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Strategic Project Management: Bridging the Gap Between Strategy and Execution

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ABSTRACT

In today's complex business problems, companies are looking to close the gap between strategy and execution by the successful implementation of strategic project management (SPM). Although strategic planning establishes the course, however, it might be difficult to guarantee smooth alignment with project execution. Therefore, incorrect alignment causes inefficiency and worse-than-ideal project results in many companies. Thus, this study critically investigates how SPM improves decision-making, organizational performance, and industry competitiveness. In this research, a qualitative research methodology was adopted, incorporating semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and case studies from major industries, such as manufacturing companies, Information Technology (IT) services, and healthcare. Subsequently, the findings demonstrate that companies are using a structured SPM framework.

In a nutshell, by combining the ideas of strategic management and project management, how interdependent they are in fostering long-term resilience and creativity. The crucial fact that the research disciplines is how important stakeholder participation, performance evaluation, and cross-functional cooperation are to the effective use of SPM. Additionally, to maximize SPM adoption, the research concludes by providing businesses with practical suggestions that guarantee projects not only fulfil operational targets but also fit in with more general strategic goals. For businesses looking to maintain a competitive edge in ever-changing market conditions, surprisingly, SPM becomes an essential tool through bridging the gap.

KEYWORDS: Strategy and Execution, Project alignment, Strategy implementation

1. Introduction

1.1. Motivation

High-level organizational strategy and its practical execution are separated by strategic project management (SPM). Integrating various disciplines is important from a business standpoint to accomplish the long-term objectives of manufacturing and business organizations and preserve competitive advantage (Bjorvatn, 2022). While strategy establishes the direction of an organization, execution turns those directions into concrete projects. Nonetheless, the ongoing difficulties in coordinating strategy and implementation highlight the necessity of a strong framework (Hutchison-Krupat, 2018). From a company perspective, internal initiatives are essential strategic tools for resolving organizational challenges. Bjorvatn (2022) emphasizes the importance of organized project management techniques and their function in promoting innovation and competitiveness. Bruder (2020) emphasizes the need to link strategy, execution, and culture, contending that for businesses to reach their maximum potential, these components must be in harmony. Similarly, Williams (2017) calls for improved cooperation between executives and project managers to close execution gaps, which are a major obstacle to success.

The significance of strategic alignment is emphasized by the scientific viewpoint. According to Correani et al., (2020), a major risk factor in the implementation of digital initiatives is the misalignment between strategic aim and execution. According to their findings, tackling issues like resource allocation and technological adaptation requires the use of holistic frameworks. Furthermore, Huynh et al., (2020) show how effective the balanced scorecard is at coordinating strategy and execution by suggesting that it be used to map strategic objectives to project outcomes. Particularly in the manufacturing industry various challenges for tailored SPM strategies. Although Herzing (2024) emphasizes how some project management methods can be used to close strategic gaps in the marketing sector,

nothing is known about how well they work in the manufacturing sector. The significance of incorporating strategic and tactical planning into the design process is emphasized by Kristensen and Kalsaas (2020) this idea might be expanded for manufacturing contexts.

Moreover, in the fast-paced manufacturing world of today, strategic resilience has become a crucial factor. According to Dieterle and Duchek (2023), collaborative models can improve strategic execution as they examine how cooperation initiatives with start-ups might improve resilience. Their scalability and applicability to big businesses, remains open for investigation. Though they admit that these models need to be further improved to meet the sector-specific demands, Gupta and Cannon (2020) support execution roadmaps that offer organized pathways for putting a strategy into action.

This research seeks to bridge this gap through the operational dynamics of SPM in various organizational settings. The aim is to understand the practical applicability of SPM, along with the key factors driving long-term success, by analysing which industries adopt and adapt SPM practices. The result of this study will add much value to academic discussions on the topic of SPM and also provide important insights for practitioners who want to adjust strategic project management approaches. By developing a tailored strategic framework and leveraging insights from existing research, this study aims to bridge the gaps identified in the literature and contribute to the advancement of strategic project management practices.

1.2. Research gap

The shift in project management from a primarily operational focus to one with a stronger emphasis on strategic objectives underscores the critical need for organizations to align project activities with their strategic planning efforts. Most of the business environments are characterized by their complexity and competitiveness in the market, organizations

should adopt project management strategies that not only achieve immediate goals but also align with broader organizational objectives (Bjorvatn, 2022). This evolution signifies a shift in the perception of project management from no longer a function of mere task execution but an essential element of strategic success.

Traditionally, project management emphasized cost control, adherence to schedules, and compliance with predefined timelines. While these operational aspects remain essential, they are insufficient to address the multifaceted challenges organizations face today (Herzing, 2024). Contemporary methodologies prioritize strategic alignment, ensuring projects contribute to organizational competitiveness and agility. This alignment enables organizations to respond effectively to changing market conditions and capitalize on emergent opportunities (Kristensen & Kalsaas, 2020).

Frameworks that integrate strategic project management (SPM) have become instrumental in addressing these challenges in industries. SPM systematically aligns project initiatives with the organization's strategic objectives, providing a structured approach to long-term achievement for organizations. By fostering improved communication and addressing resource constraints in organizations. The SPM mitigates common project challenges (Williams, 2017). Furthermore, it ensures active engagement from stakeholders at all levels, promoting shared ownership of strategic goals and outcomes (Bruder, 2020).

Additionally, integration of SPM across organizations enhances decision-making, improves risk management, and fosters a culture of continuous improvement. When project are in line with the company's strategic priorities allows organizations get the most out of their resources, achieve greater returns on investment, and build resilience to maintain competitiveness in dynamic markets(Hutchison-Krupat, 2018; Kristensen & Kalsaas, 2020). The development and significance of SPM continue to weigh on organizations as they

navigate the complexity of today's business environment, and, therefore, there is a great need to further explore these dynamics.

1.3. Research problem and theoretical contribution

This research will focus on these questions for better understanding of strategic project management and find answers to this questions.

RQ 1. In what ways does strategic project management (SPM) help manufacturing firms successfully close the gap between strategy and execution by facilitating the alignment of organizational projects with strategic objectives?

RQ 2. Which frameworks and essential elements support the effective use of strategic project management techniques, and what effects do they have on an organization’s long-term resilience and competitiveness across industries?

More specifically, this study aims to explore both academic and practical business organizations. This research will provide actionable strategies for aligning projects with strategic objectives. In traditional project management, in which the pressure on an organization to deliver timely and cost-effective results is increasingly measured against the need to be strategically relevant, the insights derived from this study will offer extremely useful guidance for project managers and leaders of business organisations navigating the complexities of project execution.

Based on the interaction between SPM and successful organizations, the paper will highlight the contribution made by best practices in SPM towards contributing to strategic long-term success (Bjorvatn, 2022; Kristensen & Kalsaas, 2020). The understanding of this relationship is critical to an organization that wants to induce a cultural strategic alignment of project

portfolios (Bruder, 2020; Hutchison-Krupat, 2018). The findings will better allow leaders to make decisions, understanding the gaps while executing a strategy and bridging the gap with strategic project management and also to drive the larger engine of organizational performance (Correani et al., 2020; Williams, 2017). This applied perspective would bridge this gap between strategy and execution.

In addition to this, the study will also contribute to the existing academic literature by filling gaps in our understanding of the impact of SPM on organizational effectiveness. Integration of proven frameworks such as Porter's Five Forces, Balanced Scorecard, and SWOT analysis will be applied in the study to provide deeper theoretical insights into the dynamics that power SPM (Kristensen & Kalsaas, 2020; Smith & Loonam, 2016). These frameworks serve as lenses through which the effectiveness of SPM can be analyzed in various organizational contexts, particularly in understanding how strategic alignment can be achieved and maintained (Execution, 2019; Bruder, 2020). This integration of theoretical models will enhance the quality of the research while also offering a basis for future studies in this domain, exemplifying the principles of SPM (Correani et al., 2020).

Finally, this research assure that firms are better positioned to leverage their project management practices in alignment with strategic goals (Herzing, 2024; Hutchison-Krupat, 2018). In this way, organizations will be strengthened in their competitiveness, resilience, and responsiveness to market changes. The outcome of this research will extend beyond individual organizational results, contributing to the broader discourse on the strategic management of projects across diverse industries.

1.4. Thesis structure

The overall structure of the thesis guarantees deep research into Strategic Project Management and its role in aligning project execution with organizational strategy. Chapter

1 identifies an introduction to SPM and recognizes its significant importance it has in today's dynamic environment of business environment, outlining research objectives, rationale, and significance. In Chapter 2, the literature review outlines how project management has evolved from an operational perspective to a strategic perspective of activity and covers some relevant theoretical frameworks found in Porter's Five Forces, the Balanced Scorecard, and SWOT analysis. The review also identifies gaps within current research. Chapter 3 is on research methodology design, data collection methods, sampling techniques, and ethical considerations. In Chapter 4, findings are presented, and data collected are used in presenting key findings related to the research objectives, which include mechanisms for alignment and critical success factors of SPM implementation. Chapter 5 is a discussion and conclusion.

2. Literature Review

This chapter of the thesis comprises the understandings the strategic project management as well as the theoretical framework associated with it. Additionally, it encompasses the comprehension of bridging the gap regarding strategies to execution in project management. Moreover, it also investigates and discusses the strategic framework that fails in the project strategic pyramids, the strategic framework that top CEOs of the company implements to achieve their targets.

2.1. Introduction to strategic project management

According to Romero & Francisco (2018) to maintain a competitive edge in project management, strategic project planning must take into account organizational capabilities like communication between project team, managers, and staff from different departments is important along with clearly understanding the roles of key people like executive sponsors. The way a company is structured and its culture also matters. Furthermore, strategic planning is essential for organization, and even more importantly, effective strategic project planning can be the key to long-term success.

Bergeron, Raymond, & Rivard, 2004; Romero & Francisco (2018) claims that companies with an organizational structure that aligns with their strategy will be less susceptible to both internal and external threats, leading to improved outcome. In fact the whole picture encompassing all internal as well as external business aspects should be taken into account when senior management makes decisions about capital expenditures and portfolio requirements (Patanakul & Shenhar, 2012; Romero & Francisc, 2018). Strategic project management is a set of methods, techniques, procedures, tools, and behaviors that specify how businesses profit from the convergence of project management and business operations, with each having the aim of furthering the organization's overarching strategic

goals. Furthermore, strategic project management encompasses managing initiatives that build organizational competencies and capabilities that support the company's long-term competitive edge (Romero & Francisco, 2018).

