

Chapter Two

Section One

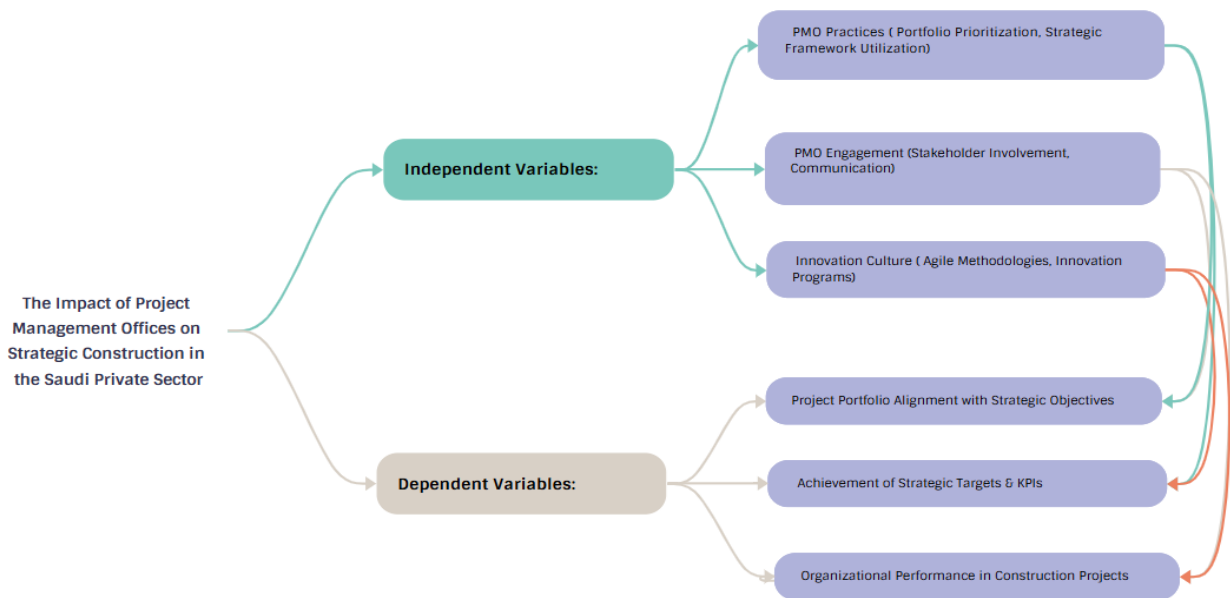
Study model

Independent Variables:

- PMO Practices (Portfolio Prioritization, Strategic Framework Utilization)
- PMO Engagement (Stakeholder Involvement, Communication)
- Innovation Culture (Agile Methodologies, Innovation Programs)

Dependent Variables:

- Project Portfolio Alignment with Strategic Objectives
- Achievement of Strategic Targets & KPIs
- Organizational Performance in Construction Projects



- PMO Practices **supports** Project Portfolio Alignment with Strategic Objectives and Achievement of Strategic Targets & KPIs.
- PMO Engagement **supports** Project Portfolio Alignment with Strategic Objectives and Organizational Performance in Construction Projects.
- Innovation Culture **supports** Achievement of Strategic Targets & KPIs and Organizational Performance in Construction Projects.

Theoretical Background of the Independent Variable — Project Management Office (PMO)

1. Concept of the PMO

A Project Management Office (PMO) is a centralized organizational unit that standardizes project-related governance processes and facilitates the sharing of resources, methodologies, tools, and techniques. The PMO plays a critical role in ensuring that projects and programs are aligned with organizational goals and strategies. Its functions may vary from providing support to managing portfolios, depending on the organizational structure and maturity.

According to the Project Management Institute (PMI), PMOs can be classified into three types:

- **Supportive PMO:** Provides consultative roles, templates, and guidance.
- **Controlling PMO:** Enforces compliance with governance frameworks.
- **Directive PMO:** Directly manages projects and programs.

