

Designing A Viable Organization Structure for Ambitious Employees

A conceptual model to advance employee performance in manufacturing companies.

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Prof. (FH) Dipl.-Ing. Wilfried Manhart, MBA

Handed in by

Yi Ju, M.A., M.Eng.

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Abstract

Designing A Viable Organization Structure for Ambitious Employees

A conceptual model to advance employee performance in manufacturing companies.

Having autonomy in the workplace can have a positive impact on employees' performance, which in turn can benefit the organization's competitive advantages. While previous researches have primarily focused on the psychological effects of job autonomy on employee performance and has been limited to certain domains, the relationship between job autonomy and organizational design is an important area of study for organizations seeking to improve their competitiveness.

This thesis proposes a conceptual model for designing an organization structure that promotes employee performance in manufacturing companies by removing obstacles towards obtaining job autonomy. The focus is on ambitious employees who seek growth and development opportunities within their organization. The model is based on a review of existing literature on job autonomy and organizational design. Exploratory qualitative research was conducted with selected ambitious employees from different industries by means of one-on-one semi-structured interviews.

Overall, the proposed model has practical implications for manufacturing companies looking to motivate their employees, as well as for researchers seeking to advance their understanding of organizational design in our times.

Keywords: employee performance, ambitious employee, job autonomy, manufacturing company, obstacles, organization structure, organizational design

Kurzreferat

Gestaltung einer tragfähigen Organisationsstruktur für ambitionierte Mitarbeiter

Ein konzeptionelles Modell zur Steigerung der Mitarbeiterleistung in produzierenden Unternehmen

Autonomie am Arbeitsplatz kann sich positiv auf die Leistung der Mitarbeiter auswirken, was wiederum den Wettbewerbsvorteilen der Organisation zugutekommen kann. Während sich die bisherige Forschung in erster Linie auf die psychologischen Auswirkungen der Arbeitsautonomie auf die Leistung der Mitarbeiter konzentrierte und auf bestimmte Bereiche beschränkt war, ist die Beziehung zwischen Arbeitsautonomie und Organisationsdesign ein wichtiges Studiengebiet für Unternehmen, die ihre Wettbewerbsfähigkeit verbessern wollen.

Diese Dissertation schlägt ein konzeptionelles Modell für die Gestaltung einer Organisationsstruktur vor, die die Mitarbeiterleistung in produzierenden Unternehmen fördert, indem Hindernisse für die Erlangung von Arbeitsautonomie beseitigt werden. Der Fokus liegt auf ambitionierten Mitarbeitern, die Wachstums- und Entwicklungsmöglichkeiten innerhalb ihrer Organisation suchen. Das Modell basiert auf einer Überprüfung der bestehenden Literatur zu Arbeitsautonomie und Organisationsdesign. Mittels halbstrukturierter Einzelinterviews wurde eine explorative qualitative Untersuchung mit ausgewählten ambitionierten Mitarbeitern aus verschiedenen Branchen durchgeführt.

Insgesamt hat das vorgeschlagene Modell praktische Implikationen für produzierende Unternehmen, die ihre Mitarbeiter motivieren möchten, sowie für Forscher, die ihr Verständnis von Organisationsdesign in der heutigen Zeit erweitern möchten.

Schlüsselwörter: Mitarbeiterleistung, ambitionierter Mitarbeiter, Arbeitsautonomie, produzierendes Unternehmen, Hindernisse, Organisationsstruktur, Organisationsdesign

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List of Abbreviations and Symbols

AI – Artificial Intelligence

ChatGPT – Chat Generative Pre-Trained Transformer

Fre. – Frequency

IoT – Internet of Things

MAXQDA – Max Qualitative Data Analysis

PESTLE – Political, Economic, Sociological, Technological, Legal, Environmental

PD – Physical Department

R&D – Research & Development

Ref. – Reference

RQ – Research Question

VD – Virtual Department

1 Introduction

1.1 Motivation and Background

A major consideration in modern organizational design is globalization. ¹ Researchers Åslund and Dąbrowski (2008) point out that the last three decades of economic, social, and political achievements of globalization have been nothing short of spectacular. ² Globalization makes our economies, technologies, cultures, and populations around the world highly interconnected and highly interdependent. ³ There are inherent problems with globalization. These problems were exposed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many manufacturing companies reported that their production, demand, and supply chains were highly affected by the pandemic. ⁴ The world after COVID-19 is unlikely to completely return to the previous status quo. ⁵ The trend of digitalization was highlighted during the pandemic. Numerous companies regard digital transformation as a crucial strategy to remain competitive. ⁶ The acceleration of digitalization has encouraged companies to rethink their competitive advantage. ⁷ Barney (1995) points out that firms that use their internal strengths in exploiting environmental opportunities and neutralizing environmental threats, while avoiding internal weaknesses, are more likely to gain competitive advantages than other kinds of firms. ⁸ Resources and capabilities of a company are considered as valuable internal sources in achieving competitive advantages. ⁹ This consideration leads Barney's question: Is a firm organized to exploit the full competitive potential of its resources and capabilities? ¹⁰ Human resources are often considered the most important resource of a company. The motivation of the author to write this thesis is to explore whether companies have provided opportunities for human talents to allow them to reach their full potential.

1.1.1 Needs of Organizations and Employees

Lencioni (2016) defines trust as an ability to rely on a person, company, product, or service to deliver an outcome. ¹¹ He describes employment as a two-way street in which organizations expect something from their employees and at the same time, their employees also have

¹ Carleton 2011

² Carleton 2011

³ 'Globalization' 2023.

⁴ 'How has the Coronavirus Impacted Manufacturing?' n. y.

⁵ 'How Will the World Be Different After COVID-19 - IMF F&D' n. y.

⁶ 'How Will the World Be Different After COVID-19 - IMF F&D' n. y.

⁷ 'How Will the World Be Different After COVID-19 - IMF F&D' n. y.

⁸ Barney 1995.

⁹ Barney 1995.

¹⁰ Barney 1995.

¹¹ Hall 2009.

needs from these organizations. ¹² Abraham Maslow, a pioneer in the field of theorized a hierarchy of human needs, says as human beings, we can only concern ourselves with higher-level needs when our lower-level needs have been satisfied. ¹³ For Abraham, as Figure 1 shows, safety and physiological needs are lower-level needs, they must be first satisfied before people can pursue higher-level needs which are in his hierarchy chart affiliation and esteem. ¹⁴ The ultimate need people pursue is self-actualization in terms of controlling one's life, as well as realizing one's potential. ¹⁵