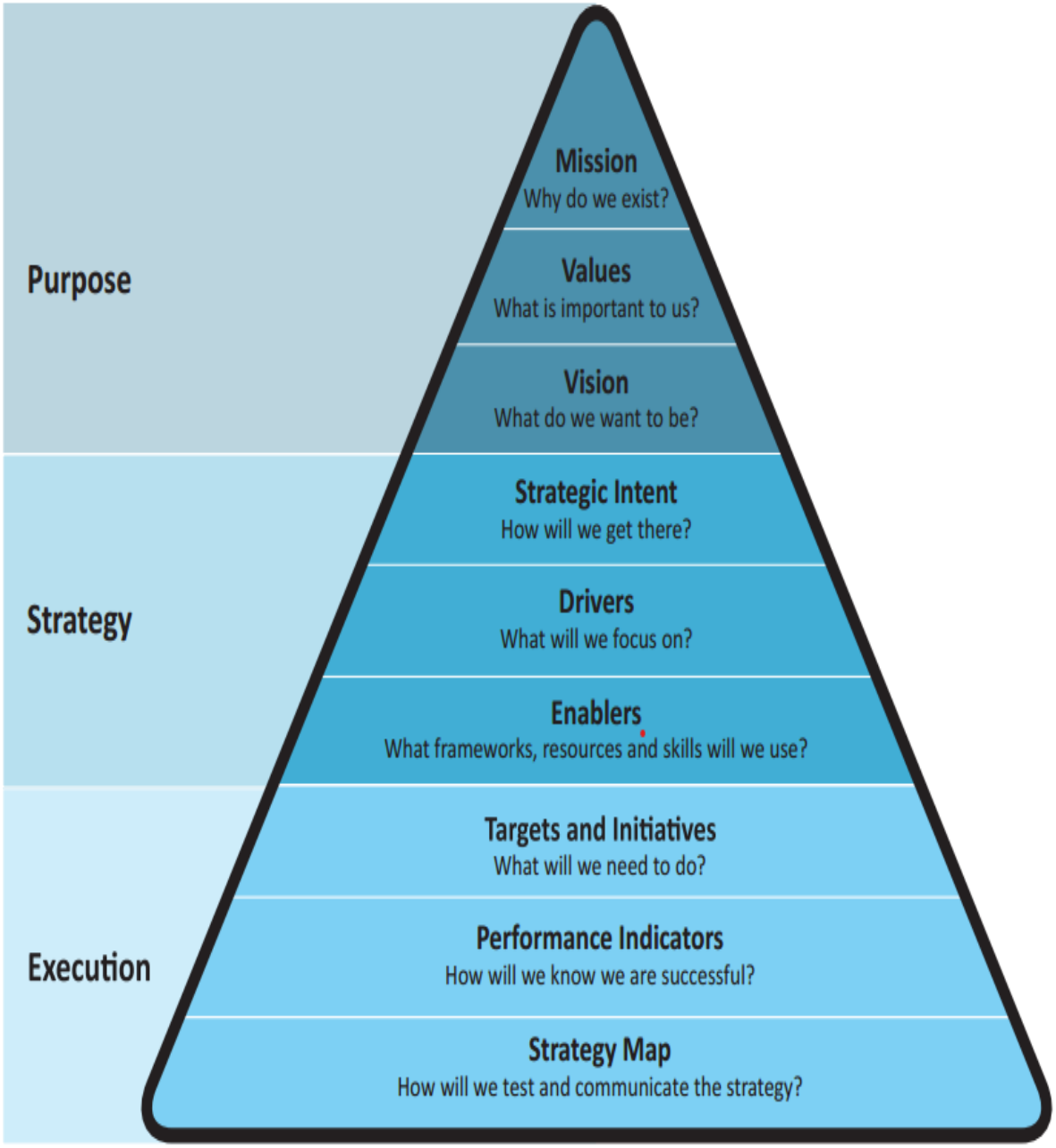

Figure 1: The strategy pyramid (McGuinnes et al., 2012, p.3).

2.1.1 Scope of strategic project management

According to Wojikiewicz (2018), project management is the use of practical knowledge to reduce the risk of failure throughout a project. Additionally, project risk is mostly caused by the inability to eliminate the uncertainty surrounding future events at every stage of the project, which arises from participant communication dynamics, project team performance variations, poor planning, and external environmental factors.

The most significant aspect of project management is a very important set of tools for managers of business and one of the most important skills that are needed in today's world. It is necessary in a lot of different industries. It is necessary in a larger company because they have a lot of ongoing projects that are happening at different times and on different teams. The major industries where project management is essential are IT, Manufacturer, as well as defense, construction, energy, and pharmacy. In contrast, this means that project management is very important in entities that are focused on material production, but it is also utilized in service entities like state administration offices or hotels.

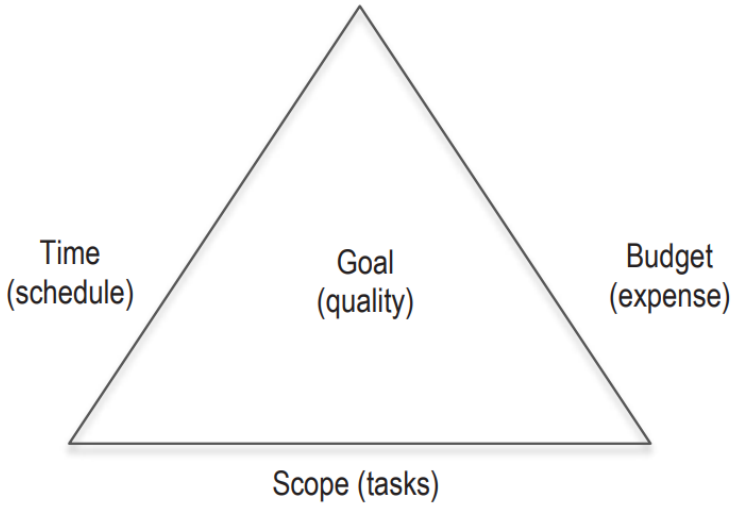

Figure 2: Project management triangle (Mingus, 2009, p. 11)

Orcik & Gajic suggest that companies are increasingly utilizing project management to gain a competitive advantage, shifting from traditional methods that focused on operational performance and budgeting to strategic approaches that link when projects are planned based on the company's main goals and helps organization grow in a smart and effective way. In addition to Jugdev & Muller (2005) highlights that when an immediate correlation is established between the effectiveness and efficiency of a project and the commercial value that the project's outputs and services deliver, project management may be strategically valuable. However, strategic project management is mostly viewed as a just a day-to-day tool. When theirs is no clear connection between the project and the value it creates and if success is only measured by time, cost and scope, strategic project management loses its bigger, long-term importance.

2.1.2 Evolution of strategic project management (SPM)

Every organization is adopting strategic project management. Moreover, the key point is that project manager and his team should learn how to support the organization's strategy and solve business problems, not just focusing on meeting the project timeline or cost and targets (Vivek & Nanthagopan, 2020). Furthermore, Aubry et al., (2007) proposed that turning strategy into real projects, managing them together in a smart way, and using them to plan for what's next.

According to Dimovski et al. (2012), Sun Tzu's The Art of War (1994) demonstrates how the idea of strategy has profound roots in the evolution of society. Military philosophers believed that strategy was a simple way to guarantee victory in combat. As time went on, this comprehension of strategy became relevant in a variety of social circumstances and moved beyond military bounds. In today's context, the word strategies has many different meanings, especially in organizational contexts where it is used to refer to a long-term strategy, a roadmap, or a course for accomplishing future goals.

The two primary methodologies that project management uses to distinguish itself are operational project management and strategic project management, in which SPM is different from strategic organizational management in that it assesses how well individual projects fit into a company's overarching plan (Papke-Shields, 2017). Operational project management is the foundation of so-called strategic project management. SPM and operational project management are the two primary methods that project management is frequently distinguished by identifying how certain projects fit into a company's broader strategy is what distinguishes PM from strategic organizational management. Interestingly, Murno (2018) discusses that SPM is frequently described as the management practices integrated into a project to meet a strategic goal by modifying not just time, cost, and resources but also support to accomplish the organization's overall goals and competitive advantage. SPM is frequently described as the management practices and used to manage resources and money to successfully complete a project.

2.1.3 Challenges of implementing SPM

There is no doubt that an organization will not face any negative consequences if strategies are not put into action. However, implementation, not planning, is the problem that many businesses encounter (Cullen et al., 2015). It is because the strategy's conception and formulation make its execution so challenging. Project management has assisted several firms in putting their strategic management plans into action (Cullen et al., 2015). Furthermore, one of the most significant challenges an organization has is accomplishing its goals with the limited resources available. Many resources can never be employed to accomplish the organization's declared aims because they are inextricably related to operational issues. Therefore, an organization will be able to provide the goods if it puts these strategic goals into practice. Project management helps attain these objectives.

Grundy (2000) suggests that implementing strategy is a crucial aspect of strategic initiatives. This is because behavioral issues that arise during the implementation of strategic projects dominate it. In addition to analytical challenges, the project's efficiency would be raised by using behavior management and problem-solving strategies. Consequently, these methods are the fundamental cause of behaviour analysis, scenario analysis, personal and strategic agenda analysis, behavioural difficulties, energy curves, and long-term disappointment.
Likewise, Sabini & Alderman (2021) claim that when putting project techniques into practice at SPM, organizational impediments present a problem. Consequently, project managers are forced to consider the sustainability of their work. Project execution fails when PM practitioners are not SPM competent. Therefore, it can be argued that since a project manager is responsible for multiple tasks, decision-making authority is also viewed as a difficulty in successful SPM.

2.2 Theoretical framework for strategic project management

The thesis utilizes two categories of theoretical framework, i.e. strategic management theory and project management theory. Firstly, strategic management theory states that the beginnings, development, tenets, and uses of strategic management in company planning, which is the result of information technology, contingency, and systems methods (Omalaja & Eruola, 2011). Moreover, Omalaja & Eruola (2011) suggest that Profit maximization, competition, resource, survival, human resource, agency, and contingency theories are examples of common theories. On the other hand, according to (Kjolhede, 2000), the basic project management literature focuses on controlling, planning, and scheduling projects within an organization, viewing them as instruments to achieve a goal. In addition to that, it overlooks the potential for reverse impacts from external factors or human issues, assuming a well-functioning bureaucracy and scientific planning tools can efficiently manage projects (Kjolhede, 2000).

