



Middle Ocean University

College of Administration

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Research Proposal

The Impact of Authority–Responsibility Misalignment on Middle Leadership Effectiveness and Organizational Performance: The Mediating Role of Top Management Support

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1. Introduction

Organizations across all sectors have experienced unprecedented changes over the past few decades, driven by globalization, digital transformation, technological advancement, increasing market competition, and continuously evolving business environments. These developments have compelled organizations to enhance their organizational effectiveness and strategic agility in order to sustain competitive advantage and achieve long-term success. Consequently, organizational performance is no longer determined solely by financial resources or technological capabilities; rather, it increasingly depends on the organization's ability to establish effective governance structures, clearly define managerial responsibilities, and align authority with accountability across different organizational levels.

Within this dynamic environment, middle leadership has emerged as one of the most critical managerial levels in modern organizations. Middle leaders serve as the strategic link between top management and operational employees by translating organizational strategies into actionable plans, coordinating cross-functional activities, managing human resources, leading organizational change, and ensuring the effective implementation of strategic initiatives. Contemporary management literature emphasizes that middle leaders are no longer merely operational supervisors; instead, they function as strategic facilitators who play a pivotal role in knowledge integration, organizational learning, innovation, and change implementation.

Despite their strategic importance, middle leaders face increasing organizational challenges arising from complex organizational structures, intensified accountability requirements, growing performance expectations, and limited decision-making authority. In many organizations, middle managers are expected to deliver strategic and operational outcomes while lacking the authority necessary to allocate resources, approve critical decisions, or resolve organizational barriers effectively. This imbalance creates a managerial paradox in which individuals are held fully accountable for organizational outcomes without possessing sufficient authority to influence those outcomes. Recent organizational research has described middle managers as one of the organization's most valuable yet underutilized strategic resources because expectations regarding

their performance continue to rise while organizational empowerment and executive support often remain insufficient.

The principle of balancing authority and responsibility has long been recognized as a fundamental concept in classical and contemporary management theory. Effective organizational governance assumes that managerial responsibility should always be accompanied by an equivalent level of authority that enables managers to execute their duties successfully. However, practical organizational settings frequently demonstrate significant discrepancies between assigned responsibilities and delegated authority. Authority–Responsibility Misalignment occurs when managers are entrusted with broad responsibilities while actual decision-making authority remains concentrated at higher organizational levels or distributed among multiple stakeholders. Such misalignment often results in delayed decision-making, overlapping managerial roles, weakened accountability systems, reduced organizational flexibility, and diminished leadership effectiveness. Recent scholarly discussions suggest that authority misalignment remains an underexplored organizational phenomenon despite its potentially significant implications for organizational performance and leadership effectiveness.

Another critical organizational factor that has received considerable attention in recent years is Top Management Support. Executive support extends beyond administrative supervision to include providing strategic guidance, allocating resources, removing organizational obstacles, empowering managers, facilitating communication, and fostering an organizational climate that encourages effective decision-making. Empirical evidence indicates that supportive top management enhances leadership confidence, organizational commitment, employee engagement, and overall managerial effectiveness. Furthermore, executive support may mitigate the adverse consequences of authority–responsibility misalignment by empowering middle leaders and enabling them to perform their managerial responsibilities more effectively. Consequently, the interaction between authority alignment and top management support represents an important area for further academic investigation.

The growing significance of middle leadership has also increased scholarly interest in understanding its relationship with organizational performance. Organizational performance has

evolved into a multidimensional construct encompassing operational efficiency, service quality, innovation capability, adaptability, employee satisfaction, strategic goal achievement, and long-term organizational sustainability. Since middle leaders are directly responsible for implementing organizational strategies and coordinating day-to-day operations, their effectiveness substantially influences organizational outcomes. Therefore, identifying organizational factors that enhance or hinder middle leadership effectiveness has become an important research priority in strategic management and organizational behavior.

Although previous studies have extensively examined concepts such as managerial empowerment, leadership styles, organizational support, accountability, and organizational performance, the existing literature reveals several important limitations. Most previous research has investigated these variables independently or examined direct relationships between two variables without integrating them into a comprehensive theoretical framework. Moreover, relatively limited attention has been given to Authority–Responsibility Misalignment as an independent organizational construct and its simultaneous influence on both Middle Leadership Effectiveness and Organizational Performance. Likewise, the potential mediating role of Top Management Support in explaining these relationships remains insufficiently explored. This represents a significant theoretical and empirical gap that warrants further investigation.

Addressing this gap, the present study proposes an integrated conceptual framework to examine the impact of Authority–Responsibility Misalignment on Middle Leadership Effectiveness and Organizational Performance while investigating the mediating role of Top Management Support. By integrating these constructs within a single empirical model, the study seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how organizational structures and executive support mechanisms influence managerial effectiveness and organizational success.

The remainder of this research proposal is organized as follows. It begins by presenting the research problem, followed by the significance, objectives, research questions, and hypotheses of the study. It then provides a critical review of the relevant literature, identifies the research gap, and establishes the theoretical foundations underpinning the proposed conceptual framework. Subsequently, the study outlines the proposed research methodology, including the research



design, population and sampling strategy, data collection instrument, and statistical analysis techniques. Finally, the proposal discusses the expected academic and practical contributions of the study to the fields of business administration, organizational behavior, and strategic management.