2. Importance of PMOs

The PMO is essential in ensuring project success, especially in complex or strategic initiatives. It provides a framework for consistency, accountability, and visibility. Key areas of importance include:

- Aligning projects and programs with organizational strategy.
- Enhancing governance and compliance.
- Increasing project success rates through standardization.
- Improving resource management and utilization.
- Enabling decision-making through data and reporting.

In the context of national transformation programs such as **Saudi Vision 2030**, PMOs are instrumental in driving reform projects, coordinating across sectors, and tracking the impact of strategic initiatives.

3. Related Theories

Several theoretical frameworks support the understanding and function of PMOs:

- **Resource-Based View (RBV):** Positions PMOs as a strategic resource that enhances organizational capabilities.
- **Contingency Theory:** Suggests the design and role of PMOs should align with the specific context and complexity of the organization.
- **Institutional Theory:** Explains the institutional pressures that lead organizations to adopt PMOs as formal structures to ensure legitimacy.
- **Organizational Alignment Theory:** Highlights the importance of aligning organizational systems (including PMOs) with strategic goals to enhance performance.

4. Determinants of PMO Effectiveness

The structure, authority, and success of a PMO depend on several determinants, including:

- **Organizational maturity and culture:** More mature organizations integrate PMOs into strategic processes.
- **Executive support:** Top management sponsorship is crucial for the PMO's influence.
- **Clarity of roles and responsibilities:** Ambiguity undermines PMO authority.
- **Integration with strategy:** PMOs aligned with the organization's strategic plan are more impactful.
- **Communication systems:** Effective communication enhances coordination and implementation.

5. Dimensions of PMOs

PMOs function across multiple dimensions, including:

- **Strategic Alignment:** Ensuring projects support strategic goals.
- **Portfolio Management:** Prioritizing and selecting projects based on strategic value.
- **Governance and Oversight:** Establishing policies, controls, and reporting structures.
- **Knowledge Management:** Capturing and disseminating best practices and lessons learned.
- **Performance Monitoring:** Tracking KPIs and providing visibility into project outcomes.
- **Capacity Building:** Enhancing project management capabilities and standards.

6. Challenges Facing PMOs

Despite their importance, PMOs often encounter significant challenges, such as:

- **Lack of top management support:** Without executive backing, PMOs may lack authority and influence.
- **Role ambiguity and resistance to change:** Misunderstanding of the PMO's purpose can lead to internal resistance.
- **Misalignment with strategic goals:** Failure to link projects with strategic direction diminishes the PMO's value.
- **Over-bureaucratization:** Excessive controls can hinder agility and innovation.
- **Inconsistent performance measurement:** Lack of clear KPIs makes it difficult to demonstrate value.

Section Two

Theoretical Background of the Dependent Variable — Strategic Plan Implementation

1. Concept of Strategic Plan Implementation

Strategic plan implementation refers to the process of turning formulated strategies into actionable initiatives, programs, and projects to achieve organizational goals. It involves translating vision and objectives into operational activities, allocating resources, and monitoring execution. While strategy formulation focuses on “what” the organization aims to achieve, implementation addresses “how” those aims will be accomplished.

Successful strategic implementation ensures the alignment of internal processes, structures, and people with long-term goals, transforming plans into measurable outcomes.

2. Importance of Strategic Plan Implementation

Even the most well-formulated strategies fail without effective implementation. The importance of strategic plan implementation includes:

- Translating vision into measurable progress.
- Achieving competitive advantage through execution excellence.
- Ensuring accountability and alignment across departments.
- Supporting change management and organizational transformation.
- Enabling tracking of progress toward national or sectoral strategies (e.g., Saudi Vision 2030).

In the Saudi context, strategic implementation is a national priority due to the scale and complexity of transformation programs across both public and private sectors.