2.2.1 Strategic management theory and its contribution to project execution

It is possible to define a strategic management theory as a hypothesis, declaration, or collection of concepts meant to clarify the beginnings, development, tenets, and uses of strategic management (Omalaja & Eruola, 2011, p. 64). Furthermore, the theory of strategic management offers an organized method for comprehending how businesses develop, execute, and assess plans to accomplish long-term goals. Frameworks for identifying competitive advantages, allocating resources efficiently, and coordinating organizational activities with external market needs form the foundation of this theory. Strategic management, when used in project execution, provides important insights into making sure that projects are not only operational endeavors, nevertheless are closely linked to the overall objectives of a business.

According to Omalaja and Eruola (2011) the foundation of the profit maximizing and competition-based approach is the notion that a company's primary objective is to generate more revenue and long term profits and to establish a sustainable competitive advantage. Based on the industrial organization perspective, that this strategy highlights how crucial a company's external market positions to acquiring and maintaining a competitive edge (Omalaja & Eurola, 2011, p. 64). To put this in another way, strategic management has a framework to examine and comprehend industry competitiveness thanks to this conventional perspective. It focuses on how a companies might set up their operations to beat the competitors and stay ahead. When economists discuss corporate goals, this method of thinking is consistent with their objectives. Essentially, it highlights the role of external market factors in shaping a company's strategy. By focusing on the market position and competition, businesses can plan better for long term success. This kind approach still remains a foundation for many strategies used today by different industries.

However, resource-based approach is founded on the management idea that a firm's competitive edge comes from its internal resources and not from how it positions itself in its external surroundings (Omalaja & Eruola, 2011, p. 64). To put it another way, a company's unique resources and competencies determine its competitive advantage rather than only evaluating environmental risks and opportunities when conducting business. (Barney, 1995). Interestingly, the Resource-Based View (RBV), one of the most fundamental tenets of Strategic Management Theory, highlights the need to utilize distinct internal resources to establish a sustained competitive edge. As a means of carrying out plans, projects must concentrate on making use of and improving these essential components, including financial assets, human capital, and technical prowess. Nevertheless, according to the resource-based philosophy of the company, some resources that a company owns and controls can provide an advantage over its competitors and, eventually, improve its financial results (Ainuddin et al., 2007). Therefore, as a means of carrying out plans, projects must concentrate on making use of and improving these essential components, including financial assets, human capital, and technical prowess. In contrast, a project aimed at developing a new product line, for instance, should align with the organization's strategic goal and core strengths to guarantee that the results support long-term market differentiation.

The survival based strategy, another significant paradigm, is predicated on the notion that in order for a business to thrive, it must constantly adjust to its competitive environment (Omalaja & Eruola, 2011, p. 64). This contrasts with the human resource-based approach, which emphasizes how individuals influence a business's strategy. Furthermore, agency theory emphasizes the significance of the relationship between the company's owners (shareholders) and managers, demonstrating how this relationship impacts the success of the organization (Omalaja & Eruola, 2011, p. 64). Lastly, the contingency theory makes the argument that there isn't a single, ideal method for managing companies. Subsequently, depending on the circumstances and state they are in, organizations should create a

suitable management plan. In brief, this key strategic management (Omalaja & Eruola, 2011, p. 64). Hence, these strategic management relationships can be defined in the following figure:

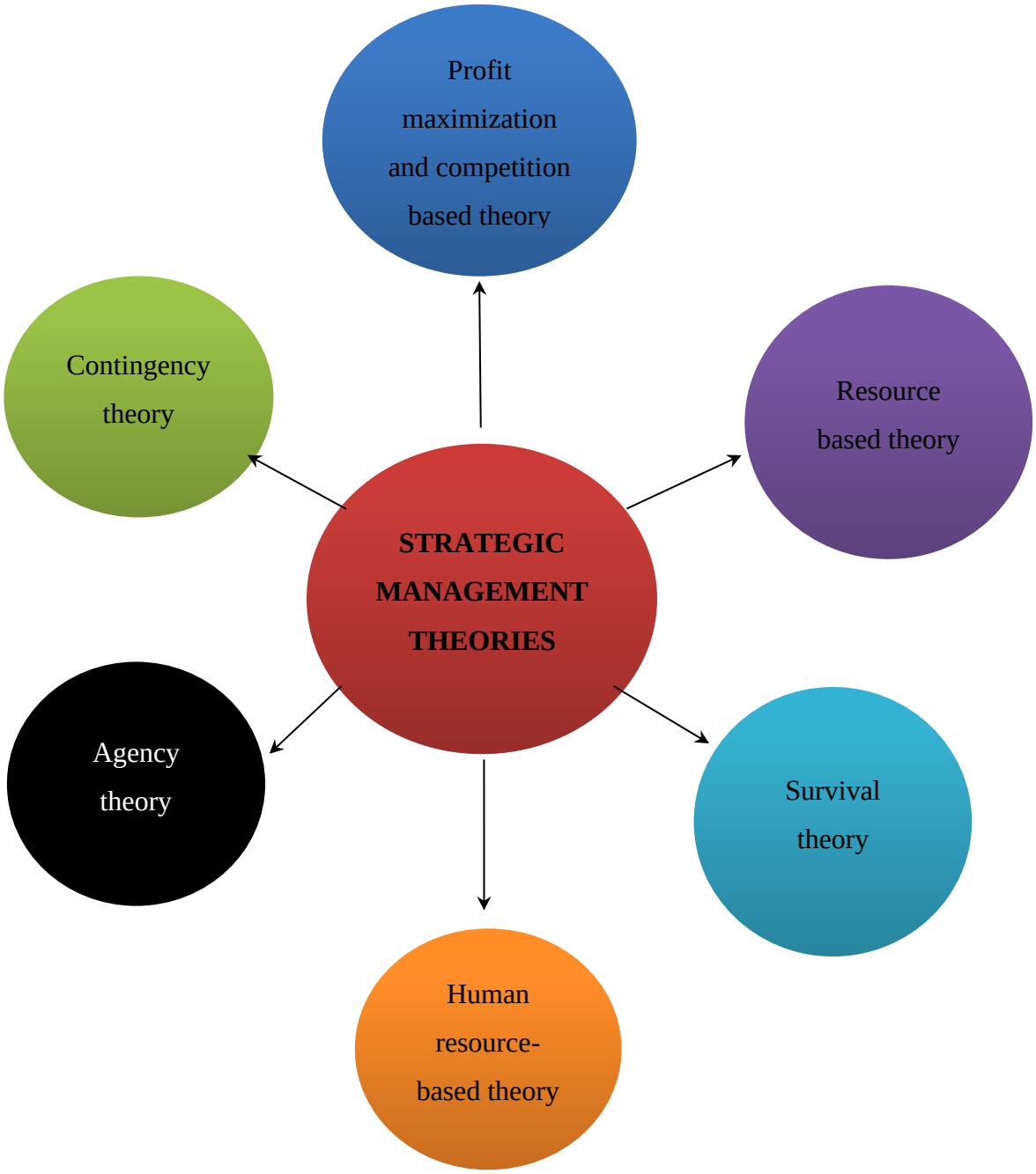

Figure 3: Strategic management theories (Omalaja & Eruola, 2011, p. 65).

Strategic Management Theory emphasizes how crucial it is for project deliverables and strategic goals to be dynamically aligned during project execution. In strategic management, strategy is a set of planned activities implemented by an organization to achieve a goal, leading to increased competitive advantage and superior performance. It differentiates an organization from competitors by providing superior value to customers, while each business unit has its own strategy to compete in their markets (Phin, 2015). Consequently, strategy helps organizations allocate resources effectively, meet market needs, and find new opportunities and trends. An organization's strategic goals may change as external circumstances change, necessitating constant modifications to project priorities and scopes. In light of the organization strategic direction, this flexibility guarantees that initiatives continue to be valuable and relevant. This requirement for flexibility is supported by dynamic capabilities theory, which highlights how businesses must constantly integrate, develop, and reorganize their resources to stay competitive (Teece & Pisano, 2007). Every business has its ecosystem of objectives, clients, rivals, and limitations. Execution is important, and here is where alignment with the strategy is crucial. Projects and efforts that are not in line with the plan might result in:

Wasted resources	Missed opportunities	Operational inefficiencies	Diminished employee morale
Investing in Initiatives that don't advance strategic objectives deplete human and financial	Failure to focus on strategic priorities might lead a company to lose its competitive advantage.	Redundancies and divisions can occur when departments work on disparate or poorly integrated projects.	When workers are unaware of how their efforts fit into the larger goals of the company, they may become disengaged.

Table 1: Concerning the significance of alignment with strategy.

In conclusion, strategic management theory offers a thorough framework for guaranteeing that project management functions as an organic extension of corporate strategy. Bowman (2002); Des et al. (2007) argue that the creation and maintenance of competitive advantage are the main concerns of strategic management in a firm. It is a procedure and a route that directs activities across the company. Organizations may make sure that every project makes a significant contribution to the accomplishment of long-term goals by using tools that include the Resource-Based View, Porter's Competitive Strategies, and the Balanced Scorecard to align their projects with strategic objectives. This alignment improves the organization's overall competitive position in the market in addition to optimizing the value that each project produces.

2.2.2 Project management theory: Methodologies and framework

Koskla & Howell (2002) explains that project management using the transformation view, which can seen that its turning inputs into outputs and proposed Three theories: first is management-as-planning. It means making plans, and changing them when needed, and putting them into action. It clearly shows what has done and the results got. The second idea is the dispatching model. This model assumes that the task in the plan can be done as expected and executed. The third ideas is thermostat model. It is about setting a performance goal and making corrections if the current plan of action is not going well. Together, these ideas help to understand the situation and explain how project management is working. Managing a project is about planning and doing the task in time and adjusting when necessary. Likewise, to comprehend in more detail the foundation of project management, the following table describes in depth:

Subject of theory		*Relevant theories*
Project		Transformation Flow Value generation
Management	Planning	Management-as-planning Management-as-organizing
	Execution	Classical communication theory Language/action perspective
	Control	Thermostat model Scientific experimentation model

Figure 4: The theory of project management (Koskela & Howell, 2002, p. 3).