2. Research Problem

Organizations operating in today's dynamic and highly competitive business environment increasingly rely on middle leaders to translate strategic objectives into operational outcomes, coordinate organizational activities, and ensure effective implementation of organizational strategies. As organizations become more complex and decentralized, middle leaders are expected to assume greater responsibilities for achieving performance targets, leading organizational change, managing cross-functional teams, and responding rapidly to emerging operational challenges.

However, despite the increasing strategic importance of middle leadership, many organizations continue to experience a fundamental imbalance between the responsibilities assigned to middle managers and the authority delegated to them. In practice, middle leaders are frequently held accountable for organizational performance while lacking sufficient authority to allocate resources, approve operational decisions, enforce managerial directives, or influence strategic priorities. This organizational inconsistency often creates a gap between managerial accountability and managerial empowerment, limiting the ability of middle leaders to perform their roles effectively.

Recent international reports indicate that middle managers have become one of the most pressured groups within organizations due to expanding responsibilities accompanied by limited organizational support and insufficient decision-making authority. For example, global organizational surveys conducted by McKinsey & Company highlight that middle managers are increasingly expected to deliver organizational transformation while receiving comparatively lower levels of empowerment and executive support than required for successful implementation. Similarly, Deloitte's Global Human Capital Trends reports consistently identify leadership capability, managerial empowerment, and organizational support as critical factors influencing organizational effectiveness in modern workplaces. Furthermore, Gallup's workplace studies demonstrate that managerial effectiveness significantly influences employee engagement, productivity, and organizational performance, while ineffective organizational structures and inadequate executive support reduce managerial effectiveness and organizational outcomes.

Although previous research has extensively examined constructs such as managerial empowerment, organizational support, leadership styles, and organizational performance, relatively limited attention has been devoted to **Authority–Responsibility Misalignment** as an independent organizational phenomenon. Existing studies have primarily investigated empowerment, delegation, or leadership behavior separately without examining how the inconsistency between managerial authority and assigned responsibility simultaneously affects both Middle Leadership Effectiveness and Organizational Performance.

Moreover, previous empirical studies have produced inconsistent findings regarding the relationship between managerial authority, leadership effectiveness, and organizational outcomes. While some studies suggest that greater managerial autonomy enhances leadership performance and organizational effectiveness, others indicate that organizational culture, executive leadership, governance structures, and resource availability significantly influence these relationships. These inconsistent findings suggest that additional organizational mechanisms may explain how authority–responsibility misalignment influences managerial effectiveness.

One such mechanism is **Top Management Support**, which has received increasing attention in contemporary management research. Although numerous studies recognize executive support as an important organizational resource, relatively few have investigated its mediating role in reducing the negative consequences of authority–responsibility misalignment. Consequently, there remains limited empirical evidence explaining whether supportive top management can compensate for insufficient managerial authority and improve both leadership effectiveness and organizational performance.

Accordingly, the research problem addressed in this study arises from the absence of a comprehensive empirical model that simultaneously examines the impact of Authority–Responsibility Misalignment on Middle Leadership Effectiveness and Organizational Performance while considering the mediating role of Top Management Support. Addressing this gap is expected to contribute to both organizational theory and managerial practice by providing a deeper understanding of how organizational structures influence leadership effectiveness and organizational success.

Based on the foregoing discussion, the present study seeks to answer the following primary research question:

What is the impact of Authority–Responsibility Misalignment on Middle Leadership Effectiveness and Organizational Performance, and to what extent does Top Management Support mediate this relationship?

To address this overarching question, the study will examine the following research questions:

1. To what extent does Authority–Responsibility Misalignment exist within contemporary organizations?
2. What is the impact of Authority–Responsibility Misalignment on Middle Leadership Effectiveness?
3. What is the impact of Authority–Responsibility Misalignment on Organizational Performance?
4. To what extent does Top Management Support influence Middle Leadership Effectiveness?
5. To what extent does Top Management Support influence Organizational Performance?
6. Does Top Management Support mediate the relationship between Authority–Responsibility Misalignment and Middle Leadership Effectiveness?
7. Does Top Management Support mediate the relationship between Authority–Responsibility Misalignment and Organizational Performance?

3. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study can be discussed from both **theoretical (academic)** and **practical** perspectives. Theoretically, the study seeks to advance scholarly understanding of organizational structures and leadership effectiveness by examining an underexplored organizational phenomenon. Practically, it aims to provide evidence-based recommendations that assist organizations in improving managerial effectiveness and organizational performance through better alignment between managerial authority and responsibility.

3.1. Theoretical Significance

The present study offers several important contributions to the existing body of knowledge in the fields of Business Administration, Organizational Behavior, and Strategic Management.

First, the study contributes to the theoretical development of management research by investigating **Authority–Responsibility Misalignment** as a distinct organizational construct rather than treating it merely as a component of managerial empowerment or delegation. Although previous studies have extensively examined leadership, empowerment, organizational support, and organizational performance, limited research has investigated the imbalance between managerial authority and assigned responsibility as an independent organizational phenomenon. Accordingly, this study expands the conceptual understanding of authority–responsibility alignment and its implications for organizational effectiveness.

Second, the study addresses an important gap in the existing literature by integrating four key organizational constructs—Authority–Responsibility Misalignment, Top Management Support, Middle Leadership Effectiveness, and Organizational Performance—within a single conceptual framework. Previous empirical studies have generally examined these variables independently or through direct relationships, while limited attention has been given to understanding their combined interaction within one comprehensive research model. Consequently, this study contributes to extending existing management theories by examining the direct and indirect relationships among these constructs.