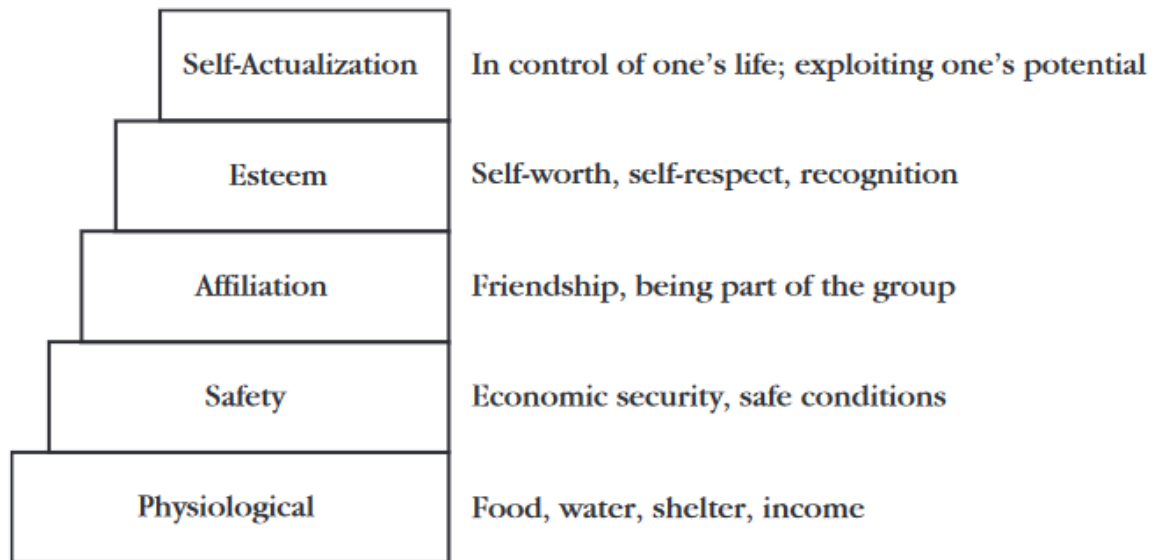


Figure 1 Maslow's hierarchy of human needs

Source McIntosh; Luecke 2011, p. 59

In the workplace, assuming basic needs are met, employees want to pursue their higher-level needs. In addition to group acceptance, employees want to earn recognition. Higher-level needs, especially the ultimate need, require specific conditions provided by organizations so that higher needs can be realized by employees. ¹⁶ Companies provide these conditions to build trust between organizations and their employees. If organizations cultivate the conditions to allow employees to realize higher-level needs, employees will grant more trust to their organization. ¹⁷ When an employee's higher-level needs are met in the workplace, the employee will usually be more engaged, innovative, and productive. ¹⁸ These three benefits of employee wellbeing determine a company's competitive advantages. ¹⁹ In addition, the performances

¹² Hall 2009.

¹³ McIntosh; Luecke 2011, p. 59.

¹⁴ McIntosh; Luecke 2011, p. 59.

¹⁵ McIntosh; Luecke 2011, p. 60.

¹⁶ 'Abraham Maslow, Motivation and Personality, 1954' 2003, p. 129.

¹⁷ Hawley's 2004, p. 70.

¹⁸ Hawley's 2004, p. 70.

¹⁹ Hawley's 2004, p. 70.

which employees conduct to achieve increased engagement, innovation, and productivity build trust between employees and their organizations. But not all employees have strong ambitions to realize their higher-level needs in the workplace. They seek only to satisfy their minimal needs, which only requires very basic performance. Or they do not see an incentive to motivate them to reach higher-level needs.

1.1.2 Ambitious Employees

Ambition is commonly defined in dictionaries as the aspiration to accomplish or achieve something exceptional in the future or the willingness to strive for power, honor, fame, or wealth.²⁰ We hold conflicting feelings towards ambition because while it has driven us to achieve great accomplishments such as art, airplanes, and antibiotics, it has also been a driving force behind destructive actions like wars, genocide, and despotism.²¹ However, Rhode (2021) points out that many of the negative consequences associated with ambition are the desire for external markers of success such as recognition, money, and power.²² But a desire for what is honorable accounts for many of the benefits. Therefore, the value of ambition is determined by intent.²³

Rhode (2021) points out that recognition, money, and power are three primary targets of ambition in American culture.²⁴ But in the opinion of the author, these three primary targets are not limited to American culture. They can apply to all human cultures. In this thesis, the desire to achieve recognition, money, and power will be used to separate ambitious employees and non-ambitious employees.

Recognition

Social scientists sometimes define recognition as status.²⁵ Recognition serves as an umbrella concept that encompasses all the various forms of status, respect, fame, honor, and approval that drives human behavior.²⁶ Adam Smith describes recognition as the wish to be “noticed with sympathy and approval” accounted for “half the labors of human life”.²⁷ Rhode (2021) in describing in his book *Ambition: for what* recognition as the dominant human ambition states:

²⁰ ‘ambition’ n. y.

²¹ Rhode 2021, p. 3.

²² Rhode 2021, p. 3.

²³ Rhode 2021, p. 3.

²⁴ Rhode 2021, p. 3.

²⁵ Rhode 2021, p. 4.

²⁶ Rhode 2021, p. 11.

²⁷ Rhode 2021, p. 12.

*“society’s most effective rewards and punishments were ‘the esteem and admiration’ or ‘the neglect and contempt of others.’”*²⁸

According to William James “Craving to be appreciated” is the deepest human need.²⁹ Adam Smith asserted that recognition is the only truly moral and socially desirable form of ambition.³⁰ All people in our society have ambition for recognition because all people have a need for self-esteem. This need has two sets. First, the desire for achievement, for confidence, for strength, for independence and freedom.³¹ Second, the desire for reputation or prestige.³² Employees who have ambition for recognition in the workplace have a desire to get a reputation in the professional area.³³ The testament to this fact is the proliferation of titles, awards, and recognition ceremonies.³⁴

In the workplace, employees gain recognition by increasing their competence, generosity, and other prosocial behaviors.³⁵ The search for recognition can propel employee performance.³⁶ Organizations can also benefit from employees’ pursuit of recognition. Employees prefer to stay longer in jobs if they gain recognition in the workplace.³⁷

Rhode (2021) however points out the dark side of recognition. Excessive ambition becomes problematic if it harms priorities and shared interests of the group.³⁸ Applause is addictive and the desire for recognition becomes toxic if it can never be fully satisfied.³⁹ In extreme cases, people can become a slave to what other people think, because they are only satisfied by extrinsic aspirations rather than motivated by their intrinsic aspirations.⁴⁰ According to Rhode (2021) a consequence of single-minded pursuit of personal recognition can sabotage the effectiveness of a leader.⁴¹ A recognition obsessed leader does not focus on creating the conditions for achievement by others but focuses only on their own personal status and recognition.⁴² Therefore, Rhode (2021) highlights:

²⁸ Rhode 2021, pp. 11-12.

²⁹ Rhode 2021, p. 12.

³⁰ Rhode 2021, p. 12.

³¹ Abraham Maslow, *Motivation and Personality*, 1954’ 2003, p. 75.

³² Abraham Maslow, *Motivation and Personality*, 1954’ 2003, p. 75.

³³ Rhode 2021, p. 13.

³⁴ Rhode 2021, p. 13.

³⁵ Rhode 2021, p. 14.

³⁶ Rhode 2021, p. 14.

³⁷ Rhode 2021, p. 13.

³⁸ Rhode 2021, p. 15.

³⁹ Rhode 2021, p. 15.

⁴⁰ Rhode 2021, p. 24.

⁴¹ Rhode 2021, p. 22.

⁴² Rhode 2021, p. 22.