3. Related Theories

Several theories explain the process and challenges of strategic implementation:

- **Strategy-as-Practice Theory:** Focuses on the actions and interactions of individuals involved in the strategy process, emphasizing that strategy is shaped by people, processes, and context.
- **Balanced Scorecard (BSC):** A performance management framework that translates strategy into objectives across financial, customer, internal process, and learning perspectives.
- **McKinsey 7S Framework:** Argues that successful implementation requires alignment of structure, systems, style, staff, skills, strategy, and shared values.
- **Kotter’s 8-Step Change Model:** Provides a structured approach to managing strategic change within organizations.

4. Determinants of Strategic Plan Implementation

Key factors that influence successful implementation include:

- **Leadership and top management commitment.**
- **Organizational structure and clarity of roles.**
- **Resource availability and allocation.**
- **Employee engagement and accountability.**
- **Effective communication of goals and expectations.**
- **Monitoring systems and feedback loops.**

5. Dimensions of Strategic Implementation

Strategic plan implementation typically involves multiple interrelated dimensions:

- **Goal translation and cascading.**
- **Operational planning and execution.**
- **Resource and budget allocation.**
- **Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms (KPIs, dashboards).**
- **Feedback, adaptation, and continuous improvement.**

6. Challenges of Strategic Implementation

Despite its importance, organizations face numerous barriers to strategic execution:

- **Misalignment between strategy and operations.**
- **Lack of accountability or unclear responsibilities.**
- **Ineffective coordination across units.**
- **Resistance to change and cultural inertia.**
- **Insufficient resources or unrealistic plans.**
- **Poor monitoring and corrective action mechanisms.**

Section Three

Relationship Between PMO and Strategic Plan Implementation

1. Theoretical Relationship Between the Variables

The Project Management Office (PMO) acts as a strategic integrator, serving as the operational arm for implementing organizational strategy through structured project and portfolio management. Theoretically, PMOs contribute to strategy implementation by:

- **Bridging the gap between strategy and execution.**
- **Providing governance and oversight to ensure alignment.**
- **Coordinating resources, timelines, and deliverables.**
- **Enabling performance tracking and corrective action.**

According to Organizational Alignment Theory, strategic success requires vertical and horizontal integration of processes and structures. PMOs provide this integration by operationalizing strategic goals through standardized practices.

From a Resource-Based View (RBV), the PMO can be seen as a unique organizational capability that enhances implementation capacity through coordination, knowledge sharing, and performance monitoring.

2. Previous Studies on PMO and Strategic Plan Implementation

Numerous studies have explored the PMO's impact on strategy execution:

- **Hobbs & Aubry (2008):** Identified the PMO as a central actor in project governance, influencing strategic alignment and implementation quality.
- **Aubry et al. (2007):** Emphasized the PMO's evolving role from tactical support to strategic influence.
- **PMI Pulse of the Profession (2017):** Found that organizations with mature PMOs are significantly more likely to achieve strategic objectives.
- **PwC Middle East PMO Study (2023):** Revealed that only 39% of regional PMOs effectively align with strategy, compared to 94% globally, pointing to a maturity gap.
- **Philbin (2016):** Demonstrated how PMOs in the UK public sector support strategic delivery through portfolio governance and structured processes.

These studies collectively affirm the enabling role of PMOs in executing strategic plans, though they also highlight contextual differences in effectiveness based on maturity, structure, and leadership support.

3. Commentary on the Literature

The literature supports the PMO as a critical mechanism for bridging strategic intent with execution. However, significant gaps remain in understanding how PMOs function in the **Saudi private sector**, particularly under national transformation pressures. Much of the existing research focuses on public institutions or global corporate environments, limiting the contextual applicability.

There is also a lack of empirical studies measuring the **direct impact** of PMO maturity, structure, or functions on **strategic plan implementation outcomes** in localized settings. This gap justifies the need for this research, which aims to evaluate how PMOs in Saudi private organizations contribute to or hinder strategy realization under Vision 2030 reforms.