Third, this research develops an integrated theoretical framework grounded in established management theories, including **Empowerment Theory**, **Perceived Organizational Support Theory**, **Agency Theory**, and **Situational Leadership Theory**. By combining these complementary theoretical perspectives, the study provides a more comprehensive explanation of how organizational structures and executive support jointly influence managerial effectiveness and organizational outcomes. Such theoretical integration is expected to enrich contemporary leadership and organizational behavior literature.

Finally, the findings of this study are expected to provide a valuable foundation for future researchers interested in organizational governance, managerial accountability, leadership effectiveness, organizational support, and strategic management by offering a validated conceptual model that may be replicated or extended across different organizational contexts and industries.

3.2. Practical Significance

Beyond its theoretical contributions, the study is expected to generate meaningful practical implications for organizations, executives, policymakers, and human resource professionals.

First, the findings will assist organizations in identifying structural weaknesses related to the misalignment between managerial authority and assigned responsibility. Understanding the extent of this organizational imbalance will enable organizations to redesign managerial roles, clarify decision-making authority, and establish more effective governance structures that improve accountability and organizational efficiency.

Second, the study will provide practical recommendations for senior executives and organizational leaders regarding the importance of supporting middle leaders through appropriate delegation of authority, resource allocation, executive communication, and organizational empowerment. Strengthening top management support is expected to enhance managerial confidence, improve leadership effectiveness, and facilitate more successful implementation of organizational strategies.

Third, the study may assist policymakers, corporate governance bodies, and organizational decision-makers in developing policies and managerial practices that promote greater consistency between authority, responsibility, and accountability. Such policies can contribute to building more resilient organizational structures capable of adapting to dynamic business environments while improving employee engagement, leadership performance, and overall organizational effectiveness.

Fourth, the research is expected to contribute to the development of a reliable measurement framework for assessing **Authority–Responsibility Misalignment, Top Management Support, Middle Leadership Effectiveness, and Organizational Performance**. The proposed measurement instrument may serve as a practical diagnostic tool that organizations can utilize to evaluate leadership effectiveness, identify organizational gaps, and support continuous organizational improvement initiatives.

Finally, by providing empirical evidence regarding the mechanisms through which organizational structures influence managerial performance, this study is expected to support organizational transformation initiatives and encourage the adoption of evidence-based management practices that improve both leadership capability and long-term organizational performance.

Overall, the present study is expected to make meaningful theoretical and practical contributions by providing a comprehensive understanding of how Authority–Responsibility Misalignment influences Middle Leadership Effectiveness and Organizational Performance. The findings are anticipated to support organizations in developing governance practices that strengthen managerial effectiveness, improve organizational performance, and enhance strategic decision-making through stronger Top Management Support.

4. Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are divided into one **general objective** and several **specific objectives**, all of which are designed to examine the relationships among the study variables and achieve the overall purpose of the research.

4.1. General Objective

To investigate the impact of **Authority–Responsibility Misalignment** on **Middle Leadership Effectiveness** and **Organizational Performance**, while examining the mediating role of **Top Management Support** within organizational settings.

4.2. Specific Objectives

To achieve the general objective, the study seeks to accomplish the following specific objectives:

1. To examine the extent of Authority–Responsibility Misalignment within contemporary organizations.
2. To investigate the impact of Authority–Responsibility Misalignment on Middle Leadership Effectiveness.
3. To examine the impact of Authority–Responsibility Misalignment on Organizational Performance.
4. To evaluate the influence of Top Management Support on Middle Leadership Effectiveness.
5. To assess the influence of Top Management Support on Organizational Performance.
6. To investigate the mediating role of Top Management Support in the relationship between Authority–Responsibility Misalignment and Middle Leadership Effectiveness.
7. To examine the mediating role of Top Management Support in the relationship between Authority–Responsibility Misalignment and Organizational Performance.

8. To develop an integrated conceptual framework that explains how organizational authority alignment and executive support jointly influence leadership effectiveness and organizational performance.
9. To propose evidence-based managerial recommendations that assist organizations in improving governance structures, strengthening middle leadership effectiveness, and enhancing organizational performance through better alignment between managerial authority and responsibility.

Collectively, these objectives provide a comprehensive framework for examining the relationships among the proposed research variables. They are designed to guide the empirical investigation, support hypothesis development, and contribute to both theoretical advancement and practical improvements in organizational leadership and governance.

5. Research Questions

The present study seeks to investigate the impact of **Authority–Responsibility Misalignment** on **Middle Leadership Effectiveness** and **Organizational Performance**, while examining the mediating role of **Top Management Support**. To achieve this purpose, the study addresses the following research questions.

5.1. Main Research Question

What is the impact of Authority–Responsibility Misalignment on Middle Leadership Effectiveness and Organizational Performance, and to what extent does Top Management Support mediate this relationship?

5.2. Specific Research Questions

To address the main research question, the following specific research questions are proposed:

1. To what extent does Authority–Responsibility Misalignment exist within contemporary organizations?
2. How does Authority–Responsibility Misalignment influence Middle Leadership Effectiveness?
3. How does Authority–Responsibility Misalignment affect Organizational Performance?
4. What is the relationship between Top Management Support and Middle Leadership Effectiveness?
5. What is the relationship between Top Management Support and Organizational Performance?
6. To what extent does Top Management Support mediate the relationship between Authority–Responsibility Misalignment and Middle Leadership Effectiveness?
7. To what extent does Top Management Support mediate the relationship between Authority–Responsibility Misalignment and Organizational Performance?