*“Leaders preoccupied with gaining recognition for their own achievement may shortchange organizational concerns on which success ultimately depends.”*⁴³

In the workplace, whoever has recognition will be thought of as the “man of importance” because they are “charged with great tasks”.⁴⁴ This perception delivers the feeling that they have self-confidence, strength, capability, are useful, and necessary for the organization.⁴⁵ They are automatically thought to be people who can be trusted in organizations. Therefore, organizations need ambitious employees who strive for positive recognition and embrace the values of the organization.⁴⁶

Money

*“The power that money confers in all aspects of our lives makes it universal appeal.”*⁴⁷ This is an undisputed fact that nowadays almost everything is up for sale. Money is thought to buy safety, security, and happiness. It shapes not only our own lives but also those of others around us.⁴⁸

In the workplace, compensation is either monetary or nonmonetary payments which employers directly provide to their employees.⁴⁹ Monetary payments are composed of basic salary and rewards, and they are the bulk of employees’ income.⁵⁰ Compensation can attract the people that companies want. Changing its compensation system could result in the departure of some employees, and it could also attract a specific group of individuals to the organization.⁵¹ In addition, compensation can affect the behavior of a company’s current employees. By changing the system, a company may cause its employees to change their behavior in a way that helps or hinders the company’s strategic direction.⁵² Since compensation is the most powerful tool to create and to shape employee incentives, and monetary payment is employee’s main income, we can assume that monetary payment plays a key role in creating and shaping employees’ incentives in workplace. DeVaro (n.y.) indicates compensation is a “three-legged stool”⁵³ that can be expressed in a formula:

⁴³ Rhode 2021, p. 5.

⁴⁴ Rhode 2021, p. 25.

⁴⁵ Abraham Maslow, *Motivation and Personality*, 1954’ 2003, p. 75.

⁴⁶ Rhode 2021, p. 16.

⁴⁷ Rhode 2021, p. 32.

⁴⁸ Rhode 2021, pp. 33-35.

⁴⁹ DeVaro n.y., p. 29.

⁵⁰ DeVaro n.y., p. 33.

⁵¹ DeVaro n.y., p. 33.

⁵² DeVaro n.y., p. 33.

⁵³ DeVaro n.y., p. 34.

Compensation = Desire x Skills x Mobility ⁵⁴

Desire in this formula means the desire employees work for pay. ⁵⁵ Skills represent employees' performance while mobility represents employees' flexibility at work. DeVaro (n. y.) explains that these "three legs" of the stool are multiplied, not added, which means if any of the legs is missing, the stool will collapse, and the compensation will be zero. ⁵⁶

Many employers use performance pay – pay for their skills to influence employee behavior in ways to benefit companies. ⁵⁷ But DeVaro (n.y.) argues there are also drawbacks towards performance-based pay. The first drawback he finds is sometimes employees expect compensation for things they would otherwise have done willingly for free. ⁵⁸ It does not shape employees' incentives but feeds their greed. Another drawback DeVaro (n.y.) mentioned is that the incidence of injuries and illnesses increases due to the fast pace of work, both employees and the co-workers who assist with the work are paid on such plans. ⁵⁹ To pay for performance is easy, but it is difficult for the organization to obtain the intended advantages that result from employee performance. ⁶⁰

Most employees are interested in higher pay in the workplace, and higher pay means promotions, in turn, companies think that promotions help retain employees. ⁶¹ Companies think that promotions can help to retain employees. ⁶² However, since promotional opportunities are usually scarce, this scarcity creates competition within the team or the department. ⁶³ Since department supervisors or team leaders are the key people to measure employee performance, they will make promotion decisions. In this competition, employees who are ambitious to get promotion opportunities may misuse personal relationships with their supervisors or sabotage their competitors by lowering their performances. ⁶⁴

Organizations should encourage their employees to raise themselves to a higher level. Advancement opportunities should be provided fairly for all employees that use unfair and un-transparent ways to influence promotion decision makers should be excluded. ⁶⁵ Organizations should not only take performance, but also employees' desire to work for pay and their mobility for work into a compensation decision. ⁶⁶ In the workplace, employees expect to get

⁵⁴ DeVaro n.y., p. 34.

⁵⁵ DeVaro n.y., p. 34.

⁵⁶ DeVaro n.y., p. 34.

⁵⁷ DeVaro n.y., p. 227.

⁵⁸ DeVaro n.y., p. 235.

⁵⁹ DeVaro n.y., p. 236.

⁶⁰ DeVaro n.y., pp. 236-237.

⁶¹ DeVaro n.y., p. 238.

⁶² DeVaro n.y., p. 238.

⁶³ DeVaro n.y., p. 335.

⁶⁴ DeVaro n.y., p. 336.

⁶⁵ Milkovich; Newman; Gerhart 2014, p. 325.

⁶⁶ Milkovich; Newman; Gerhart 2014, p. 325.

a fair amount of salary and rewards, and a fair determination of pay.⁶⁷ Meanwhile, organizations expect ambitious employees that are motivated by money, are not abusing relationships, or sabotaging other competitors in promotion.⁶⁸ Ambitious employees, that are motivated by money should seek fair and transparent competition in promotion and seek fair pay for their desire, performance, and mobility.

Power

Dahl (2007) points out that power is a relation among people.⁶⁹ If A has power over B, it means at least one aspect in these four categories – a) source, domain, b) means or instruments, c) the amount or extent, d) the range or scope that A is more powerful than B. It also indicates that A and B are unequal in power.⁷⁰ If A has power over B, we can assume, A can ask B to do something that B would not otherwise do.⁷¹ The more inequality exists, the more powerful A is over B. In the workplace, power is given to us by others. In other words, our power is granted to us by others.⁷² If an individual is more powerful in the workplace, he or she will take more authority to improve the lives of other employees.⁷³ In the workplace, individuals such as executives, managers, and supervisors have a certain level of power and can decide orders, allocate resources, give rewards, and make decisions.⁷⁴ Power happens daily and the interaction happens in two directions – horizontally and vertically.⁷⁵ Power happens vertically from up to down in a hierarchy structure.⁷⁶ Higher positions can give command to lower positions. And for the same hierarchy positions, the one who has more knowledge on a specific situation than others can dominate the conversation. Here knowledge automatically creates power.⁷⁷ As power receivers, executives, managers, or supervisors use power to get what they want from others and use power to influence others.⁷⁸ This influence can affect the behavior and thinking of people. In Consequences of Influence Methods, abuse of power mostly happens in category resistance.⁷⁹ Refer to Figure 2.

⁶⁷ Milkovich; Newman; Gerhart 2014, p. 325.

⁶⁸ Milkovich; Newman; Gerhart 2014, p. 325.

⁶⁹ Dahl 2007, p. 202.

⁷⁰ Dahl 2007, p. 203.

⁷¹ Dahl 2007, pp. 202-203.

⁷² Falbe, C.M., & Yukl, G., 1992.

⁷³ Falbe, C.M., & Yukl, G., 1992.

⁷⁴ McIntosh and Luecke 2011, p. 2.

⁷⁵ McIntosh and Luecke 2011, p. 2.

⁷⁶ McIntosh and Luecke 2011, p. 2.