In relation to project theory according to (Koskela, 2002), the (partial) models of operations as flow and value production supplement the transformation model's conceptualization by taking time, unpredictability, and customer into account. Likewise, the theoretical underpinnings of management must also be expanded. Moreover, the concept of human behaviour as intrinsically located is added to planning by the management-as-organizing approach (Johnston & Brennan, 1996). Therefore, planning should also concentrate on setting up the surroundings to support intentional behavior. The language/action view, which was first proposed by Winograd & Flores (1986), the importance of commitment from all parties involved and ensuring everyone is dedicated to the goal and commitment in management execution, as opposed to the conventional communication theory's one-way communication. Furthermore, the Shewhart & Deming (1939) scientific experimental approach of control focuses on identifying the reasons behind deviations and taking action to address them rather than merely altering performance to reach a predefined objective when a deviation occurs. Thus, the academic experimental paradigm incorporates the element of controlled learning.

Think of a project management methodology like a recipe for success - it's a carefully designed set of steps and guidelines that show teams the most effective way to plan, execute, and complete their work (Ungureanu & Ungureanu, 2014). Just like a good recipe

helps even novice cooks create great dishes, a solid methodology helps project teams deliver successful outcomes.

These methods are not abstract concepts - they're workable, tried-and-true methods that impose order and structure on the usually disorganized project world. They enable teams to make better decisions, resolve problems efficiently, and stay in charge throughout the project life cycle (Kerzner, 2004).

Why methodologies are worth their weight is that they give you a clear map. They divide the project path into manageable steps, providing project managers and their people with a trusted roadmap for delivering on time, within budget, and to specification. It's GPS for your project - you never have to wonder where you are or where you're going.

Figure 5: The basic layout of project management layout (Ungureanu & Ungureanu, 2014, p. 48).

In general, project management is a planning framework that focuses on achieving desired changes through a chosen methodology, identifying and defining the best way to achieve these changes in terms of project timeline and budget (Ungureanu & Ungureanu, 2014). It framework project management is an organized compilation of every pertinent detail about how to change the technique. An exact methodology for managing the project. In this regard, the project management technique may be characterized as a unique framework-project management level (Ungureanu & Ungureanu, 2014) which is stated as follows:

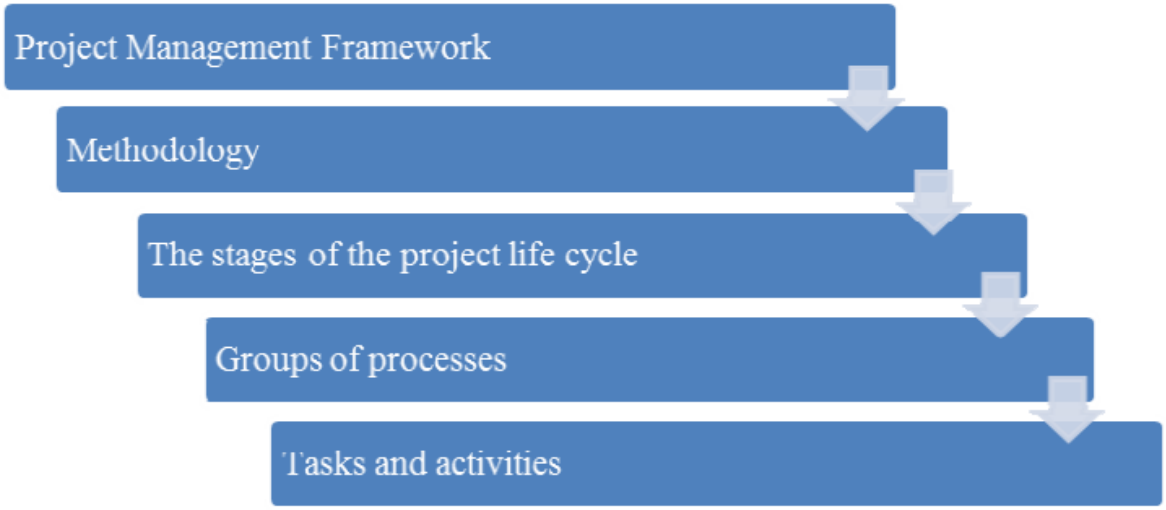

Figure 6: The framework of project management (Ungureanu & Ungureanu, 2014, p. 49).

The project management methodologies are categorized in the context of modern and traditional methods. Moving ahead, the project management process follows a set of consecutive processes in a typical method (Ungureanu & Ungureanu, 2014, p. 49). A product or service is designed, developed, and delivered in a step-by-step process. (Ungureanu & Ungureanu, 2014). For example, this kind of approach, which follows a linear

progression of stages, is known as "Waterfall" in the IT and software development fields (Ungureanu & Ungureanu, 2014).

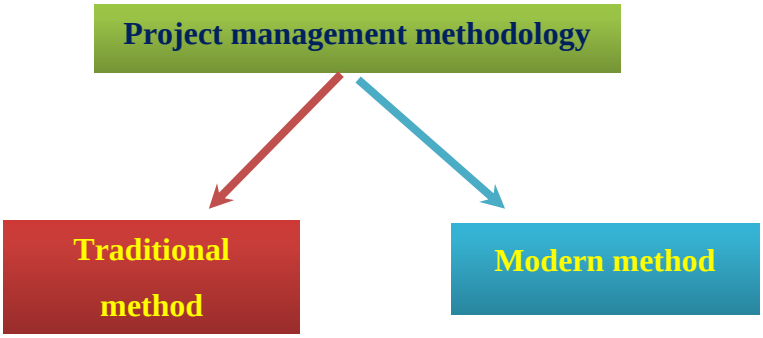

Figure 7: Types of project management methodologies.

Source: Created by the author.

Analysis of advantages and disadvantages of the traditional method can be justified as follows:

Advantage	Disadvantage
Measuring progress is simple.	The involvement of ISK is significantly high.
Simplified structure.	Lack of space for innovation.
Clarity knowledge transfer.	Works without customer involvement.

Table 2: Advantages and disadvantages of the waterfall methods.

Source: Table created by author.

The waterfall method, also known as the conventional method of project management, gets its name from its linear approach to IT development, which consists of the following project phases: Initiation, Planning, Execution, Control, and Closeout (Gebken, 2018). A gateway review must be performed to ascertain if the project should proceed or be discontinued, and each of these discrete phases must be completed before the next one can start. The

waterfall approach has a few main benefits (Gebken, 2018). Since requirements are established before any software is built, all parties involved in the process agree on what is needed and every one knows about development activities before it start and reduce scope creep (Schwalbe, 2016). Additionally, a business analyst can go on to another project while development activities are underway provided, they have finished documenting the requirements (Gebken, 2018). Consequently, in a big firm, when a testing or requirements team can serve many projects at once, this might be a significant advantage (Gebken, 2018).

Instead of emphasizing linear procedures, modern techniques provide a different perspective to project management (Ungureanu & Ungureanu, 2014). While certain techniques are ideally suited for software companies, others may be used in production to enhance processes in a variety of different domains, including production technology (Ungureanu & Ungureanu, 2014). However, in this category, the most often used approaches to project management are

The critical path method (CPM) identifies potential activity sequences and calculates the longest time of each sequence to investigate the most crucial or vital activities in a project (Ungureanu & Ungureanu, 2014). This technique is one of the most traditional and widely used. Furthermore, this approach aids in estimating the amount of time required to do the task and the tasks that will comprise the application's scope or project schedule. By determining which tasks are important and which task can be flexibility, Project manager can make decisions and allocate resources more efficiently and monitor the progress with accuracy.

Another methodology is Lean. Generally, the goal of the lean project management technique is to reduce resource waste and increase the value provided to the client. Therefore, with this approach, businesses may use fewer resources to provide their clients with more value. Consequently, through customer satisfaction and value creation

throughout the execution of an optimized process flow that removes waste of goods, services, transportation, inventory, etc., the concerned method attains perfection (Ungureanu & Ungureanu, 2014). Lean technique emphasizes improvements and to evaluate the processes regularly and also to make necessary changes.

Next methodology is Six Sigma. It is closely related to Lean because this technique is also aims to eliminate waste but it more focus on the reducing variability and the defects through data-driven decision-making. Six Sigma employs statistical tools and methods to identify the root cause of the problem by DMAIC framework Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve and Control it guide the teams to solve a problem in a systematic way and it helps organizations to improve the quality and efficiency while enhancing customer satisfaction (Ungureanu & Ungureanu, 2014).

A more moderna and dynamic approach used by most of the organizations is Critical Chain Project Management (CCPM) methodology that involves planning, carrying out, and reviewing various types of work in various environments, from a single project to multiple projects (Ungureanu & Ungureanu, 2014). The methodology makes use of the Restrictions Management theory the concept of "buffers" to manage tasks and resource-dependent activities (Ungureanu & Ungureanu, 2014). CCPM is very useful especially when dealing with multi-project environments and where shared resources are managed very carefully.

In the realm of Software development and Information technology industries SCRUM has emerged as a leading agile project management methodology. The project is broken down into a short time-boxed iteration called as sprint. The process that involves teams generating software in "monthly SCRUM sessions" and "sprints" of no more than 30 days. This approach example is particular and useful, particularly for collaborative teams who are fully committed and not severely limited by time or material budget (Ungureanu & Ungureanu, 2014). During each sprint the team prioritize the task focused from the backlog

of the requirements also by having a daily scrum meeting will provide the team the opportunity to share the progress of the individual task and to discuss the impediments and realign the efforts. This methods allows the team to respond quickly to changing requirements of the customers. The agile methodologies like SCRUM are built on the foundation of shared principles that encourage the teamwork and establish continuous collaboration and to stay updated throughout the project life cycle and development. Hence, this indicates that one or more products are produced, each with a distinct role in the project. The complex product is then rendered after the entire process.

2.3 Integration of strategic and project management principles

It is evident that for firms to accomplish their long-term objectives, the integration of strategic and project management principles is crucial (Cabanis-Brewin & Pennypacker, 2006). In project management concentrates on the planning, carrying out, and finishing of individual projects, strategic management involves figuring out an organizations long-term strategy and extent (Knutson, 2003). Nevertheless, organizations may make sure that their initiatives directly contribute to their strategic objectives when these two disciplines are in alignment.