8. Which dimensions of Authority–Responsibility Misalignment have the greatest influence on Middle Leadership Effectiveness and Organizational Performance?
9. What managerial practices can organizations adopt to improve authority–responsibility alignment, strengthen middle leadership effectiveness, and enhance organizational performance?

The proposed research questions comprehensively address the objectives of the study and provide a logical basis for testing the research hypotheses. Together, they guide the empirical investigation and ensure a systematic examination of the relationships among the proposed research variables.

6. Research Hypotheses

This study adopts a quantitative research approach to examine the relationships among the proposed research variables. Based on the conceptual framework and the theoretical foundations of the study, the following hypotheses are proposed.

6.1. Hypothesis

H1:

Authority–Responsibility Misalignment has a statistically significant impact on Middle Leadership Effectiveness and Organizational Performance, with Top Management Support mediating this relationship.

6.2. Sub-Hypotheses

Direct Effect Hypotheses

H1a

Authority–Responsibility Misalignment has a statistically significant negative effect on Middle Leadership Effectiveness.

H1b

Authority–Responsibility Misalignment has a statistically significant negative effect on Organizational Performance.

H2a

Top Management Support has a statistically significant positive effect on Middle Leadership Effectiveness.

H2b

Top Management Support has a statistically significant positive effect on Organizational Performance.

Mediation Hypotheses

H3a

Top Management Support significantly mediates the relationship between Authority–Responsibility Misalignment and Middle Leadership Effectiveness.

H3b

Top Management Support significantly mediates the relationship between Authority–Responsibility Misalignment and Organizational Performance.

6.3. Null Hypotheses

To statistically test the proposed relationships, the corresponding null hypotheses are formulated as follows:

H01

Authority–Responsibility Misalignment has no statistically significant effect on Middle Leadership Effectiveness.

H02

Authority–Responsibility Misalignment has no statistically significant effect on Organizational Performance.

H03

Top Management Support has no statistically significant effect on Middle Leadership Effectiveness.

H04

Top Management Support has no statistically significant effect on Organizational Performance.

H05

Top Management Support does not significantly mediate the relationship between Authority–Responsibility Misalignment and Middle Leadership Effectiveness.

H06

Top Management Support does not significantly mediate the relationship between Authority–Responsibility Misalignment and Organizational Performance.

The proposed hypotheses are derived from the study's theoretical foundations and conceptual framework. Collectively, they provide a systematic basis for examining the direct and mediating relationships among the research variables through quantitative statistical analysis.

7. Literature Review

Theme One: Studies on Middle Leadership Effectiveness and Authority Alignment

Study 1

Anzengruber, J., Bergner, S., Nold, H., & Bumblauskas, D. (2020). *Be Like Me: The Effects of Manager–Supervisor Alignment*. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 42(2), 316–332.

This study examined the relationship between managerial capability alignment between managers and their direct supervisors and its influence on managerial effectiveness across different organizational levels. The researchers sought to determine whether alignment between managers and supervisors contributes to higher leadership effectiveness.

The study employed a quantitative research design using data collected from more than **1,600 manager–supervisor dyads** across organizations in the United States and Germany. Managerial effectiveness was assessed using organizational performance evaluations, while polynomial regression analysis was used to examine the degree of alignment between managers and supervisors.

The findings demonstrated that managerial effectiveness increases significantly when the managerial capabilities of middle managers are aligned with those of their supervisors. The study further revealed that both the quality of alignment and the capability level of supervisors jointly influence managerial effectiveness. Moreover, the impact of alignment differed according to managerial hierarchy, indicating that middle managers are particularly sensitive to the quality of executive alignment.

Although the study provides strong empirical evidence regarding managerial alignment, it focuses primarily on capability congruence rather than examining the broader organizational issue of **Authority–Responsibility Misalignment**. Furthermore, it does not investigate organizational performance as a dependent variable nor examine the mediating role of Top Management Support. Consequently, the present research extends this work by exploring how structural authority

misalignment influences both leadership effectiveness and organizational performance through executive support mechanisms.

Study 2

Song, L. J., Zhang, X., & Wu, J. (2014). *A Multilevel Analysis of Middle Manager Performance: The Role of CEO and Top Manager Leadership*. *Management and Organization Review*, 10(2), 275–297.

The objective of this study was to investigate how CEO leadership behavior and top management support jointly influence the performance of middle managers through a multilevel organizational framework.

Using a multilevel quantitative design, the researchers analyzed data collected from **608 middle managers** and **140 top managers** representing **40 organizations**. Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM) was employed to examine the interaction between CEO leadership styles and top management support.

The study concluded that supportive top managers significantly improve middle managers' performance, particularly when CEO leadership exhibits authoritarian or task-oriented characteristics. The findings further suggest that executive support can compensate for unfavorable leadership conditions at higher organizational levels and substantially improve managerial effectiveness.

Despite its valuable contribution, the study focused primarily on leadership behaviors rather than organizational structures. It did not investigate the balance between managerial authority and responsibility nor evaluate organizational performance directly. Therefore, the present study expands the existing literature by introducing **Authority–Responsibility Misalignment** as an organizational antecedent while simultaneously examining organizational performance as an additional outcome variable.