⁷⁷ McIntosh and Luecke 2011, p. 2.

⁷⁸ McIntosh and Luecke 2011, pp. 1-2.

⁷⁹ Falbe & Yukl G 1992, p. 647.

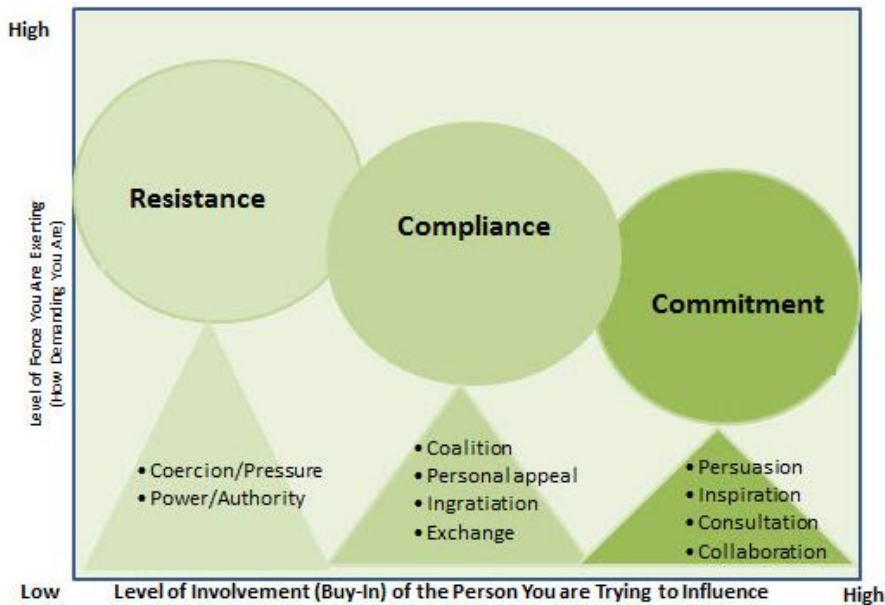


Figure 2 Consequences of influence methods

Source Adapted from Falbe & Yukl, G. (1992), p. 647

Rhode (2021) points out that physical and psychological harm in the workplace is mainly caused by the abuse of power.⁸⁰ When power is abused in the workplace, employees experience stress, anxiety, and shame – these signs show they are powerless.⁸¹ Rhode (2021) mentions power can shield people from accountability, and some people become more willing to violate social norms and prioritize their own interests once they get power.⁸² They do not focus on the needs of other people and this behavior is self-sabotaging.⁸³ In addition, Rhode (2021) points out the most negative personality is “power hungry”.⁸⁴ Power hungry people only have ambition to get power for their own purposes.⁸⁵ They are selfish and less fair than leaders.⁸⁶ Cumulative abuses of power can diminish trust at work.⁸⁷ Organizations need ambitious employees who pursue power for reasons other than self-interest. Once employees achieve power, they are obliged not to abuse it. Employees should desire power to influence other people’s behavior and thinking in positive ways. They use power to promote goals and values of organizations.

⁸⁰ Rhode 2021, p. 64.

⁸¹ Falbe, C.M., & Yukl, G., 1992.

⁸² Rhode 2021, p. 65.

⁸³ Rhode 2021, p. 65.

⁸⁴ Rhode 2021, p. 65.

⁸⁵ Rhode 2021, p. 65.

⁸⁶ Rhode 2021, p. 66.

⁸⁷ Keltner 2016.

1.2 Thesis Structure

This thesis is divided into four parts. In Part I (Chapter 1), the author of this thesis introduces her research by analyzing the historical and social contexts that shaped the development of the research topic. Based on the analysis, the author states her research motivation. Also, in Part I the needs of both organizations and their employees have been stated as well as the clarification on ambitious employees.

Based on this, Part II of this volume (Chapter 2) examines theoretical perspectives on job autonomy and organizational structure, which serve as conceptual underpinnings for this research design.

To transition to empirical research, Part III (Chapters 3 and 4) presents primary data obtained from semi-structured interviews with ambitious employees selected from various manufacturing companies in China, Liechtenstein, and Austria. Using these findings, a conceptual model for a feasible organizational structure is developed.

Lastly, the author of this thesis concludes with two chapters (5-6) in Part IV, discussing the potential limitations and the need for new leadership, as well as the benefits of further development in the same field. Refer to Figure 3.

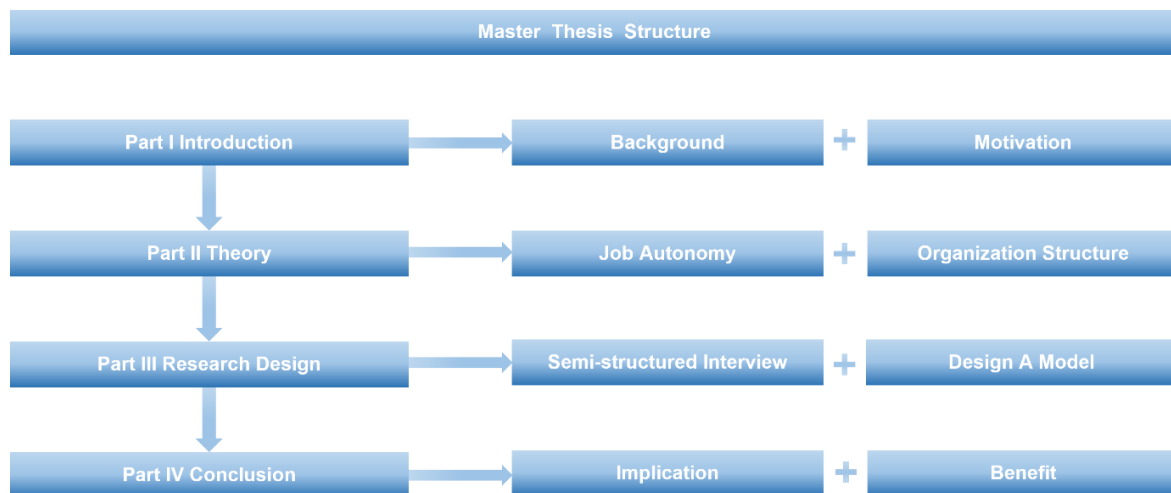


Figure 3 Structure of the master thesis

2 Literature Review

2.1 Employee Performance and Job Autonomy

Nowadays companies face three competitive challenges: the challenge of sustainability, the global challenge, and the technology challenge.⁸⁸ To gain more competitive advantages in today's worldwide competition, companies need to have the ability to be both effective in the marketplace and efficient with the use of organizational resources.⁸⁹ As personnel are among the most valuable assets of any organization, the competitive environment also affects the advancement of a company's workforce.⁹⁰ A company's competitive advantage comes not through the performance of a single employee one at a time, but through the aggregate performance of all employees' efforts.⁹¹ Organizations are interested in how employees translate their energy into company competitive advantages.⁹² At the same time, employees are interested in how they can engage themselves, feel competent and successful in organizations.⁹³ Advanced employee performance can simultaneously benefit both organizations and employees. This "win-win" scenario not only enhances a company's competitive advantages but also heightens employee well-being.⁹⁴

2.1.1 Dimensions of Employee Performance

Shields (2007) points out that work performance is a system which has three horizontal dimensions and three vertical dimensions (Figure 4).⁹⁵ Three horizontal dimensions are 1) inputs – the abilities and attitudes of employees, 2) human resources – work effort and performance of employees, and 3) outputs – outcomes from employee performance.⁹⁶ Three vertical dimensions include 1) individual performance, 2) group performance, and 3) organizational performance.⁹⁷ Figure 4 indicates that an employee can transfer individual performance such as his or her knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes directly to organizational results, such as profitability, customer satisfaction, and market share. His or her individual performance can also translate to group performance and consequently flow to organizational performance.⁹⁸ This collective performance will contribute to organizational results in the end.⁹⁹ In this

⁸⁸ Noe; Hollenbeck; Gerhart 2018, p.17.