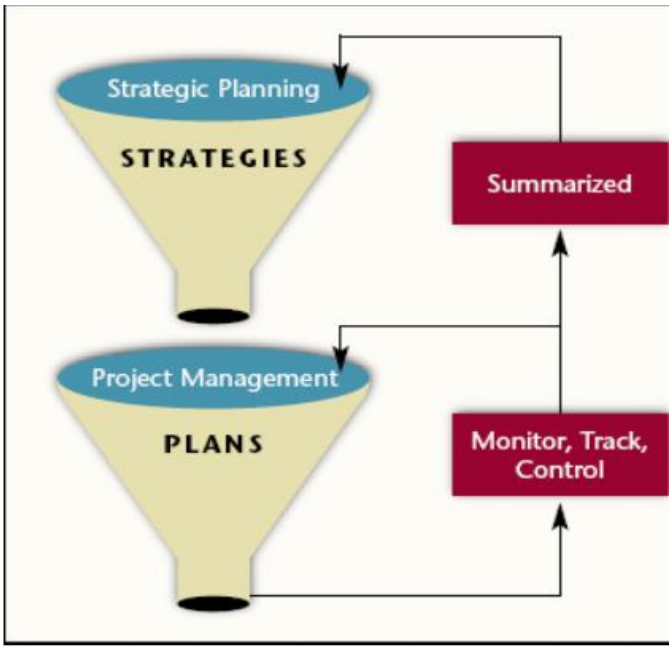

Figure 8: Organizational strategy shaping project actions (Knutson, 2003).

The process shown in the figure demonstrates that broad concepts are developed through strategic planning and then honed and turned into workable plans through project management. Likewise, these plans go through a cycle of tracking, monitoring, and controlling; the outcomes are then compiled to help with decision-making and maybe to be used again in the strategic planning process. Also, the funnel forms represent the process of reducing broad strategies to more focused, workable plans.

In the context of aligning strategy and project, organizations must first clearly define their strategic goals and effectively convey them to all workers in order to align initiatives with corporate strategy (Cabanis-Brewin & Pennypacker, 2006) Thuss, this significantly guarantees that everyone can work toward shared goals and remains conscious of the organization's direction (Cabanis-Brewin & Pennypacker, 2006). Additionally, the organization's strategy is carried out through strategic initiatives, which are collections of projects and activities. Strategic planning and project management procedures may be combined to provide a unified structure that accelerates company success (Knutson, 2003).

It is significant to integrate best practices to accomplish the strategic target of any organization. Hence, organizations may integrate strategy and project management concepts with the aid of many best practices (Cabanis-Brewin & Pennypacker, 2006) explained. One of the most foundational practice is transparent Communication, to make sure that initiatives are in line with the overarching plan, executives must convey strategic goals to project managers (Knutson, 2003). This ensures that individual projects are consistently aligned with organization strategy. Secondly is priority setting, to ensure efficient resource allocation, organizations should rank initiatives according to their strategic significance (Knutson, 2003). By dong so organizations can make decision to allocate limited resources to the most impactful initiatives and maximize the return on investment. Additionally, Quantifiable Objectives plays a vital role. Establishing quantifiable objectives for initiatives aids in monitoring advancement and guarantees that strategic aims are being accomplished (Knutson, 2003). Another essential best practice is frequent review of project performance by monitoring project performance and strategy alignment on regularly keeps projects on course and helps pinpoint opportunities for improvement (Cabanis-Brewin & Pennypacker, 2006).

Likewise, there are several advantages of combining strategy and project management concepts (Cabanis-Brewin Pennypacker, 2006), For example, organizations that maintain a close alignment between strategic direction and project initiatives are more likely to experience increased Project Success. Project success is more likely for organizations that match their strategy with their initiatives (Cabanis-Brewin Pennypacker, 2006). Similarly, these alignment facilities improved distribution of resources. Project contributions to strategic objectives are guaranteed by efficient resource allocation and prioritization (Knutson, 2003). Additionally, Improved Decision-Making. Improved project management and decision-making are made possible by transparent communication and quantifiable objectives (Knutson, 2003). Ultimately these practices contribute to enhanced

organizational efficiency. Efficiency and effectiveness are raised when strategy and project management are integrated into a coherent structure (Knutson, 2003).

For firms looking to accomplish their long-term objectives, the combination of project management and strategic management principles is essential (Cabanis-Brewin Pennypacker, 2006). Project success and overall organizational efficiency may be increased by companies ensuring that their initiatives directly contribute to their strategic objectives by aligning them with corporate strategy (Adams et al., 1991). Project management abilities must be included within the strategic management process at a far earlier level than is now the case in the majority of firms, as the interdependence of strategy and project management becomes increasingly apparent (Adams et al, 1991). Project managers can only effectively integrate their activities with those of the project and the functional organization to increase the efficiency, effectiveness, and speed at which the organization's defined objectives can be accomplished if they are aware of the goal the organization is attempting to achieve (Adams et al., 1991).

Another great frame of guidance in project management is Porter's Five Forces Model (1980) which helps in understanding the competitive landscape where the project manager operates. Strategic insight into the dynamics of each is sure to lend projects quite relevant while positioned to leverage competitive advantages to ultimately enhance their impact on organizational performance.

3. Research methodology

This chapter describes the methodological framework of the study, presenting the step-by-step procedure used to gather, analyze, and interpret information. The research follows Saunders' research onion model, which presents a systematic, multi-layered methodological decision-making process. This framework preserves methodological rigour while remaining in line with the aims of the study.

At its center is the defense of case selection, data procedures, and analytical methods. The chapter also assesses the validity and reliability of the study, considering how anticipated biases were addressed to maintain the credibility of results. In addition, ethical concerns are discussed, highlighting their influence on research design and implementation.

By outlining the methodology extensively, this chapter not only proves the empirical grounding of the study but also shows a clear basis to assess its contributions. The following sections expand on this through discussions of sampling approaches, data collection, and analytical techniques, providing an exhaustive understanding of the research design

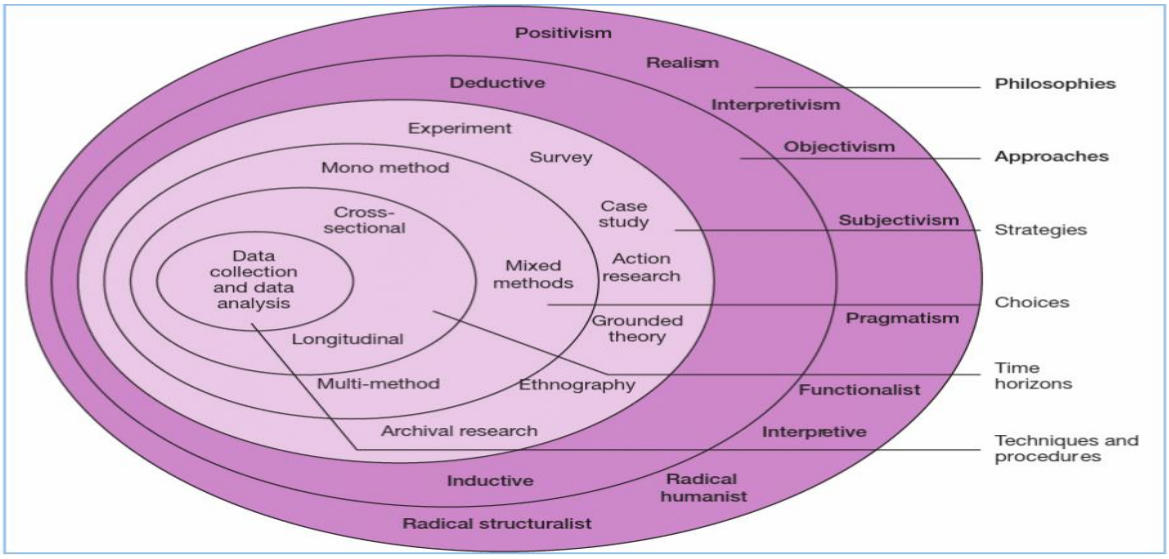

Figure 9: Research Onion (Saunders et al., 2007, p. 102)

3.1 Research philosophy

According to Blackwell (2018) research philosophy is the researcher's perspective on reality, practice, and knowledge, as demonstrated by and it informs data collection, analysis, and design in addition to philosophical concepts. Furthermore, according to Skyi et al., (2020) research is an approach to investigation or a voyage of discovery that progresses from the known to the unknown in order to establish veracity, demonstrate the validity or invalidity of a phenomenon, or enable a thorough investigation of something that has been conjectured or it could be regarded as an concept put forth as a recommendation, presumption, hypothesis, or preliminary sign of anything that is ambiguous or imprecisely defined. Noor (2008) emphasizes that the type of social phenomena being examined determines the best research methodology.

This research has adopted an interpretivist research philosophy, which emphasizes the importance of subjective experience and individuals who are involved in the strategic project management (SPM) so we can have a better understanding. Interpretivism is suitable for this study because it focuses on the socially constructed frameworks of reality and seeks to explore how the individuals interpret and act upon aligning the organization strategy and bridge the gap between strategy and execution. Sincee strategic project management practices can vary across each industry based on the organization cultures, and interpretivist approach. Through this study researchers can gain an in-depth insight from the project managers into the challenges they have faced, tools, and the strategic framework that was used in aligning the project with strategic goals and how they have filled the gap. Therefore, an understanding of a research framework is essential for doing quality research because it permits the creation of meaningful knowledge and to get good understanding about the subject and the interpretation of data (Elgeddawy & Abouraia, 2024).

3.2 Philosophical concept

Based on the nature of the research question and the objective of the thesis, the philosophical concept that is applicable is interpretivism (Myers, 2008). Interpretivism, a philosophy that integrates human interest into studies, emphasizes qualitative analysis over quantitative ones, based on the critique of positivism in social sciences (Myers, 2008). Consequently, studies that seek to investigate complex, situation-specific phenomena, such as how Strategic Project Management (SPM) helps close the gap between strategy and execution, are especially well-suited for it. It is because (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022; Wellington & Szczerbinski, 2007) argue that Interactive interviews enable researchers to explore interviewees thought and experience it provies valuable data for academics to make informed decisions for future action which appears to be applicable in this research context. Since the nature of strategic project management appears to be context-driven. Consequently, because SPM approaches are applied differently in different sectors, organizational cultures, and strategic goals, it is crucial to investigate these situations using qualitative insights (Cohen et al., 2011; Blaikie, 2004; Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022).