Study 3

Tawse, A., Atwater, L., Vera, D., & Werner, S. (2020). *Strategy Implementation Capability: The Role of Middle Manager Leadership and Coordination*. Academy of Management Proceedings.

This study explored the contribution of middle managers' leadership behaviors and coordination capabilities to successful strategy implementation.

The researchers adopted a quantitative research approach using **44 organizational work teams** undergoing strategic transformation. Leadership behaviors and coordination processes were measured through organizational surveys, while statistical analyses examined their direct and indirect influence on strategy implementation capability.

The findings revealed that transformational leadership among middle managers significantly enhances strategy implementation effectiveness. Additionally, coordination processes partially mediate the relationship between leadership and successful implementation. The study emphasized that middle managers play a strategic role in translating organizational objectives into operational outcomes.

Although the study confirms the strategic importance of middle leadership, it concentrates primarily on leadership style and coordination mechanisms. It does not examine whether managers possess sufficient organizational authority to execute their assigned responsibilities, nor does it investigate executive support as a mediating organizational resource. These limitations provide an important opportunity for the current study to extend existing knowledge.

Critical Comparative Analysis

The three studies consistently recognize **middle leadership** as a fundamental determinant of organizational effectiveness. They collectively demonstrate that managerial alignment, executive support, and leadership capability significantly influence managerial performance and organizational success.

However, several important differences emerge among these studies. Anzengruber et al. (2020) focused on **manager–supervisor capability alignment**, whereas Song et al. (2014) examined **multilevel leadership support**, and Tawse et al. (2020) emphasized **strategy implementation capability**. Although all three studies investigated leadership-related factors, none explicitly addressed **Authority–Responsibility Misalignment** as an independent organizational construct.

Methodologically, all three studies adopted quantitative research designs using different analytical techniques, including polynomial regression and hierarchical linear modeling. Their findings consistently support the importance of leadership alignment and executive support, yet they differ regarding the organizational mechanisms responsible for improving managerial effectiveness.

Collectively, these studies demonstrate that leadership effectiveness depends on organizational conditions beyond individual leadership competencies. Nevertheless, they leave several questions unanswered concerning how structural imbalances between managerial authority and assigned responsibility affect leadership effectiveness and organizational performance.

8. Research Gap

Managerial empowerment, and organizational performance, several important research gaps remain. First, most previous studies have examined these constructs independently or through simple bilateral relationships rather than integrating them within a comprehensive conceptual framework. In particular, limited attention has been given to **Authority–Responsibility Misalignment** as a distinct organizational construct, despite its practical significance in influencing managerial effectiveness and organizational outcomes.

Second, existing research has primarily focused on leadership styles, employee empowerment, or organizational support, while comparatively few studies have investigated the structural imbalance between managerial authority and assigned responsibility. Consequently, the mechanisms through which such misalignment affects middle managers' ability to perform their strategic and operational roles remain insufficiently understood.

Third, although numerous studies have confirmed the positive influence of Top Management Support on leadership and organizational outcomes, little empirical research has examined its mediating role in mitigating the negative consequences of Authority–Responsibility Misalignment. This represents an important theoretical gap, as executive support may function as a critical organizational mechanism that strengthens managerial effectiveness despite structural constraints.

Furthermore, previous studies have frequently concentrated on specific industries, organizational contexts, or geographical settings, limiting the generalizability of their findings. In addition, many studies have investigated leadership effectiveness and organizational performance separately without examining their simultaneous relationship within a single integrated research model.

Accordingly, the present study seeks to address these gaps by proposing and empirically testing an integrated conceptual framework that examines the impact of **Authority–**

Responsibility Misalignment on Middle Leadership Effectiveness and Organizational Performance, while investigating the mediating role of **Top Management Support**. By integrating these variables into a single explanatory model, the study is expected to contribute to the existing body of knowledge in Business Administration and provide practical recommendations for improving organizational governance, managerial effectiveness, and organizational performance.

9. Theoretical Foundations of the Study

The present study is grounded in a multidisciplinary theoretical framework that integrates complementary perspectives from leadership, organizational behavior, strategic management, and organizational governance. Since the study investigates the relationships among **Authority–Responsibility Misalignment**, **Middle Leadership Effectiveness**, **Top Management Support**, and **Organizational Performance**, no single theory is sufficient to explain all dimensions of the proposed conceptual model. Therefore, this research adopts four complementary theories that collectively provide a comprehensive explanation of the proposed relationships.

1. Empowerment Theory

Empowerment Theory serves as one of the primary theoretical foundations of this study. The theory proposes that employees and managers perform more effectively when they are provided with adequate authority, autonomy, resources, and opportunities to participate in organizational decision-making. According to empowerment scholars, managerial effectiveness is strongly influenced by the degree to which individuals possess the authority required to fulfill their assigned responsibilities.

Within organizational settings, empowerment extends beyond merely delegating tasks; it involves granting managers the authority necessary to make decisions, allocate resources, solve operational problems, and exercise leadership. When organizations assign responsibilities without providing corresponding authority, managers experience reduced autonomy, lower job satisfaction, diminished motivation, and weaker leadership effectiveness.

In the context of the present study, Empowerment Theory explains how **Authority–Responsibility Misalignment** can negatively influence **Middle Leadership Effectiveness**. The theory suggests that insufficient managerial authority limits leaders' ability to influence organizational outcomes, thereby reducing their effectiveness in executing strategic and operational responsibilities.

