deliverables, and overall productivity.

Although global research shows the of role clarity and organizational structure, there is a clear gap in studies that examining these two factors on Agile teams in Saudi organizations. This study intends to address this gap and provide recommendations for improving Agile teams' performance within Saudi organizations.

3. Significance of the Study

This research is important due to its role and contribution in many different areas such as:

3.1 Theoretical Significance

- **Agile context:** Most Agile research is west oriented. This study fills the gap in literature on Agile project management in Saudi Arabia.
- **Connecting the dots:** Focusing on the lack of literature on organizational structure and the role clarity of teams.
- **Addressing the gap:** Highlighting the scarcity of academic research on the organizational concept of Agile effectiveness in Saudi Arabia.

3.2 Practical Significance

- **Strategic Alignment:** Provides a clear path for project managers and organizational leaders to align their traditional hierarchy with the standard required by national KPIs.
- **Operational efficiency:** offers practical guidance for implementing Agile principles more effectively in the Saudi organizational context.
- **Local roadmap:** Establish a foundation of Agile Excellence tailored to the Saudi market to give managers in Saudi Arabia.

4. Research Objectives

- Exploring the effect of **Role Clarity** on Agile teams.
- Examine the impact of **Organizational Structure** on Agile team performance.
- Exploring the **combined effect** of **Role Clarity** and **Organizational Structure** on Agile team effectiveness.
- Provide practical recommendations for enhancing Agile team performance in Saudi organizations.

5. Research Questions

1. How does **Role Clarity** influence Agile team effectiveness in Saudi organizations?

- To what extent does a clear understanding of Agile roles, for instance: Scrum Master and Product Owner, reduce task overlaps among team members?
- How does the presence of documented responsibilities impact the speed of decision-making within the team?
- In what ways does unclear roles lead to personal conflict or reduced morale in Saudi Agile environments?
- How does role clarity contribute to the individual accountability of team members during sprint cycles?

2. How does **Organizational Structure** impact Agile team effectiveness?

- How do functional managers interfere with self-organizing Agile teams?
- To what degree does a decentralized structure (flat hierarchy) accelerate the delivery of project increments?
- What role does structural flexibility play in allowing teams to pivot based on changing project requirements?
- How do centralized approval processes in Saudi organizations act as a bottleneck for Agile team velocity?

3. Is there an interactive effect between **Role clarity** and **Organizational Structure** on **Agile team effectiveness**?

- Does a rigid organizational structure reject the benefits of high role clarity within the team?
- Can high levels of role clarity compensate for a traditional hierarchy, allowing teams to remain effective?
- How does the combination of flat structure and high role clarity impact the overall "Agile Maturity" of the organization?
- To what extent does the alignment between the company's formal structure and the team's internal roles predict long-term project success?

6. Research Hypotheses

H1: Role clarity positively affects Agile team effectiveness.

- Role clarity significantly reduces task overlap among Agile team members.

H2: Organizational structure positively affects Agile team effectiveness.

- Decentralized decision-making structures increase the speed of Agile project delivery.

H3: There is a significant interaction between role clarity and organizational structure affecting Agile team effectiveness.

- High role clarity has a stronger positive impact on effectiveness in flat structures than in rigid hierarchical structures.

7. Literature Review

7.1 Agile team effectiveness: Beyond Technicality

Modern research defines Agile effectiveness as the team ability to be resilient and organized under pressure while sustaining performance through changing project conditions.

(Marek et al., 2023) argue that in rapidly developing economies such as Saudi Arabia, Agile teams may face organizational environments that still feel pressured to move from a predefined plan to the flexibility that Agile frameworks are designed to promote.

Similarly, (VersionOne, 2022) shows that organizational culture and managerial support play a crucial part in the success of Agile initiatives. The report identifies team culture and leadership support as the main two factors of successful Agile implementation. However, applying these two factors can be difficult in organizations that have historically relied on hierarchical management methods and centralized decision-making.

Overall, these findings suggest that Agile teams' effectiveness misaligned with the organizational context, which appears to be an important factor in shaping team outcomes.

7.2 Role Clarity: The foundation of success

Role clarity is an essential concept when it comes to employees understanding the responsibilities and authority of their roles within a team. Within Agile environments, role clarity will be effective and crucial when we expect teams to be more independent and have a considerable level of responsibility.

The findings of (Schmidt & Tang, 2024) show that there are miscommunications when it comes to cross-functional teams regarding the members roles or what is the decision-making process?

For instance, a team member is unsure who is responsible for making product features a priority over technical changes approval which leads to a lack of coordination and decision-making process will be delayed.

In GCC organizations, it was noted by (Al-Amri, 2022) that there are some challenges that appeared during the transformation to Agile roles such as Scrum master or Product Owner.

For instance, Agile roles were introduced to hierarchical organizations structured while maintaining this traditional form. As a result, employees found themselves struggles between the Agile approaches and the foundation of traditional structure.

I find these studies indicate that defining job responsibilities and immersing them into organizations system will allow Agile teams to be effective and practical.

7.3 Organizational Structure: The Limitations on Agile Teams

The structure of an organization affects how power and authority is presented, how communication happens between departments and top-level management, and how the decision-making process started and finished. In Agile environments, any structure that supports flexible approaches will be considered more aligned with Agile principles.