Thus, it is essential to pay attention to comprehending links and processes. Therefore, the study aims to investigate how SPM aids in project alignment with strategic goals (RQ1) as well as the components and frameworks that improve organizational resilience (RQ2). So, given that these are dynamic, complicated phenomena that require in-depth investigation, interpretivism makes a valuable sense in this research.

Research questions is mainly concerned with subjective insights into organizational practices. Therefore, to answer the questions, one must comprehend how various manufacturing companies use SPM methodologies to match strategy with projects. To elaborate more, this entails examining the distinct viewpoints, experiences, and methods of teams and managers, all of which are essential to interpretivism. It is because according

to Myers (2008) & Saunders et al., (2012), using the interpretivism approach allows researchers to gain deeper insights and draw a conclusion that might differ from the traditional approach. This is because it focuses on understanding the subject in detail by collecting and interpreting qualitative data of individual perspective, which helps to capture the complexity of individual experience as a result the data generated through this approach have a high level of validity(Myers, 2008). Thus, in the context of this research, qualitative investigation of “ways” by asking “in what ways,” the question indicates an investigation of certain mechanisms and processes, which calls for an interpretative strategy to reveal the underlying meanings and practices (Alharahsheh & Plus, 2020).

Furthermore, it aims to examine the efficacy of different SPM frameworks and their consequences for competitiveness and resilience (Alharahsheh & Plus, 2020) that contribute to the objectives of this thesis. In addition to that, the study of how these frameworks are interpreted and used in various organizational situations (Alharahsheh & Plus, 2020). Additionally, it covers cross-industry perspectives, the phrase "across industries" suggests that comparative analysis is necessary, which frequently entails comprehending the distinct operational, strategic, and cultural settings within different sectors.

3.3 Research approach

In the context, research approaches, according to Creswell (2014), are methods and techniques for carrying out research that involve making assumptions, obtaining information, evaluating it, and making interpretations. Nevertheless, they need a lot of decisions, which should be made by the complexity of the subject. Additionally, Creswell (2014) contends that the topic or problem under examination determines the research technique to be used. Moreover, logical reasoning is necessary for research to generate hypotheses, validate results, and develop interpretations (Butte, 2010). In contrast, in terms

of categories of research approach which according to Butte (2010), there are three types of justification: abductive, deductive, and inductive.

This research employs an inductive methodology, which is suitable for investigating intricate, situation-specific phenomena such as Strategic Project Management (SPM) because one important feature and advantage of qualitative research is inductive analysis which includes reading through the data and seeing codes, categories, patterns, and themes as they appear is known as inductive analysis (Bingham, 2023). Firstly, in this research, the inductive approach starts with gathering information using qualitative techniques, such as case studies and interviews, to comprehend how SPM practices improve organizational resilience and help projects fit with strategic goals. Secondly, in line with the interpretivist research approach of this research, patterns, themes, and frameworks will emerge from these insights, aiding in the construction of new theories rather than the testing of well-established ones (Bingham, 2023). Furthermore, inductive analysis involves defining data, linking initial coding to emergent themes and theories, developing codes, categories, themes, and findings, identifying representative data, and explaining findings using theory and literature (Bingham, 2023). Which significantly contributes to achieving the objective of this research. This inductive approach was particularly useful for better understanding how the strategic frameworks are adopted in the real-world project execution in different industries.

According to Chetty and Wali (2020) a research strategy is a set of steps that controls the researcher's cognitive process, it is a logical, systematic plan that guides the researcher's thinking and guarantees the employment of the proper data collection and analysis technique. Furthermore, when there is little to no prior research on the topic, the study also makes use of the exploratory research technique (Chetty & Walia, 2020) which could significantly contribute to achieving particular objectives of the research topic. According

to Malhotra (2017), research strategies are plans or schemes that are used for finding and evaluating information.

In the context of this research, a qualitative approach is well-suited to this research because it allows for a thorough understanding of the contextual and dynamic nature of SPM practices within organizational settings (Malhotra, 2017) that leads to a meaningful data collection and ultimately resulting to a valuable conclusion of this research. Firstly, by concentrating on the remained experiences, perceptions, and insights of professionals, this strategy seeks to generate vibrant, detailed data that highlights the complexities of aligning projects with strategic objectives. Secondly, this study makes use of a qualitative research strategy to investigate the role of Strategic Project Management (SPM) in bridging the gap between organizational strategy and execution (Malhotra, 2017) that brings a scenario to grasp ideas concerning to reality of the project process in several sample organizations.

The thesis incorporates an exploratory and contextual approach in which an exploratory study method is used since there is a dearth of previous literature on the practical application of SPM, especially in manufacturing and other industry-specific contexts. Consequently, this methodology facilitates the discovery of novel insights, the development of comprehension, and the identification of developing themes, alignment of strategic objectives with project execution. Thus, to comprehend how organizational strategy, culture and project management techniques interact, the research focuses on real-world scenarios. The study has exploratory in nature and sought to uncover the processes, challenges occurred, and contextual factors that has affected the organization and how the organization has bridged the gap between strategy and execution.

3.4 Research timeframe

According to (Alamgeer, 2023), the duration of the researcher's involvement in the population's examination is indicated by the research's time horizon, also known as the timeframe applicable to the research. The researcher therefore chooses the temporal frame depending on the sort of inquiry and the study's goals (Alamgeer, 2023). Nevertheless, there are two categories of study time horizons based on the temporal range: cross-sectional and longitudinal research (Alamgeer, 2023). Additionally, Alamgeer (2023) claims that studies with observational samples at a certain time are referred to as cross-sectional research. On the other hand, longitudinal studies may have a period that is short or lengthy (Alamgeer, 2023).

In the context of this research, the thesis utilizes cross-sectional approach as a time frame because it enables the collection of data at a single point in time as well as a cross-sectional research timeframe is appropriate for this study offering a brief overview of contemporary practices, issues, and viewpoints within organizations (Alamgeer, 2023). Furthermore, this method works especially well for examining how various teams, industries, or organizations apply strategic management concepts to project execution. Despite requiring long-term observation, it is effective for qualitative research, allowing the researcher to obtain sophisticated, in-depth insights through case studies or interviews. Consequently, this timeline, which focuses on a certain time duration, combines efficiently the academic requirements of a thesis and produces useful results that apply to modern corporate settings.

3.5 Data collection and analysis

The most important aspects of the research that guide the study's conclusion are the gathering and interpretation of data. However, it is the researcher's responsibility to review, evaluate, and derive a significant conclusion from the data after it has been collected and analysed through the research procedure. Therefore, the data collection procedure and analysis technique that are adopted in this research have been discussed as follows:

3.5.1 Data collection

Data was collected using semi-structured interviews with experience in project management from various industries, such as electronics manufacturing company, IT, public services and automotive industry. In fact, these techniques were selected because of their capacity to offer profound, comprehensive insights into the experiences of participants, organizational procedures, and practical SPM implementations. Subsequently, it enables the research and gives the research direction through collecting participant viewpoints in a flexible yet methodical manner. Interviews were conducted virtually via zoom and Microsoft teams; each meeting was done in 30 to 60 minutes.

No of Participants	Industry	Role	Interview type
PM 1	Manufacturing	Senior project Manager	Microsoft Teams
PM 2	IT services	Project Lead	Microsoft Teams
PM 3	Public sector	Business Manager	Zoom
PM 4	Automotive	Project Manager	Microsoft Teams
PM 5	Health care	Manager	Microsoft Teams

Table 3: Description of Semi-Structured Interviews

The interview guide has been open-ended questions covering several thematic areas relevant to strategic project management. A complete list of interview questions used in the study is provided in **Appendix 1**

The interview protocol was developed based on key themes identified and assured that confidentiality has been appropriately maintained to ensure ethical behavior of research. It is important in the research to ensure that participants are completely aware of the research's objectives, the intended use of their answers and their freedom to discontinue participation at any moment without facing consequences. So, this research has carefully maintained it during the entire data collection procedure. To preserve participant trust and study integrity, this research has maintained refrain from asking leading questions or misinterpreting replies from every interview and other data collection procedures. The author has taken careful consideration on avoiding sharing or competitive information that would jeopardize the organization's interests if it were made public. The questions are designed to particularly focus on the practical aspects of strategic project management and challenges that occurred and how they have bridged the gap. Some of the topics covered the framework and methodologies adopted in project execution and what are the success factors and organizational adaptability to the sudden changes and long-term resilience. The diversity of sectors represented by each participant enriched the data and enabled cross-sectoral comparison of strategic project management practices.

3.5.2 Data analysis

In this research, the process of data analysis involves including thematic analysis, a qualitative method that finds, examines, and presents themes or patterns in the data that has been gathered (Caulfield, 2019). When examining intricate relationships between project management and strategic concepts, this approach has appropriately contributed to drawing a definite conclusion of the research in the data analysis process. In addition to

that getting acquainted with the data and interviews to extract important insights, like strategic alignment, project prioritization, resource allocation, and execution challenges.

Most importantly, the qualitative data are carefully managed and organized using technical solutions, which allows the discovery of recurrent patterns and results will be cross-checked. The most significant aspect is the contextual details which are also carefully considered to make sure the study accurately captures the individuals' distinct experiences and difficulties. Hence, this comprehensive approach guarantees practical, well-founded insights into how businesses successfully apply strategic project management. The process has followed a step-by-step method, first, the important topics and answers related to the strategic project management were highlighted and this also includes the comments about how the managers align the projects with strategies and what tools and frameworks they used and how they have deal the situations and the challenges.

Next, the highlighted parts were grouped into main categories, to get better understanding such as strategic alignments, types of frameworks used to overcome obstacles. Similarly, responses were compared across all five interviews to find what practices were common and what differences existed. Once these categories were clear, the findings were matched with the concepts discussed in the literature review. For example, interviewers who mentioned using Balanced scorecards, five forces or lean methods were compared with the theories described in chapter 2. This has helped show whether real-life practice supported the theory or offered new insights.