⁸⁹ Pinto 2019, p. 50.

⁹⁰ Noe; Hollenbeck; Gerhart 2018, p.17.

⁹¹ Macey et al. 2009, p. 108.

⁹² Macey et al. 2009, p. 63.

⁹³ Macey et al. 2009, p. 180.

⁹⁴ Macey et al. 2009, p. 15..

⁹⁵ Shields 2007, p.20.

⁹⁶ Shields 2007, p.20.

⁹⁷ Shields 2007, p.20.

⁹⁸ Shields 2007, p.20.

⁹⁹ Shields 2007, p.20.

system, all factors are triggered by individual performance. In other words, individual performance plays a decisive role in the operation of the whole system.

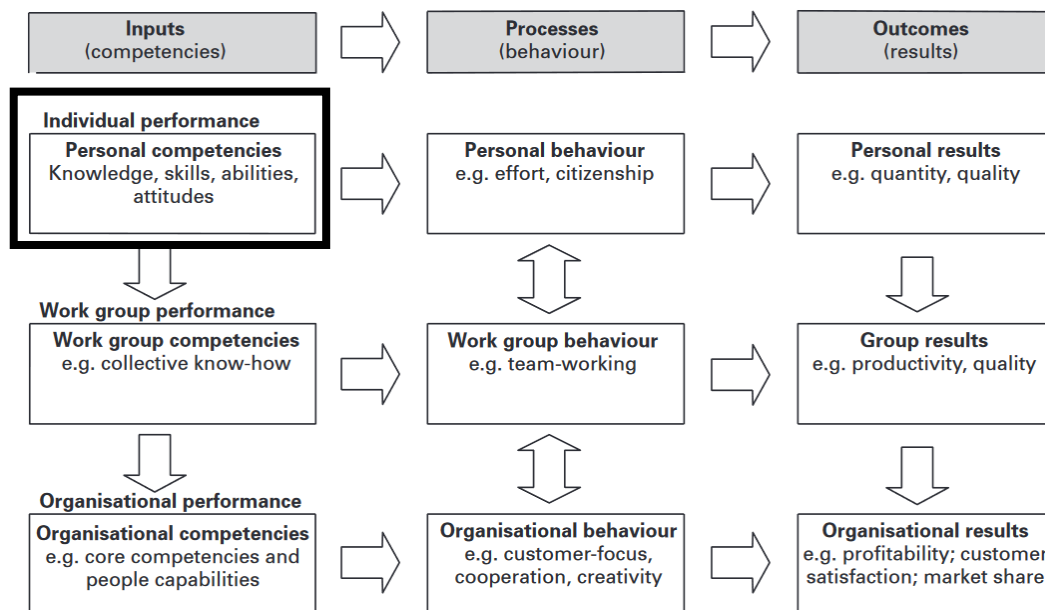


Figure 4 What is performance

Source Shields, 2007, p. 21

2.1.2 Two Measurements of Employee Individual Performance

Shields (2007) gives two measurements of individual performance: capability and willingness.

¹⁰⁰ The visible and readily observable capabilities are ‘above the waterline’ in iceberg analogy model (Figure 5). They are described as skill and knowledge. ¹⁰¹ And the bulk of individual capabilities are submerged ‘below the waterline’. ¹⁰² They are described as self-concept, social role and values, motives, and personality traits. ¹⁰³ This thesis separates the visible capability – skill and knowledge which is ‘above the waterline’ from the invisible capability, named as willingness which is ‘below the waterline’. ¹⁰⁴ The invisible part which refers to willingness is treated as key factor to influence high performance. ¹⁰⁵ Willingness represents the strength of an individual’s desire to perform allocated work tasks, and to undertake work effort. ¹⁰⁶ To understand employee willingness in the workplace three aspects must be explored: ¹⁰⁷

1. The direction of that behavior: why people take certain actions rather than others.

¹⁰⁰ Shields 2007.

¹⁰¹ Shields 2007, p.183.

¹⁰² Shields 2007, p.183.

¹⁰³ Shields 2007, p.183.

¹⁰⁴ Shields 2007, p.183.

¹⁰⁵ Shields 2007, p.183.

¹⁰⁶ Shields 2007, p.42.

¹⁰⁷ Shields 2007, p.42.

2. The intensity of that behavior: why the actions taken involve either a lot of effort, or a little.
3. The duration of that behavior: why some actions are more sustained and enduring than others.

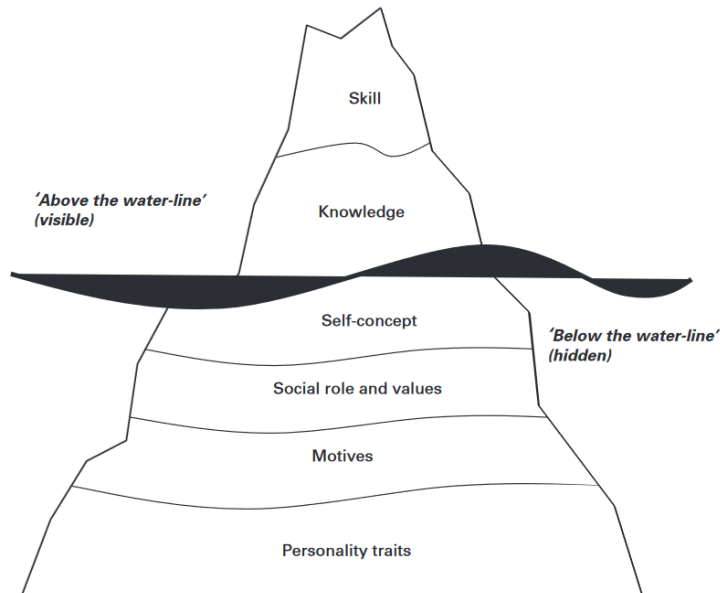


Figure 5 Performance competencies: the Spencer and Spencer 'iceberg' model

Source Shields, 2007, p.183

The importance of understanding willingness and capability is because they both work together to lead individual employee's performance.¹⁰⁸ This in turn produces organizationally desired results which will benefit companies' competitive advantages (Figure 6).¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Shields 2007, p.45.

¹⁰⁹ Shields 2007, p.45.