Literatures Review

Analytical Analysis of Previous Studies

1. Points of Convergence

Across Philbin (2016), Brito & Medeiros Junior (2021), Ntshwene et al. (2022), and Jamaleldine (2023), there is broad agreement that:

- PMOs function as strategic enablers by aligning projects with organizational goals.
- Standardization of processes, governance frameworks, and performance monitoring are critical to PMO success.
- The absence of clear structures, standardized methodologies, and KPIs undermines PMO effectiveness and makes cross-organizational comparisons difficult.
- PMOs must be contextually adapted to fit organizational maturity, sectoral requirements, and strategic priorities.

This aligns with the current research framework, where PMO Practices (portfolio prioritization, strategic framework utilization) and PMO Engagement (stakeholder involvement, communication) are hypothesized to drive project portfolio alignment, achievement of KPIs, and organizational performance in construction projects.

Area of Divergence	Studies Involved	Nature of Difference	Reasons for Discrepancy
Focus on Structure vs. Process	Philbin (2016) vs. Jamaleldine (2023)	Philbin focuses on designing PMO structures to fit organizational culture; Jamaleldine emphasizes operational processes for improving efficiency.	Difference in research scope — Philbin uses a theoretical lens on PMO typologies, while Jamaleldine applies an operational performance focus.
Stakeholder Engagement	Brito & Medeiros Junior (2021) vs. Ntshwene et al. (2022)	Brito stresses active stakeholder involvement in strategic alignment, whereas Ntshwene focuses more on performance measurement via KPIs, with less attention to stakeholder dynamics.	Divergence stems from methodological emphasis — stakeholder engagement is qualitative and contextual, while KPI measurement is quantitative and standardized.
Sector & Cultural Context	Jamaleldine (2023) vs. Philbin (2016)	Jamaleldine notes regional/cultural factors as gaps; Philbin treats PMOs as largely universal constructs without deep cultural adaptation.	Philbin's study is cross-industry and global; Jamaleldine's is more sensitive to regional adaptation needs .
Strategic vs. Operational Impact	Brito & Medeiros Junior (2021) vs. Ntshwene et al. (2022)	Brito links PMOs to strategy implementation in Project-Based Businesses; Ntshwene measures operational efficiency in Botswana organizations.	Strategic impact is harder to measure, leading to more conceptual framing in Brito, while Ntshwene chooses measurable operational indicators .

2. Linking to the Current Research Problem

the research problem — **limited empirical frameworks describing how PMOs in Saudi Arabia's construction sector align portfolios with strategic objectives under Vision 2030** — directly intersects with the gaps identified in these studies:

- **From Philbin (2016):** Need for **custom-fit PMO structures** tailored to context → your study applies this to **Saudi construction projects**.
- **From Brito & Medeiros Junior (2021):** Stakeholder engagement and cross-departmental communication are vital → your study includes **PMO Engagement** as a key independent variable.
- **From Ntshwene et al. (2022):** Lack of **formal KPIs** → your study measures **Achievement of Strategic Targets & KPIs** as a dependent variable.
- **From Jamaleldine (2023):** Cultural and sector-specific adaptation gaps → your study situates PMO evaluation in the **Saudi Vision 2030 construction sector context**, bridging the cultural adaptation gap.

3. Reasons for Mixed Results in Previous Research

- **Differences in Context:** Studies were conducted in different regions (global, Botswana, Saudi private sector) and sectors (IT, engineering, general project-based businesses), leading to varying relevance of findings.
- **Variations in Measurement:** Some relied on conceptual models (Philbin), others on KPI frameworks (Ntshwene), and others on qualitative strategic alignment assessment (Brito).
- **Temporal Scope:** Short-term efficiency outcomes vs. long-term strategic alignment cause different conclusions on PMO value.
- **Focus Areas:** Some prioritize governance and control (Philbin, Ntshwene), others innovation and adaptability (Brito, Jamaleldine).