3.6 Ethical considerations

The research has followed all ethical rules and guidelines. The research considered the most significant aspect to protect sensitive organizational information that is discussed during focus groups or interviews with executives, project managers, or team members. Thus, it

can be assured that confidentiality has been appropriately maintained to ensure ethical behavior in research. It is important in the research for ensuring that participants are completely aware of the research's objectives, the intended use of their answers, and their freedom to discontinue participation at any moment without facing consequences. So, this research has carefully maintained it during the entire data collection procedure. To preserve participant trust and study integrity, this research has refrained from asking leading questions or misinterpreting replies from every interview and other data collection procedures. The author has taken careful consideration to avoid sharing of information that would jeopardize the organization's interests if it were made public.

4. Findings

This chapter presents the key findings that derived from five semi-structured interviews with project managers across diverse industries. The purpose of this research was to explore how organizations implement Strategic Project Management (SPM) to bridge the gap between strategy formulation and execution. The findings are organized into four major themes that emerged during data analysis: Strategic alignment practices, use of project management frameworks, key enablers and challenges, and organizational resilience. Each theme provides valuable insights into how companies operate SPM to achieve their strategic objectives.

4.1 Strategic alignment practices

Strategic alignment emerged as a critical factor in successful SPM implementation across all interviewed organizations. Participants unanimously emphasized the need to explicitly link projects with overarching strategic goals. In the manufacturing sector, the project manager explained, "*Every project that we undertake must directly support at least one of our three strategic pillars: cost reduction, quality improvement, or market expansion and if a proposed initiative doesn't align, it doesn't get funding*." (Interviewee) This kind of approach ensures resource allocation aligns with corporate priorities.

To ensure diverse perspectives on Strategic Project Management (SPM) implementation, the study included participants from five distinct industry sectors. These comprised the manufacturing industry, service industry, technology industry, automotive industry, and governmental/public sector organizations. Each sector represents a different operational context and strategic landscape, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of how SPM practices are adapted and executed across varied environments. Public sector organizations demonstrated a different but equally structured approach to alignment. A government

project manager noted, "*Our digital transformation projects must directly support government policy objectives, particularly in cybersecurity and citizen service delivery. We use a mandatory alignment checklist during project initiation*." (Interviewee) This policy-driven approach reflects the unique constraints and requirements of public sector strategic management.

Common practices for achieving strategic alignment included the development of formal project charters with clear links to strategic KPIs, quarterly cross-functional strategy reviews, and the use of visual management tools like strategy maps and OKRs (Objectives and Key Results). One IT services manager described their "strategy wall," a physical and digital dashboard that maps agile sprints to annual strategic objectives, ensuring continuous visibility of alignment. These mechanisms create tangible connections between day-to-day project work and long-term organizational strategy. Representative quotes and practices demonstrating how strategic alignment was implemented in different industries are summarized in the table below.

Industry	Participant Quote	Practice
Manufacturing	"We tie every project to one of our three strategic pillars: cost reduction, quality improvement, or market expansion. If a project doesn't align with at least one, it's automatically deprioritized."	Project charters linked to KPIs; quarterly reviews
Public Sector	"Our projects must reflect government policy goals. For example, when the national government prioritized cybersecurity, we restructured ongoing initiatives to align with that directive."	Policy-driven project alignment; digital priorities
IT Services	"The 'strategy wall' used for visual mapping helps our team stay focused. It shows real-time progress of sprints aligned with quarterly objectives, so no one loses sight of the bigger picture."	OKRs, visual tools for alignment with goals
Healthcare	"Strategic KPIs are linked directly to patient care outcomes. That's how we ensure every project contributes to measurable improvements in service delivery."	Patient-outcome linked alignment
Automotive	"Alignment with R&D and sustainability goals is non-negotiable. If a proposed project doesn't support our emissions targets or innovation roadmap, it doesn't go forward."	R&D objectives mapped to strategy

Table 4: Strategic Alignment Practices by Industry

4.2 Use of project management frameworks

The research revealed that organizations employ a diverse mix of project management frameworks, often blending traditional and agile methodologies to suit their specific needs. Hybrid approaches were particularly prevalent, allowing companies to balance flexibility with structure. In the IT sector, the participant described their tailored approach: "*We follow Scrum for development sprints but integrate quarterly strategic checkpoints and this ensures our agile teams remain focused on delivering features that advance our annual strategic goals, not just immediate technical requirements*." (Interviewee)

Manufacturing and automotive industries showed a strong preference for Lean principles combined with structured methodologies. An automotive R&D manager explained, *"While we embrace Lean to eliminate waste in our processes, we rely on Critical Path Method (CPM) when dealing with regulatory milestones. Missing a safety certification deadline isn't an option*." (Interviewee) This pragmatic combination demonstrates how organizations adapt frameworks to meet both operational and compliance requirements.

The public sector stood out for its reliance on structured frameworks like PRINCE2 and MSP (Managing Successful Programs), reflecting the need for accountability and governance in government projects. Healthcare organizations, meanwhile, using hybrid Agile-Waterfall approaches, particularly for large-scale digital transformation initiatives where certain phases require rigid compliance checks. Below is the table highlights the framework used by industries.

Industry	Frameworks Mentioned	Participant Answers
Manufacturing	Lean, Six Sigma, Balanced Scorecard	*"Lean helps us reduce waste in project execution."*
IT Services	Scrum, Kanban, PMBOK	*"We use Agile with quarterly checkpoints."*
Public Sector	PRINCE2, MSP	*"We follow PRINCE2 for public transparency"*
Healthcare	Hybrid Agile-Waterfall, SWOT	*"We mix Waterfall and Agile to adjust with change."*
Automotive	Lean, Critical Path Method (CPM)	*"CPM ensures we meet regulatory milestones."*

Table 5: Frameworks Used Across Industries

4.3 Key enablers and challenges

Successful SPM implementation depends on several critical enablers, with strong executive sponsorship emerging as the most frequently cited factor. A healthcare project manager emphasized, "Our SPM steering committee, chaired by the CEO, has the authority to cut through bureaucratic hurdles. When strategic projects stall, this group intervenes directly." (interviewee) Such top-level commitment ensures strategic projects receive the necessary attention and resources across departments.

Digital tools also played a pivotal role in enabling alignment. Multiple participants described using business intelligence dashboards (e.g., Power BI, Tableau) to provide real-time visibility into how projects contribute to strategic KPIs. One manufacturing manager noted, "Our monthly operations review now starts with a 10-minute dashboard walkthrough showing project status against strategic targets. It's transformed our conversations from tactical firefighting to strategic prioritization." (interviewee)

However, significant challenges persist. Departmental silos created alignment difficulties, particularly in large organizations. An automotive executive shared, "Our R&D and production teams use different KPIs. When developing new vehicle platforms, this misalignment can add months to timelines." Resource constraints, especially in SMEs, and resistance to change from middle management were other commonly reported hurdles. One public sector participant summarized the change management challenge: "Strategy feels abstract until it hits someone's performance metrics. We've learned the hard way that you can't just announce strategic priorities - you need to rebuild incentives around them." (interviewee)

The table highlights the key enablers and challenges identified during the research of strategic project management (SPM) implementation.

Factor	Participants Answer
Enablers	
Executive Sponsorship	PM5: *"Our CEO chairs the SPM steering committee."*
Digital Tools	PM1: *"We use Power BI dashboards to align project KPIs."*
Cross-functional Reviews	PM3: *"Quarterly reviews clarify alignment."*
Challenges	
Siloed Departments	PM4: *"R&D and production use different KPIs, causing delays."*
Resource Constraints	PM1: *"We lack dedicated SPM staff; too many hats for one manager"*
Change Resistance	*Mentioned in 3 interviews across the public and manufacturing sectors*

Table 6: Enablers and Challenges in SPM Implementation

4.4 SPM and organizational resilience

The interviews revealed compelling evidence that effective SPM enhances organizational resilience by creating structures for adaptive response. Multiple participants shared examples where their SPM frameworks enabled rapid pivots during crises. A public sector interview recalled, "*When COVID-19 hit, our SPM governance model allowed us to repurpose 30% of our project portfolio to support remote work initiatives within three weeks. The existing alignment between projects and strategic goals meant we could quickly identify which initiatives to accelerate, pause, or redirect*" (Interviewee).

Manufacturing organizations reported using scenario planning embedded in their SPM processes to build resilience. *"We now run 'disruption simulations' during project initiation*," explained one operations manager. "*This helped us navigate the chip shortage crisis because we'd already identified alternative suppliers for critical components*" (interviewee). Such practices demonstrate how SPM moves beyond theoretical alignment to create practical preparedness.

Continuous learning mechanisms also contributed to resilience. Several organizations institutionalized post-mortem analyses, not just for failed projects but for strategic initiatives overall. A healthcare technology manager described their approach: "*We document lessons from every major project in a searchable database. Now and then, when we launch similar initiatives, we automatically surface relevant insights about what worked or didn't work last time*." (interviewee) This organizational learning aspect transforms SPM from a planning exercise into a dynamic capability.

Practice	Industry / Quote
Scenario Planning	*Manufacturing:* "*Helped us pivot during supply chain issues*"
Strategic Dashboards	*IT Services:* "*Flagged vendor delays in real-time*"
Post-Mortem Reviews	*Healthcare:* "*We track failed projects for strategic updates*."
Rapid Project Repurposing	*Public Sector:* "*We reallocated 30% of IT projects during the pandemic*."

Table 7: Resilience Practices Enabled by SPM

4.5 Synthesis

The research identified consistent patterns in how organizations bridge strategy and execution through SPM. Strategic alignment is achieved through formal mechanisms like strategy-linked project charters and OKRs, supported by regular cross-functional reviews. Organizations tailor project management frameworks to their contexts, with hybrids like Agile-PMBOK or Lean-CPM being common. While executive sponsorship and digital tools enable success, challenges like siloed departments and resource constraints require ongoing attention.