(Hoda & Noble, 2022) discuss how hierarchical structures will be the main cause of a phenomenon described by them as “structural friction.” This happens when the decision-making process always begins at top-level management, which makes teams always seek approval before taking any step forward. Such practices are lethal to the “Agile velocity”

when taking in consideration the core of the concept which is rapid iteration and responsiveness concentrated.

When we explore the centralized decision-making among large traditional Saudi organizations, we find that Agile teams experience different obstacles that affect their ability to act quick or to be flexible when dealing with project changes and developments.

In addition, it is noted by (Kalyan, 2025) that matrix organizational structures which are heavily used in public and private sectors can be the foundation of employees' rivalry. Competing and reporting rather than being focused on implementing the Agile principals' goal will create uncertainty and divided attention.

To maximize the outcomes in hierarchical traditional entities, the relation between organizational structure and Agile team effectiveness deserves closer examination and behavioral adjusting techniques.

7.4 Research Gap: the Saudi context

Research on Agile project management has been growing exponentially over the past few years, but the gap is widened when it comes to test or explore the Agile practices within the Saudi organizational context. This study seeks to explore three crucial gaps:

In the first place, unlike Western context there is a lack of studies on how the hierarchical traditional Saudi organizations interacts to Agile structure's requirement which shows that existing studies may not be the suitable projection to this environment.

Another important point is previous studies conducted in Saudi Arabia, such as (Somali et al., 2018) and (Al-Zahrani, 2022) are focused on the adaption and challenges of Agile methodologies in general instead of concentrating on the organizational structure as an

essential factor that may descent the Agile teams effectiveness after the starting to adapt phase.

Equally important, there is a significant lack of research studying the impact of role clarity and organizational structure on Agile team effectiveness. Exploring how these two concepts influence each other will help us grasp the idea of team performance fluctuations across Saudi organizations. For instance, defining roles clearly may not be enough when there are many structure restrictions, or that flexible flat structure may not produce the outcomes needed due to unclear roles.

For these critical reasons, this study aims to explore how both role clarity and organizational structure together influence Agile team effectiveness within Saudi organizations.

8. Theoretical Framework of the Study

This study draws three theories to explain the dynamics of Agile team performance within the Saudi organizational context in order to obtain the results needed and answer the questions of the research.

8.1 Role Clarity Theory

Role Theory shows that when roles are clearly defined along with responsibilities and expectations, employees will perform better and more effectively. When individuals have to deal with unclear roles, it will lead to miscommunication which will start conflicts among the team. As a result, the coordination might be reduced and impact on the team's performance negatively (Rizzo et al., 1970).

Without this clarity in Agile environments, where teams hierarchically structured, they may suffer from duplicated roles or major delays in the decision-making process which will affect the workflow and reduce accountability.

8.2 Organizational Structure Theory

In this study, the Organizational Structure Theory will be examined in how the distribution of authority, coordination, and the decision-making process have a major impact on the outcomes of organizational performance. Unlike hierarchical structures, flexible structures aim to accelerate the decision-making process and strengthen team independence which leads to more collaboration and better responsiveness (Robbins & Judge, 2019).

Agile methodologies concentrate on adaptation velocity and self-organizing teams which are the roadmap to structural alignment with Agile principles which will influence positively team effectiveness.

8.3 Agile Project Management Principles

Agile principles emphasize that it is critical for successful project delivery to collaborate, continuously improve, and adapt to many changes to obtain all the benefits (VersionOne, 2022).

These principles suggest that when roles are clear and defined and there is a flexible structure, it will be an essential part of providing Agile teams with a great environment to perform effectively.

Based on these perspectives, the study proposes that Role Clarity and Organizational Structure are not isolated from each other. In addition, Agile team effectiveness may be influenced by the degree of structural restrictions on clear roles within Saudi organization.

9. Research Methodology

9.1 Research Design

This study will use a quantitative research approach to examine the relation between role clarity, organizational structure, and Agile team effectiveness in the Saudi organizations' context. A descriptive and explanatory approach will be followed to assess the study variables to obtain the full picture of the current state of Agile practices in Saudi organizations.

9.2 Population & Sampling

The population consists of practitioners of Agile project teams employed in Saudi organizations, especially in sectors where Agile practices are applied and embraced. A random sample of 150-300 participants will be selected using stratified sampling technique to ensure the variety of representation across sectors.

9.3 Data Collection

Data will be gathered using a digital form of structured questionnaire to measure role clarity, organizational structure, and Agile team effectiveness on a five-point Likert scale (1= Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree).

9.4 Data Analysis

SPSS will be used to perform data analysis following this roadmap:

- **Reliability:** Internal consistency will be ensured by Cronbach's Alpha.
- **Descriptive:** Means and standard deviations to profile the sample.
- **Inferential:** multiple regression and interaction analysis to examine the proposed hypotheses.

10. Research Tools

The main instrument to be used is a digital Survey Questionnaire with four main sections:

- Demographic data such as: Sector, Experience, and Agile Role.
- Role Clarity.
- Organizational Structure.
- Agile Team Effectiveness.

A 5-point Likert scale will be used to measure the relationship between these sections.

11. Research Limits

- **Temporal limits:** The research conducted in 2026.
- **Geographical limits:** It is limited to Agile methodologies in Saudi organizations, any generalization beyond this context must be restricted.
- **Conceptual limits:** Focuses on role clarity, organizational structure, and Agile team effectiveness.

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