4. How the Current Study Advances the Field

By integrating PMO Practices, PMO Engagement, and Innovation Culture into a single framework, your research addresses the:

- **Structural and procedural gaps** identified by Philbin and Ntshwene.
- **Strategic alignment and stakeholder engagement** priorities emphasized by Brito.
- **Contextual adaptation and long-term impact** considerations highlighted by Jamaleldine.

Furthermore, applying this model to **Saudi Arabia's construction sector under Vision 2030** provides a **sector-specific, culturally relevant** empirical study — something missing from the existing literature.

Comparative Analysis of Previous Studies and Their Relevance to the Current Research Framework

Study & Year	Geographical / Sector Focus	Research Focus / Method	Key Findings &	Identified Gaps	Relevance to Current Study
Philbin (2016) – <i>Exploring the Project Management Office (PMO): Role, Structure and Processes</i>	Global, cross-industry	Literature review, conceptual analysis of PMO roles & structures	PMOs vary in role (supportive, controlling, directive) and must fit organizational context; importance of well-defined processes for project success	Limited sector-specific application; no deep cultural/region al analysis; lacks KPI-based performance measurement	Informs PMO Practices (portfolio prioritization, strategic framework utilization) and highlights the need for context-specific PMO design in Saudi construction projects

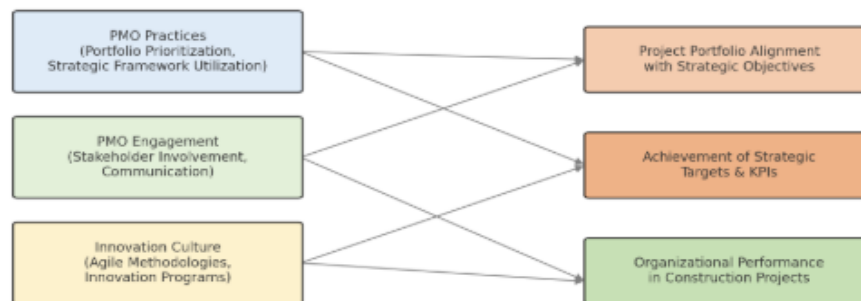
Brito & Medeiros Junior (2021) – PMO Contribution to Strategy Implementation in PBBs	Primarily Saudi private sector (general PBBs)	Systematic literature review; conceptual model proposal	PMOs can enhance strategy implementation through structure, standardization, and alignment; emphasizes stakeholder engagement and cross-department communication	Overlooks dynamic, evolving strategies; lacks detailed KPI measurement; limited sector-specific depth	Directly supports PMO Engagement variable (stakeholder involvement, communication) and strategic alignment focus under Vision 2030
Ntshwene et al. (2022) – KPIs for Measuring PMO Services in Botswana	Botswana , multi-sector organizations	Empirical study using KPI frameworks	PMOs improve governance, strategic alignment, and delivery; lack of universal KPIs limits consistent measurement	No standard PMO models; limited to operational KPIs without broader strategic analysis	Provides operational measurement foundation for Achievement of Strategic Targets & KPIs dependent variable
Jamaleldine (2023) – Impact of PMOs on Organizational Performance	Not region-specific (general PBBs)	Empirical analysis of PMO contributions to efficiency and delivery targets	PMOs enhance efficiency, risk management, and process standardization; positive short-term impacts	Lacks long-term strategic impact analysis; ignores cultural/sector-specific factors; does not differentiate PMO types	Highlights need for contextualized PMO evaluation in Saudi construction sector; informs Organizational Performance variable

5. Analytical Link to Current Study

- **Agreement across studies:** PMOs improve governance, standardization, and alignment — this validates the inclusion of **PMO Practices** and **PMO Engagement** as independent variables in the model.
- **Differences:** Variation in scope (strategic vs. operational), sector specificity, and cultural considerations explains the lack of consensus on PMO long-term value — your study addresses this by focusing on **Saudi Vision 2030 construction projects**.