2. Perceived Organizational Support Theory (POS Theory)

Perceived Organizational Support Theory, originally developed by Eisenberger and colleagues, suggests that employees develop general beliefs regarding the extent to which their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being. Organizational support is reflected through managerial trust, resource allocation, recognition, communication, and executive commitment.

Within this theoretical perspective, Top Management Support represents one of the strongest organizational signals demonstrating institutional commitment toward managerial success. When middle leaders perceive strong executive support, they are more likely to demonstrate higher organizational commitment, stronger motivation, greater confidence, and improved leadership performance.

The present study applies POS Theory to explain the mediating role of **Top Management Support**. Specifically, the theory suggests that executive support may reduce the negative organizational consequences of Authority–Responsibility Misalignment by providing additional guidance, organizational resources, decision-making flexibility, and psychological support.

3. Agency Theory

Agency Theory provides an important governance perspective for understanding organizational authority, accountability, and managerial responsibility. The theory argues that organizational effectiveness depends on establishing clear relationships between authority, responsibility, accountability, and decision-making rights.

According to Agency Theory, organizational inefficiency emerges when managers are held accountable for organizational outcomes without possessing adequate authority to influence those outcomes. Such situations create governance problems, increase role ambiguity, reduce managerial accountability, and ultimately impair organizational performance.

Within the framework of this study, Agency Theory explains why **Authority–Responsibility Misalignment** may negatively affect both **Middle Leadership Effectiveness** and **Organizational Performance**. The theory provides the governance rationale underlying the proposed relationship between organizational structure and managerial effectiveness.

4. Situational Leadership Theory

Situational Leadership Theory proposes that leadership effectiveness depends not only on the personal characteristics of leaders but also on the organizational context within which leadership is exercised. Effective leadership emerges when managerial behaviors are appropriately aligned with organizational conditions, employee readiness, available resources, and environmental demands.

This theory recognizes that even highly competent leaders may fail to achieve organizational objectives if organizational structures restrict their authority or if executive support is insufficient. Consequently, leadership effectiveness cannot be evaluated independently from the organizational environment.

Within the present study, Situational Leadership Theory explains why organizational conditions—particularly **Authority–Responsibility Alignment** and **Top Management Support**—may significantly influence the effectiveness of middle leaders. The theory complements Empowerment Theory by emphasizing that leadership outcomes are contingent upon organizational circumstances rather than solely individual leadership competencies.

Integration of the Theoretical Framework

The four theories complement one another in explaining the conceptual framework proposed in this study.

Empowerment Theory explains the importance of granting managers sufficient authority to perform their assigned responsibilities effectively. Perceived Organizational Support Theory

explains how executive support enhances managerial motivation, confidence, and effectiveness. Agency Theory provides the governance perspective by emphasizing the necessity of aligning authority, responsibility, and accountability within organizational structures. Finally, Situational Leadership Theory explains how organizational context shapes leadership effectiveness and managerial performance.

Collectively, these theories provide a comprehensive theoretical foundation for examining the impact of **Authority–Responsibility Misalignment** on **Middle Leadership Effectiveness** and **Organizational Performance**, while simultaneously explaining the mediating role of **Top Management Support**. Their integration allows the study to examine both structural and behavioral dimensions of organizational effectiveness, thereby offering a more holistic explanation of the proposed research model.

Application of the Theoretical Framework to the Present Study

The proposed theoretical framework assumes that Authority–Responsibility Misalignment represents a structural organizational problem that directly reduces the effectiveness of middle leaders and negatively influences organizational performance. However, the study further assumes that Top Management Support functions as an organizational mechanism capable of mitigating these negative effects by providing strategic guidance, organizational resources, executive encouragement, and decision-making support.

Accordingly, the study proposes that organizations can improve leadership effectiveness and organizational performance not only by aligning managerial authority with assigned responsibilities but also by strengthening executive support mechanisms that empower middle leaders to fulfill their organizational roles successfully.

10. Research Methodology

Research Design and Methodology

This study adopts a **quantitative, explanatory, and applied research design** to investigate the relationships among **Authority–Responsibility Misalignment, Middle Leadership Effectiveness, Top Management Support, and Organizational Performance**. The selected research design is appropriate because the primary objective of the study is to examine causal relationships among clearly defined variables and empirically test the proposed conceptual framework.

The research is classified as an **applied study** because its findings are expected to generate practical recommendations that can assist organizations in improving managerial effectiveness, organizational governance, and overall organizational performance. At the same time, the study is **explanatory** in nature because it seeks to explain how Authority–Responsibility Misalignment influences organizational outcomes and whether Top Management Support mediates these relationships.

Research Approach

The study employs a **quantitative research approach**, which is widely recognized as the most appropriate methodology for examining relationships among organizational constructs through statistical analysis.

A quantitative approach enables the researcher to:

- Measure the perceptions of middle managers regarding Authority–Responsibility Misalignment.
- Examine the relationships among the proposed variables using statistical techniques.
- Test the proposed research hypotheses objectively.
- Evaluate the mediating effect of Top Management Support.

- Generalize the findings to a broader organizational population.

The quantitative approach also provides greater objectivity, reliability, and statistical rigor, making it particularly suitable for leadership and organizational behavior research.

Research Strategy

The study will utilize a **cross-sectional survey design**, in which data will be collected from participants at a single point in time through a structured questionnaire.

The questionnaire will be administered electronically to middle managers working in organizations from different sectors, including public, private, and semi-government organizations, in order to obtain diverse managerial perspectives and improve the generalizability of the findings.