Figure 6 Individual performance influences organizational competitive advantages

2.1.3 Job Autonomy

During the introduction of the Job Characteristics Model in the 1960s, Hackman and Oldham raised the question of whether individuals could exert influence over how they perform their work. ¹¹⁰ Autonomy occurs when employees (groups or individuals) have freedom and discretion to decide what to carry out and how to carry out their work. ¹¹¹ Also, autonomy is considered as the ability to spread empowerment which brings employees “more choice and control” in the workplace. ¹¹² In a general context, the term “employee autonomy” denotes the capacity of workers to impact the events that occur within their work surroundings. ¹¹³ This influence is achieved by making decisions, thereby enabling employees to exercise control in the workplace. ¹¹⁴ They have the right to make decisions but are responsible for their outcomes. ¹¹⁵ The control in the workplace includes control over work commissions, the work tempo, physical movement, the technical environment, social environment, and freedom from supervision. ¹¹⁶ An employee who holds more control at work will be considered to have more ability

¹¹⁰ ‘What Hackman & Oldham’s Job Characteristics Model Means for Workers’ 2018.

¹¹¹ ‘The Job Characteristics Model: What it is and why it matters more than ever | CQ Net - Management skills for everyone’ n. y.

¹¹² ‘Equality of autonomy’ 2022.

¹¹³ ‘Autonomy and Control’ 2015.

¹¹⁴ ‘Autonomy and Control’ 2015.

¹¹⁵ Fairtlough et al. 2008, p. Sec1:34.

¹¹⁶ ‘Equality of autonomy’ 2022.

to achieve his or her organizational goals as well as personal goals.¹¹⁷ When an employee possesses a substantial degree of autonomy in the workplace, the results of their work are primarily determined by their own endeavors, initiatives, and choices. Conversely, when an employee has a low level of autonomy in the workplace, the outcomes of their work are predominantly influenced by directions provided by their managers or a set of job procedures.¹¹⁸ Thus, who expect to hold a higher level of autonomy at work will experience greater personal responsibility for their own successes and failures at work.¹¹⁹

The value of autonomy to employees is that autonomy makes work more meaningful.¹²⁰ Employees perceive their jobs as significant when their skills are utilized effectively, they are encouraged to generate innovative solutions to problems, the job is considered important by the employee.¹²¹ Granting autonomy encourages workers to utilize their pertinent skills, experiment with novel concepts, and learn from the outcomes (whether positive or negative) to enhance their self-development in the workplace.¹²² The work, conferring autonomy to employees, provides significant individual psychological and dispositions resources, such as self-efficacy, self-esteem, and optimism to them.¹²³ In return, employers can benefit from conferring autonomy.¹²⁴ The longer a person holds autonomy at work, the higher the skill he or she has.¹²⁵ Furthermore, individual innovation tends to flourish when people can decide what they want to explore and how they like to conduct their exploration.¹²⁶ The conferred autonomy to employees at work positively influences work outcomes.¹²⁷ Thus, employers can expect their employees to continuously improve their performance and to express diverse identities at work.¹²⁸ Employers who tend to provide more autonomy to their employees will benefit more from positive consequences of higher job performance.¹²⁹

Autonomy in the workplace is based on a proper understanding of consent.¹³⁰ As pointed out by Hill Jr. (1980): "*Consent is considered as a foundational construct in autonomy, both in terms of exercising one's autonomy and in recognizing the autonomy of others.*"¹³¹ In other words, autonomy is not only to promote one's own values and performances at work but also

¹¹⁷ 'Autonomy and Control' 2015.

¹¹⁸ 'Job characteristic theory' 2022.

¹¹⁹ 'Job characteristic theory' 2022.

¹²⁰ Macey et al. 2009, p. 143.

¹²¹ Macey et al. 2009, p. 115.

¹²² 'Equality of autonomy' 2022, Ali et al. 2014, p. 48.

¹²³ Heery 2016, p. 125.

¹²⁴ Heery 2016, p. 125.

¹²⁵ Noon and Blyton 2002, p. 137.

¹²⁶ Fairtlough et al. 2008, p. Sec1:2.

¹²⁷ Fairtlough et al. 2008, p. Sec1:2.

¹²⁸ Heery 2016, p. 126.

¹²⁹ Heery 2016, p. 76.

¹³⁰ Singh 2022, p.2.

¹³¹ Singh 2022, p.2.

to withhold from violating the values and performances of others.¹³² Consent is the contradiction of direct control.¹³³ Direct control refers to close supervision, which is the best way to guarantee organizational compliance, but by giving up commitment while consent is considered best for commitment but does not guarantee organizational compliance.¹³⁴ Therefore, in Hyman's (1987) opinion autonomy is thought to apply for highly skilled, core employees in scarce supply and direct control applies for easily replaced low skilled workers.¹³⁵ However, Hyman asserts that for core employees only applying with autonomy is not effective for organizations. He suggests that some direct control to be given to core employees is needed.¹³⁶ Therefore, autonomy coupled with direct control is the way to manage core employees so that employers can benefit from employees' high working performance and at the same time core employees' well-being is heightened.

Macey (2009) points out, one piece of evidence that an employee successfully receives autonomy from an organization is that this employee is treated with respect.¹³⁷ Employees are treated with respect and feel their values are aligned with their organizations' values.¹³⁸ For example, as Fairtlough (2008) finds out that some organizations appreciate employees' values by giving credit when credit is due, by rewarding success.¹³⁹ Also, challenging, and meaningful jobs are designed and given to interesting employees to release their energy and talent.¹⁴⁰ Moreover, as Macey (2009) recognizes that autonomy is a matter of style and communication.¹⁴¹ Thus, the ability to reinforce employee initiative can be trained. Through this ability managers can confer autonomy to employees.¹⁴² Do employees feel safe and free to decide what and how to carry out their work if organizations have already provided respect, meaningful jobs, and good communication?¹⁴³ If autonomy is thought from both employers and employees important, are the current working conditions in place violating employees to obtain autonomy? What exactly prevents employees from pursuing autonomy in the workplace?

¹³² Singh 2022, p.2.

¹³³ Noon and Blyton 2002, p. 253.

¹³⁴ Noon and Blyton 2002, p. 253.

¹³⁵ Noon and Blyton 2002, p. 253.

¹³⁶ Noon and Blyton 2002, p. 253.

¹³⁷ Macey et al., 2009, p.29.

¹³⁸ Macey et al. 2009, p.29.

¹³⁹ Fairtlough et al. 2008, p. Sec1:2.

¹⁴⁰ Macey et al. 2009, p.94.

¹⁴¹ Macey et al. 2009, p.143.

¹⁴² Macey et al. 2009, p.143, Heery 2016, p. 125.

¹⁴³ The Job Characteristics Model: What it is and why it matters more than ever | CQ Net - Management skills for everyone' n. y.

2.2 Research Question and Purpose of This Research

The primary research question of this thesis is:

If an organizational structure can remove identified obstacles in achieving autonomy, what would this conceptual model entail?

The following secondary questions are also addressed in this thesis:

RQ1. What obstacles do ambitious employees face in pursuing job autonomy within manufacturing organizations?

RQ2. What organizational structure elements contribute to these obstacles?

RQ3. How do these elements of organization structure contribute to the obstacles?