- **Research gap bridged:** Existing studies either focus on structure/process without strategic metrics (Philbin), strategy without operational KPIs (Brito), operational KPIs without strategy (Ntshwene), or efficiency without cultural adaptation (Jamaleldine). Your study integrates all three dimensions — practices, engagement, and innovation culture — into one framework.

This visual mapping diagram illustrates how each of the four earlier studies connects to the independent variables and the dependent variables within the study model.



What was or wasn't addressed

Although PMO research is extensive in Western and global contexts, there is a **scarcity of empirical studies** examining:

- **PMO strategic alignment** within **national transformation programs** such as *Saudi Vision 2030*.
- The **combined influence** of PMO practices, engagement, and innovation culture on both **portfolio alignment** and **organizational performance**—especially in the **construction sector**, which is a key driver in Saudi Arabia's economic diversification.
- The role of **innovation culture** (e.g., agile methodologies, innovation programs) as a **strategic enabler** in PMO-led environments, rather than a purely technical or operational tool.
- Context-specific **performance measurement frameworks** that integrate *Strategic KPIs* and *Vision 2030 targets* with PMO dashboards.
- The **interplay between stakeholder engagement** and **strategic performance** in large-scale, government-backed project portfolios.

Basis theorem for Calculus

- **Geographical bias** in existing PMO literature, which is dominated by studies from North America, Europe, and Australia, with minimal representation of the Middle East.
- **Sectoral bias**, where most PMO studies focus on IT, finance, or general portfolio management rather than **mega-project-heavy industries** like construction.
- **Limited integration** of *innovation culture* into PMO performance frameworks—often treated as separate research domains.
- **Contextual uniqueness** of Vision 2030, which blends *public-sector governance*, *private-sector execution*, and *cultural transformation*, making Western PMO models only partially applicable.
- A tendency for prior research to treat PMO alignment as a **static process**, rather than a **dynamic interaction** shaped by stakeholder engagement and innovation adoption.

The study will help to address the deficit and make a qualitative breakthrough.

This study will:

- **Develop and empirically test** an integrated model linking PMO practices, engagement, and innovation culture to strategic alignment, KPIs, and performance—specifically in the Saudi **construction project ecosystem** under Vision 2030.
- Provide **contextualized evidence** from Saudi Arabia, filling a geographical and cultural gap in PMO literature.
- **Operationalize innovation culture** as a measurable PMO variable, positioning it as a strategic enabler rather than a by-product.
- Deliver a **performance measurement framework** that connects PMO outputs directly to Vision 2030's *strategic targets* and *KPIs*, enhancing applicability for policymakers and practitioners.
- Offer a **replicable model** for other nations undergoing large-scale transformation, thus extending the contribution beyond the local context.

Proposed Approach, Results, and Contribution

1. PMOs as Strategic Enablers for Aligning Projects with Organizational Goals

Proposed Approach

Philbin (2016) established a seminal baseline for understanding PMO roles, structures, and processes, emphasizing their capacity to centralize project oversight and promote consistency. However, while Philbin's framework provides a generalizable starting point, it lacks empirical exploration of context-driven mechanisms by which PMOs operationalize strategic objectives—particularly in the mega-projects and national transformation initiatives central to Saudi Vision 2030.

Brito and Medeiros Junior (2021) advanced this discussion by examining PMO contributions to strategy implementation within public budget bodies (PBBs), highlighting PMOs' role as integrators between policy intent and operational delivery. Yet, their scope is confined to budgetary contexts, with minimal attention to innovation culture, stakeholder engagement, and complex multi-sector governance—all pivotal in Vision 2030 environments.