A cross-sectional survey is considered appropriate because it allows the researcher to measure multiple organizational constructs simultaneously while examining the structural relationships among them.

Research Implementation Plan

The study will be conducted through the following sequential stages:

Stage One: Literature Review

A comprehensive review of contemporary literature will be undertaken to identify the theoretical foundations of the study, define the research constructs, review previous empirical studies, identify the research gap, and develop the proposed conceptual framework.

Stage Two: Development of the Research Instrument

Based on established measurement scales identified in previous research, a structured questionnaire will be developed to measure:

- Authority–Responsibility Misalignment
- Top Management Support



- Middle Leadership Effectiveness
- Organizational Performance

The questionnaire will be designed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from **Strongly Disagree (1)** to **Strongly Agree (5)**.

Before large-scale data collection, the questionnaire will undergo expert review and pilot testing to evaluate content validity, clarity, and reliability.

Stage Three: Data Collection

The finalized questionnaire will be distributed electronically to middle managers working in organizations across different sectors.

Participation will be voluntary, anonymous, and confidential to encourage honest responses and reduce response bias.

The collected data will be screened for completeness, missing values, and outliers before statistical analysis.

Stage Four: Data Analysis

The collected data will be analyzed using appropriate statistical software.

The analysis will include:

- Descriptive statistics.
- Reliability analysis (Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability).
- Validity assessment (Convergent and Discriminant Validity).
- Correlation analysis.

- Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test the direct relationships among the study variables.
- Mediation analysis to examine the mediating role of Top Management Support.

Stage Five: Interpretation and Discussion

The statistical findings will be interpreted in light of the theoretical framework and previous empirical studies.

The discussion will compare the results with existing literature, explain similarities and differences, highlight theoretical contributions, and provide practical implications for organizational leaders and decision-makers.

Research Process

The overall research process can be summarized as follows:

1. Identification of the research problem.
2. Comprehensive literature review.
3. Development of the conceptual framework.
4. Formulation of research hypotheses.
5. Questionnaire design and validation.
6. Data collection.
7. Statistical analysis.
8. Interpretation of findings.
9. Conclusions and recommendations.

11. Population and Sample

The target population of this study consists of **middle managers** working in organizations across different sectors, including public, private, and semi-government organizations. Middle managers are selected because they represent the organizational level most directly affected by the alignment between managerial authority and assigned responsibility and play a critical role in translating strategic objectives into operational outcomes.

A representative sample of approximately **300 to 400 middle managers** will be selected using **stratified random sampling** to ensure adequate representation of organizations from different sectors and organizational sizes. This sampling technique is considered appropriate because it increases the representativeness of the sample and improves the generalizability of the research findings.

The proposed sample size is considered sufficient for conducting **Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)** and testing the proposed conceptual framework. Participation in the study will be voluntary, and respondents will be assured that all information collected will remain confidential and will be used solely for academic research purposes.

12. Research Instrument

Data Collection Instruments

To achieve the objectives of the study and empirically test the proposed conceptual framework, primary data will be collected through a **structured questionnaire**. The questionnaire is considered the most appropriate instrument for this study because it enables the systematic collection of quantitative data from a relatively large number of respondents while ensuring consistency, objectivity, and statistical comparability.

The questionnaire will be developed based on well-established measurement scales reported in previous peer-reviewed studies related to leadership, organizational behavior, managerial empowerment, organizational support, and organizational performance. Existing validated measurement items will be carefully adapted to fit the context and objectives of the present study while maintaining their conceptual integrity.

Questionnaire Structure

The questionnaire will consist of two main sections.

Section One: Demographic Information

The first section will collect respondents' demographic and organizational information to describe the study sample and support subsequent statistical analyses.

The demographic variables will include:

- Gender
- Age
- Educational qualification
- Years of managerial experience
- Current managerial position

- Organizational sector (Public, Private, or Semi-Government)
- Organization size
- Industry type

These variables may also be used to examine whether respondents' characteristics influence the proposed relationships.

Section Two: Research Constructs

The second section will measure the four principal constructs of the study using a **five-point Likert scale**, ranging from:

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neutral

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree

The questionnaire is expected to include approximately **38–45 measurement items**, distributed as follows:

Construct	Approximate Number of Items
Authority–Responsibility Misalignment	10
Top Management Support	10
Middle Leadership Effectiveness	10
Organizational Performance	10

Each construct will be measured through multiple indicators adapted from internationally recognized measurement scales reported in previous empirical studies.

Questionnaire Development

The questionnaire will be developed through a systematic multi-stage process.

First, an extensive review of contemporary literature will be conducted to identify reliable and validated measurement scales relevant to each research construct.

Second, the selected measurement items will be adapted to ensure their suitability for the organizational context of the present study while preserving their original theoretical meaning.

Third, the preliminary questionnaire will be reviewed by academic experts specializing in Business Administration, Organizational Behavior, Leadership, and Research Methodology to evaluate the clarity, relevance, and comprehensiveness of each measurement item.

Finally, the revised questionnaire will undergo pilot testing before full-scale data collection to identify any ambiguities or practical issues affecting respondents' understanding.

Validity of the Research Instrument

Several procedures will be implemented to ensure the validity of the questionnaire.

Content Validity

Content validity will be established through expert evaluation. A panel of university professors and specialists in Business Administration and Organizational Behavior will review the questionnaire to assess the relevance, clarity, and representativeness of each measurement item.