RQ4. If an ideal organization structure can remove these obstacles, what would the conceptual model for such a structure look like?

The objective of this study is to create a feasible organizational structure model for ambitious employees in manufacturing companies. The goal of this model is to remove obstacles that hinder ambitious employees from pursuing job autonomy within organizations. The intended results of this research are:

1. To identify obstacles that hinder ambitious employees from pursuing job autonomy within manufacturing companies.
2. To pinpoint the organizational structure elements that give rise to these obstacles.
3. To understand how these structural elements create these obstacles.
4. To establish a conceptual model of a viable organization structure for ambitious employees by removing all obstacles to job autonomy.

2.3 Organization Structure in Manufacturing Companies

Many of the organizational models that are commonly used nowadays were initially developed during the 1970s and 1980s.¹⁴⁴ The intended outcomes of an organizational design model are to diagnose a company's current state.¹⁴⁵ Then visualize a successful future and find ways to help the organization thrive.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ McCoy 2021.

¹⁴⁵ McCoy 2021.

¹⁴⁶ McCoy 2021.

Models such as Weisbord's Six Box Model, Transformation Model and Burke-Litwin Model, take the environment into account. ¹⁴⁷ The Star Model and McKinsey 7-S Model do not include environment into discussion. ¹⁴⁸ Although external variables such as the political, social, and legal climates, heavily impact organizational design. ¹⁴⁹ The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the relationship between two internal variables in an organization - its employees and structure. The Star Model and McKinsey 7-S Model illustrate that different strategies require different structures for implementation in organizations (Figure 7).



Figure 7 Organization strategy determines organization structure.

Star Model (Figure 8) is an organization design framework created by Jay R. Galbraith based on his experiences in applying information and decision processes. ¹⁵⁰ He uncovered that the mindsets of employees, performance measurement tools, rewards, and organizational structure must be considered, when changes are made to processes of information and decision making in an organization. ¹⁵¹ Therefore, he created the Star Model which he thinks will give a holistic way of thinking about an organization as consisting of 1) a strategy, 2) a structure, 3) information decision processes, 4) reward systems, and 5) people. ¹⁵² But in the Star Model, Galbraith did not give weight to these five factors. Without weighing, it is hard for companies to identify the relative importance of each factor, in a company's strategic direction. If the relative weight of each factor is not considered this is not a holistic way of thinking. The holistic way of thinking focuses not only on what affects the decision process but also how important this factor is in the whole system.

According to Galbraith (2014), leaders or general managers considering changing their organization should use the Star Model. ¹⁵³ He claims that in order to change an organization all five interconnected factors must be altered so that they complement each other. ¹⁵⁴ An organization could not change piecemeal. ¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁷ McCoy 2021.

¹⁴⁸ McCoy 2021.

¹⁴⁹ McCoy 2021.

¹⁵⁰ Galbraith 2014, p.17.

¹⁵¹ Galbraith 2014, p.16.

¹⁵² Galbraith 2014, p.17.

¹⁵³ Galbraith 2014, p.17.

¹⁵⁴ Galbraith 2014, p.17.

¹⁵⁵ Galbraith 2014, p.16.

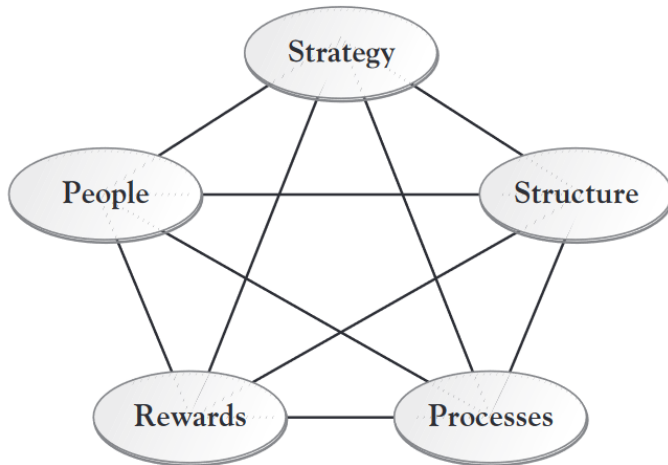


Figure 8 Star Model

Source Galbraith, 2014, p.17

The structure in the Star Model means the determination of the placement of power and authority in the organization.¹⁵⁶ The policies related to the organization's structure can be categorized into four domains:¹⁵⁷

- 1) Specialization: the particular types and quantity of job involved in carrying out tasks.
- 2) Shape: the number of individuals who comprise the different departments.
- 3) Distribution of power: in the horizontal dimension, it pertains to the allocation of power to the department that manages the issues critical to its function while in the vertical dimension pertains to the classic considerations of centralization.
- 4) Departmentalization: the underlying foundation for establishing departments at each level of the structure.

McKinsey 7-S model:

There is another organization design framework beginning with “Ss”, developed by business consultants Robert H. Waterman, Jr. and Tom Peters in 1980s.¹⁵⁸ This framework is McKinsey 7-S Model. The 7 S's are structure, strategy, systems, skills, style, staff and shared values, see Figure 9. This model was introduced in the article “structure is not organization” authored by Bob Waterman, Tom Peters, and Julien Phillips in which they argue:¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ Galbraith 2014, p.17.

¹⁵⁷ Star Model: <https://www.jaygalbraith.com/images/pdfs/StarModel.pdf> n.y.

¹⁵⁸ 'McKinsey 7S Framework' 2023.

¹⁵⁹ 'McKinsey 7S Framework' 2023.

“Diagnosing and solving organizational problems means looking not merely to structural reorganization for answers but to a framework that includes structure and several related factors.”¹⁶⁰

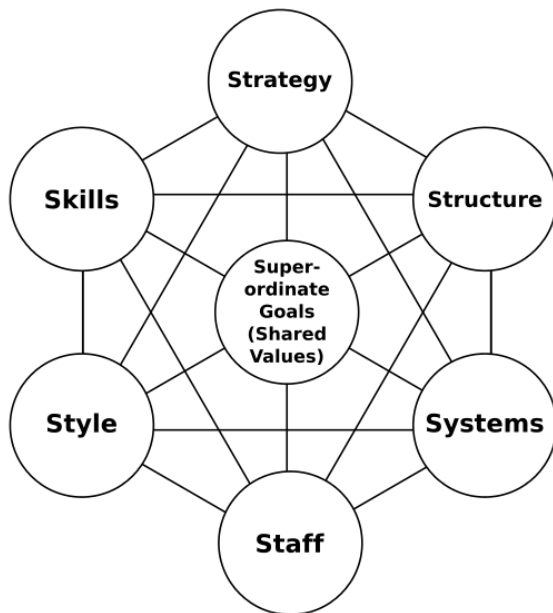


Figure 9 McKinsey 7-S Model

Source 'McKinsey 7S Framework', 2022

Structure in McKinsey 7-S Model is to divide tasks and then provides coordination; it trades off specialization and integration; it decentralizes and then recentralizes.¹⁶¹

Galbraith (2014) argues in the Star Model that in dynamic business environments and matrix organizations, processes, rewards, and people are gaining greater significance, while structure is losing its importance.¹⁶² The importance of structure in an organization is often exaggerated because it impacts status and power.¹⁶³ According to the McKinsey 7-S Model, effective organizational change is not solely dependent on structure but on the interdependence of several factors such as strategy, systems, style, skills, staff, and shared values.¹⁶⁴ This suggests that there is no fixed starting point or implied hierarchy, but rather an

¹⁶⁰ Structure is not organization: <https://managementmodellensite.nl/webcontent/uploads/Structure-is-not-organization.pdf> 1980.