Building on these foundations, this study investigates how PMOs in Saudi mega-projects translate national-level strategic directives into operational project criteria. It foregrounds the mediating role of innovation culture and stakeholder engagement in sustaining strategic alignment, and examines Saudi-specific contextual factors—governance models, cultural dynamics, and Vision 2030 performance frameworks—that shape PMO effectiveness.

Results and Contribution

This study:

Extends Philbin's structural/process-oriented model and Brito & Medeiros Junior's alignment emphasis by:

- Developing an Integrated PMO–Innovation–Engagement–Performance Model that empirically links PMO capabilities to strategic KPI achievement in Vision 2030 contexts.
- Providing evidence-based alignment mechanisms that adapt international PMO maturity frameworks to Saudi Arabia's cultural and governance realities.
- Offering a practical strategic alignment framework deployable by government bodies and project-intensive organizations to bridge global theory and local implementation.

2. Standardization of Processes, Governance Frameworks, and Performance Monitoring

Proposed Approach

Philbin (2016) underscored the importance of standardized processes and governance in PMO success, but his work treats these elements largely in isolation from contextual adaptation. Existing literature rarely examines how standardization frameworks can be re-engineered to align with the operational, cultural, and sectoral demands of emerging economies.

Brito & Medeiros Junior (2021) acknowledged governance as a facilitator of strategic delivery but did not integrate it with performance monitoring in a dynamic, feedback-driven system. Jamaleldine (2023), while establishing a general correlation between PMO governance and organizational performance, offers little on how governance-performance synergy functions in mega-project environments.

Results and Contribution

This study:

Advances their findings by:

- Developing a Vision 2030-specific standardization framework for the Saudi construction sector, integrating governance structures with real-time performance monitoring.
- Investigating the synergistic relationship between governance and performance monitoring, conceptualizing them as an interdependent system rather than discrete tools.
- Providing empirically validated adaptive governance–monitoring loops that promote continuous improvement and sustained strategic alignment in mega-projects.

3. The Impact of Absent Clear Structures, Standardized Methodologies, and Strategic KPIs on PMO Effectiveness

Proposed Approach

Ntshwene et al. (2022) made a valuable contribution by identifying KPIs for measuring PMO services in Botswana. However, their approach prioritizes operational efficiency metrics over strategic transformation indicators, and lacks adaptation for culturally distinct, mega-project-based contexts such as Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030.

Philbin (2016) and Jamaleldine (2023) also identify the importance of structures and methodologies but stop short of prescribing contextualized frameworks or standardizing KPIs across organizations to enable benchmarking. Without clear structures and consistent metrics, PMO maturity stagnates, and the demonstration of strategic value becomes elusive.

Results and Contribution

This study:

- Designs a context-specific PMO structural and methodological framework grounded in Saudi construction sector governance and cultural realities.
- Develops and validates Vision 2030-aligned strategic KPIs that measure transformational rather than purely operational success.
- Standardizes measurement definitions to enable cross-organizational benchmarking, addressing the comparability challenges noted by Ntshwene et al. (2022).

4. Contextual Adaptation of PMOs to Organizational Maturity, Sectoral Requirements, and Strategic Priorities

Proposed Approach

Philbin (2016) proposed general PMO models but did not account for how PMOs evolve across organizational maturity stages in sector-specific contexts. Jamaleldine (2023) linked PMO maturity with organizational performance but treated maturity as a static condition rather than a dynamic, adaptive process responsive to shifting priorities.

Brito & Medeiros Junior (2021) hinted at contextual adaptation in strategic delivery but lacked empirical testing in complex, public–private mega-project ecosystems.

Results and Contribution

This study:

- Empirically maps PMO adaptation pathways across organizational maturity levels in the Saudi construction sector.
- Integrates sector-specific challenges—including regulatory demands, stakeholder diversity, and high-risk profiles—into flexible governance frameworks.
- Produces a context-aware PMO adaptation model calibrated to Vision 2030’s evolving priorities, enabling agility and cultural alignment.

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