Industry	Alignment Approach	Frameworks Used	Enablers	Resilience Practices
Manufacturing	Strategic pillars (cost, quality, market)	Lean, Six Sigma, Balanced Scorecard	Power BI, executive sponsorship	Scenario planning, KPI tracking
IT Services	OKRs, Agile strategy wall	Scrum, Kanban, PMBOK	Agile checkpoints, dashboards	Risk flagging, iterative adjustment
Public Sector	National policy-driven alignment	PRINCE2, MSP	Transparent goals, policy linkage	Emergency response repurposing
Healthcare	Service outcome-linked KPIs	Hybrid Agile-Waterfall, SWOT	CEO-led reviews, post-mortems	Continuous learning loops
Automotive	R&D, production strategy links	Lean, Critical Path Method (CPM)	CPM for regulation, Lean R&D	Flexibility in supply chain execution

Table 8: Strategic Project Management Summary by Industry

Most significantly, the findings demonstrate that SPM contributes substantially to organizational resilience. Companies with mature SPM practices could respond faster to disruptions, leveraging their strategic alignment frameworks to make informed portfolio

adjustments. The integration of scenario planning and continuous learning into SPM processes appears particularly valuable for building adaptive capacity. These insights set the stage for Chapter 5's discussion of theoretical implications and practical recommendations.

5. Discussion and conclusion

5.1 Discussion

This study's findings reveal critical insights into how Strategic Project Management (SPM) bridges the gap between strategy formulation and execution. By comparing the empirical results (Chapter 4) with existing literature (Chapter 2), we can contextualize the contributions and practical implications of this research.

Participants emphasized formal mechanisms like OKRs (Objectives and Key Results) and strategy-linked project charters to align projects with organizational goals. This aligns with Huynh et al. (2020), who highlighted the Balanced Scorecard as a tool for mapping strategic objectives to project outcomes. However, our findings extend this by showing that smaller firms (e.g., manufacturing SMEs) often lack resources for sophisticated scorecards, instead relying on simplified KPIs and visual management (e.g., strategy walls). This supports Bjorvatn's (2022) argument that SPM must be scalable to different organizational contexts.

The hybrid adoption of Agile, Lean, and traditional frameworks (PMBOK, PRINCE2) reflects literature on flexibility in SPM (Kristensen & Kalsaas, 2020). For example, IT firms combined Scrum with strategic checkpoints, reinforcing Romero & Francisco's (2018) view that Agile must evolve beyond "sprint delivery" to support long-term strategy. Meanwhile, automotive and manufacturing sectors leaned on Lean-CPM hybrids, validating Wojikiewicz's (2018) emphasis on industry-specific adaptations. Notably, public sector reliance on PRINCE2/MSP aligns with Grundy's (2000) findings on governance-heavy environments.

Leadership sponsorship emerged as the top enabler, mirroring Williams' (2017) claim that executive engagement closes execution gaps.

Digital tools (e.g., Power BI dashboards) were pivotal for real-time alignment, extending Correani et al.'s (2020) work on digital transformation in SPM.

The link between SPM and resilience was striking. Participants described scenario planning and post-mortem learning as key to adapting during crises (e.g., pandemic pivots). This empirically validates Dieterle & Duchek's (2023) theoretical model of SPM as a resilience builder, while adding that real-time dashboards and strategic governance (e.g., steering committees) accelerate adaptive responses.

5.2 Theoretical Implications

The findings strongly support Barney's (1995) foundational argument that unique organizational capabilities create sustainable competitive advantage. In the context of SPM, this manifests through industry-specific adaptations of project management frameworks. For instance, IT service firms in our study developed valuable hybrid approaches combining Agile methodologies with strategic governance checkpoints - a capability that proved difficult for competitors to imitate due to its deep integration with organizational culture and processes. Similarly, automotive manufacturers created rare value by uniquely blending Lean principles with Critical Path Method (CPM) for regulatory compliance, demonstrating how tailored SPM practices can become strategic resources. These empirical observations extend RBV theory by showing how project management frameworks, when properly contextualized, transition from operational tools to strategic assets.

The data revealed a clear dichotomy in strategic orientation that aligns with Omalaja and Eruola's (2011) theoretical framework. Multinational corporations predominantly exhibited profit-maximization behaviors, meticulously aligning projects with financial KPIs through structured frameworks like PMBOK and Balanced Scorecard. This reflects the traditional

industrial organization perspective were competitive positioning drives strategy. Conversely, public sector and healthcare organizations emphasized survival-based approaches, prioritizing policy alignment and adaptability through governance-heavy frameworks like MSP (Managing Successful Programs). This divergence empirically validates the contingency aspect of strategic management theory - that optimal SPM approaches depend fundamentally on organizational context and strategic objectives. The healthcare sector's particular challenges with regulatory compliance further illustrate how institutional theory intersects with strategic management in shaping SPM practices.

While Huynh et al. (2020) established the Balanced Scorecard as a gold standard for strategic alignment, our findings suggest an evolution in performance measurement practices. Organizations operating in dynamic environments (particularly IT services and agile manufacturing units) overwhelmingly adopted OKRs over traditional scorecards. This shift appears driven by the need for more frequent strategy recalibration - OKRs' quarterly cycle proved more adaptable than annual scorecard reviews. However, the study also found that mature organizations often layered OKRs onto existing Balanced Scorecard architectures, creating a hybrid measurement system. This practical adaptation suggests that rather than replacing established frameworks, newer tools like OKRs are extending strategic management systems to accommodate both stability and flexibility - an important nuance for future research on performance measurement in SPM.

An important implication is that there also needs to be an improvement in communication across all levels of an organization. The most common reason project management cannot be effectively accomplished is owing to poor communication, which results in a mismatch between project execution and strategic goals. Therefore, organizations are expected to define structured communication strategies ensuring there is a smooth flow of updates and feedback between the project teams and the strategic planners. This can be achieved through scheduled strategy review meetings, transparent reporting mechanisms, and the

use of collaborative tools to keep project teams abreast of strategic changes. Better communication eliminates misalignments, and project teams can modify their efforts to achieve real use for better project output.

Resource management also becomes a critical connecting link between strategy and execution. Organizations need to ensure that the right financial, human, and technological resources are committed to strategically important projects. This means not only ensuring sufficient funding but also ensuring that the right equipment and technologies are made available to the project team. Strategic resource allocation would require careful planning in terms of what projects to prioritize, and where maximum value to the organization lies. Training and development programs would be crucial for equipping employees with the project management skills to manage resources and deal with challenges in the future.

The consistency between these findings and established theories strengthens the validity of our results, while the identified nuances point to valuable avenues for theoretical refinement, particularly regarding how traditional strategic management frameworks adapt to increasingly dynamic business environments.

5.3 Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Strategic Project Management (SPM) systematically bridges the strategy-execution gap through three critical mechanisms. First, it aligns projects with organizational strategy through formal mechanisms such as OKRs and project charters, supported by adaptive governance structures like steering committees and digital dashboards. These tools create transparency and accountability, ensuring that day-to-day project execution remains connected to strategic objectives. Second, SPM succeeds by tailoring frameworks (Agile, Lean, PMBOK) to industry-specific needs, confirming

Wojikiewicz's (2018) argument that rigid, one-size-fits-all approaches fail. For instance, IT firms benefit from Agile-strategy hybrids, while manufacturers rely on Lean-CPM combinations for regulatory compliance. Third, SPM enhances organizational resilience by embedding scenario planning and continuous learning into project governance, enabling companies to navigate disruptions such as pandemics and supply chain crises effectively.

For practitioners, these findings offer actionable insights. Leadership must visibly champion SPM to break down silos and foster cross-functional collaboration. Investing in digital tools for real-time project tracking ensures alignment remains dynamic rather than static. Most importantly, organizations should adapt frameworks to their specific context for example, integrating Agile with strategic checkpoints in IT or combining Lean with CPM in manufacturing. These practices transform SPM from a procedural requirement into a competitive advantage.

While this study provides valuable insights, its small sample size (five interviews) limits broad generalizability. Future research could expand on these findings by exploring SPM implementation in startups, where resource constraints and rapid scaling present unique challenges. Additionally, quantitative studies measuring the impact of SPM on organizational resilience could strengthen the evidence base. For instance, metrics such as project success rates during crises or time-to-adapt in volatile markets would offer tangible proof of SPM's strategic value.

Enhanced communication and collaboration between leadership and project teams enhance the culture of strategic alignment in organizations, which is a pre-condition for the successful execution of strategic project management. Strategic alignment can be designed as regular meetings to narrow down the gap from strategy formulation to execution by project managers through open communication channels and collaborative planning. For example, Google is well-suited to the structure "Objectives and Key Results." It outlines the

way of effective communication and a kind of alignment catalyst for successful projects and organizational growth.

It would be right for organizations to invest in training and development to keep their project managers abreast with skills and knowledge that would be used to better achieve strategic project management. Strategic planning, risk management, and advanced tools of project management require training. Certification programs with continuous education provided by the Project Management Institute and other professional bodies have many benefits. For instance, Accenture revealed the connection between the continuous learning and development of employees to superior project outcomes and strategic alignment.

By following these guidelines, organizations will enhance the performance of their strategic project management practice, thus gaining better results and attaining long-term strategic success. Acceptance of these guidelines will help organizations respond to the dynamics of their operating environment well, resulting in sustained success and a resource-based competitive advantage. Overall, this research focuses on the worth of proactivity in the practice of strategic project management through continuous strategy and execution alignment.

In summary, SPM is far more than a project management tool—it is a strategic capability that redefines how organizations execute, adapt, and compete. By aligning projects with strategy, customizing frameworks to industry needs, and building resilience through continuous learning, SPM closes the persistent gap between ambition and results. For leaders, the message is clear: investing in SPM maturity pays dividends not just in project outcomes but in long-term organizational agility and success. Future research should build on these findings to further refine best practices and quantify SPM's impact across diverse business environments.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Interviews questions

1. Can you please share your name and what's your job role, and your experience?
2. Can you define how your organization defines strategic project management (SPM) and how it is implemented?
3. Which frameworks or methodologies have been used to ensure strategic alignment in project execution?
4. How do you manage cross-functional collaboration and communication for strategy execution?
5. What are the challenges faced during aligning the project with strategic goals?
6. How did you overcome the obstacles or bridge the gap between strategy and execution?
7. Which project management methods are used in your organization? Like Scrum, Agile
8. How does your organization measure strategic project management?
9. How does your team manage the risk and uncertainty?
10. Can you provide examples where SPM helped to take initiatives successfully?
11. In what ways does strategic project management (SPM) help manufacturing firms successfully close the gap between strategy and execution by facilitating the alignment of organizational projects with strategic objectives?
12. Which frameworks and essential elements support the effective use of strategic project management techniques, and what effects do they have on an organization's long-term resilience and competitiveness across industries?