Their comments and recommendations will be incorporated before finalizing the questionnaire.



Construct Validity

Construct validity will be assessed statistically after data collection using:

- Factor Loadings
- Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
- Composite Reliability (CR)
- Discriminant Validity

These procedures will confirm that the questionnaire accurately measures the intended theoretical constructs.

Reliability of the Research Instrument

The internal consistency of the questionnaire will be evaluated using several reliability measures.

Cronbach's Alpha

Cronbach's Alpha coefficients will be calculated for each construct to determine internal consistency reliability.

A Cronbach's Alpha value of **0.70 or higher** will be considered acceptable.

Composite Reliability

Composite Reliability (CR) will also be calculated because it provides a more comprehensive assessment of construct reliability in Structural Equation Modeling.

Values greater than **0.70** will indicate satisfactory reliability.

Pilot Study

Before administering the questionnaire to the full sample, a pilot study involving approximately **30–40 middle managers** will be conducted.



The pilot study aims to:

- Evaluate questionnaire clarity.
- Identify ambiguous wording.
- Estimate completion time.
- Assess preliminary reliability.
- Improve measurement quality.

Necessary revisions will be made before launching the final survey.

Administration of the Questionnaire

The finalized questionnaire will be distributed electronically using secure online survey platforms.

Participation will be voluntary and anonymous.

Respondents will be informed that:

- Participation is entirely voluntary.
- Individual responses will remain confidential.
- Data will be used solely for academic research.
- No personally identifiable information will be disclosed.

These procedures are intended to enhance response accuracy and minimize social desirability bias.

The structured questionnaire is expected to provide reliable and valid data for examining the proposed conceptual framework. The use of previously validated measurement scales, together with appropriate validity and reliability assessments, is expected to enhance the quality and credibility of the empirical findings.

13. Statistical Analysis Methods

The collected data will be analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics and SmartPLS software. Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques will be employed to examine the relationships among the study variables and to test the proposed research hypotheses.

The statistical analysis will be conducted in several stages.

First, descriptive statistics will be used to summarize the demographic characteristics of the respondents, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations.

Second, the reliability of the research instrument will be assessed using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) to ensure the internal consistency of the measurement scales.

Third, the validity of the measurement model will be evaluated through Convergent Validity, using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and Discriminant Validity, using the Fornell–Larcker Criterion and the Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT).

Fourth, Pearson Correlation Analysis will be conducted to examine the strength and direction of the relationships among the study variables.

Finally, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) will be employed using SmartPLS to test the proposed conceptual framework, evaluate the direct effects among the research variables, and examine the mediating role of Top Management Support in the relationship between Authority–Responsibility Misalignment, Middle Leadership Effectiveness, and Organizational Performance.

The statistical results will be interpreted at a significance level of 0.05, and the findings will be presented using appropriate statistical tables and figures to facilitate interpretation and discussion.

14. Research Delimitations

The present study is conducted within clearly defined delimitations that specify the scope of the research and facilitate the interpretation of its findings. These delimitations relate to the target population, geographical coverage, temporal scope, and research context.

Human Delimitations

The target population of this study consists of **middle managers** employed in organizations operating across various economic sectors, including public, private, and semi-government organizations.

The study focuses specifically on individuals occupying middle management positions because they represent the organizational level most directly affected by the alignment between managerial authority and assigned responsibility. Their strategic role in translating organizational objectives into operational outcomes makes them the most appropriate participants for examining the proposed research model.

A representative sample of approximately **300–400 middle managers** will be selected using **stratified random sampling** to ensure adequate representation of organizations from different sectors and organizational sizes.

The selected sample size is considered appropriate for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and is expected to provide sufficient statistical power for testing the proposed conceptual framework.

Organizational Delimitations

The study is limited to organizations that possess formal organizational structures with clearly defined managerial levels and reporting relationships.

Organizations included in the study should have established middle management positions responsible for supervising employees, coordinating operational activities, and implementing organizational strategies.

Small organizations with highly informal organizational structures may be excluded because the distinction between managerial authority and responsibility is often less defined in such environments.

Geographical Delimitations

The study is not restricted to a specific country or geographical region. Instead, it is designed to investigate the proposed research model within organizational contexts regardless of geographical location.

This broader scope enhances the theoretical contribution and increases the potential applicability and generalizability of the findings across different organizational environments, provided that participating organizations possess comparable managerial structures.

Should data collection be conducted within a particular country or region for practical reasons, this will be clearly acknowledged as an operational limitation rather than a theoretical limitation of the study.

Temporal Delimitations

The study is expected to be conducted during the **2026–2027 academic year**.

Data collection is planned to take place during the **first semester of 2027**, while data analysis, interpretation of findings, and thesis preparation will be completed during the subsequent stages of the research.

The findings of the study will therefore reflect organizational perceptions and managerial practices during the specified period.

Subject Delimitations

The scope of the study is limited to examining the relationships among the following research variables:

- Authority–Responsibility Misalignment
- Top Management Support
- Middle Leadership Effectiveness
- Organizational Performance

Other organizational variables that may influence leadership effectiveness or organizational performance—such as organizational culture, leadership style, employee engagement, organizational commitment, or psychological empowerment—are beyond the scope of the present study and are not included in the proposed conceptual framework.

These delimitations define the scope of the present study while ensuring that the research remains focused on its objectives. They also facilitate the interpretation and generalization of the findings within the specified organizational context.

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