¹⁶¹ Structure is not organization: <https://managementmodellensite.nl/webcontent/uploads/Structure-is-not-organization.pdf> 1980.

¹⁶² Star Model: <https://www.jaygalbraith.com/images/pdfs/StarModel.pdf> n.y.

¹⁶³ Star Model: <https://www.jaygalbraith.com/images/pdfs/StarModel.pdf> n.y.

¹⁶⁴ Structure is not organization: <https://managementmodellensite.nl/webcontent/uploads/Structure-is-not-organization.pdf> 1980.

interconnectedness among these variables. ¹⁶⁵ Both models force us to concentrate on interactions and fit. ¹⁶⁶

The author agrees that structure is merely one aspect of an organization's architecture. ¹⁶⁷ An effective organizational change is inevitably linked to all internal factors of an organization. Although each model has its strengths and limitations, they are designed for organizational diagnosis and analysis. ¹⁶⁸ Some models with more elements and interconnections and some with less. It can be five factors in Star Model or seven factors in McKinsey 7-S Model or even more factors defined by different organizations according to their needs. No matter how many factors are used for organization design or organizational change, all organizations will have at least three fundamental factors – strategy, structure, and staff. An organization firstly needs strategic direction to guide its actions to improve its competitive positioning. Staff in an organization are going to process these actions by coordinating their functions within an arrangement. This arrangement is the structure. The quality of the arrangement design, determines how good staff process their actions to achieve strategic goals. In the area of structure, we can look at three aspects - hierarchy of authority, the type of hierarchy, and the distribution of power. ¹⁶⁹ Moreover, organization structure is treated as significantly affecting the entire amount of challenge and complexity in the employees' jobs, which includes autonomy.¹⁷⁰

In my work, this new organization strategy is to remove obstacles of ambitious employees' pursuing their job autonomy. And it leads to a new viable organization structure which is designed for ambitious employees. See figure 10.

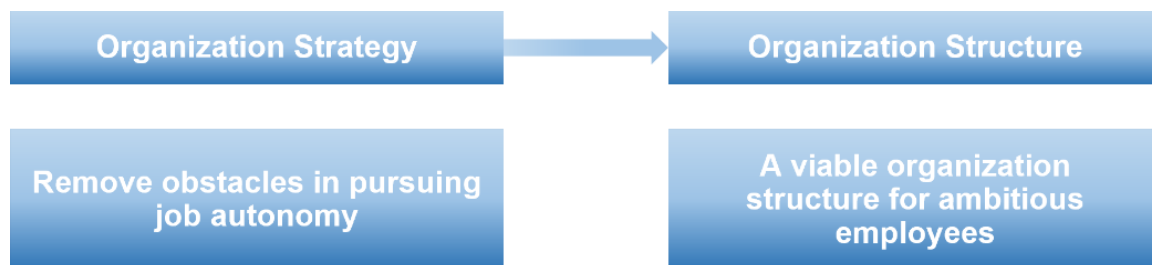


Figure 10 A specific organization strategy determines a viable organization structure.

¹⁶⁵ Structure is not organization: <https://managementmodellensite.nl/webcontent/uploads/Structure-is-not-organization.pdf> 1980.

¹⁶⁶ Dolley 2011.

¹⁶⁷ Star Model: <https://www.jaygalbraith.com/images/pdfs/StarModel.pdf> n.y.

¹⁶⁸ Cichocki; Irwin 2011, p. 22.

¹⁶⁹ Galbraith 2014, p.56.

¹⁷⁰ Galbraith 2014, p.100.

2.3.1 Most Used Organization Structures in Manufacturing Companies

Few American businesses needed a clearly defined organization structure before 1850 because the size of the industrial enterprises was small and most of them were small family businesses.¹⁷¹ With the change of times, as industry companies grew and developed, they realized the need to have a clear organization structure. In modern times, an industrial organization is structurally formed.¹⁷² An organizational structure provides a framework of responsibilities, reporting relationships, and groupings.¹⁷³ It includes a hierarchy of authority and accountability.¹⁷⁴ This hierarchy determines who to report to and what to report to. This is the vertical information linkage of organization structure.¹⁷⁵ Organization structure is also designed to provide horizontal information linkage based on the workflow processing requirements.¹⁷⁶ The size and complexity of an organization determine which structure model or hybrid models to be used in a company.¹⁷⁷ Most manufacturing companies choose to combine characteristics of functional, divisional, and matrix structures into application because each structure has its own strengths and weaknesses.¹⁷⁸ By incorporating aspects of multiple structures, companies can create a hybrid approach that leverages the benefits of each structure while minimizing their limitations.¹⁷⁹ This allows for a more flexible and adaptable organizational structure that can respond to changing market conditions and customer demands.¹⁸⁰ Additionally, the combination of structures can help to enhance communication and collaboration between different departments, leading to improved efficiency and productivity.¹⁸¹ The complexity of an industrial organization has three dimensions – function, product lines and geography. These three dimensions constitute a company's portfolio strategy.¹⁸² In Galbraith's opinion, the structure an organization adopted to execute its business depends on its portfolio strategy.¹⁸³ Similarly, Chandler (1998) thinks structure follows strategy.¹⁸⁴ But Chandler (1998) points out in more detail that structure types are the result of the concatenation of three basic strategies: expansion of volume – to create administrative offices to handle one function in one local area; geographical dispersion – the growth of the company will bring the needs from national to international scale; vertical

¹⁷¹ Galbraith 2014, p.100.

¹⁷² Galbraith 2014, p.101.

¹⁷³ Daft 2010, p.127.

¹⁷⁴ Cichocki; Irwin 2011, p.25.

¹⁷⁵ Daft 2010, p.102.

¹⁷⁶ Daft 2010, p.127.

¹⁷⁷ Structure is not organization: <https://managementmodellensite.nl/webcontent/uploads/Structure-is-not-organization.pdf> 1980.

¹⁷⁸ Daft 2010, p.102.

¹⁷⁹ Daft 2010, p.103.

¹⁸⁰ Daft 2010, p.103.

¹⁸¹ Daft 2010, p.104.

¹⁸² Galbraith 2014, p.185.

¹⁸³ Galbraith 2014, p.186.

¹⁸⁴ Galbraith 2014, p.186.

integration – the move into new functions and diversification – the development of new products.¹⁸⁵

1. Company Strategy and Its Functional Structure

The purpose of a functional structure (See Figure 11.) in manufacturing organizations is to divide the work into subtasks that can be performed by many people simultaneously.¹⁸⁶ This initial division of labor is based on functional specialization.¹⁸⁷ Human knowledge and skills are consolidated according to specific activities to benefit organizations.¹⁸⁸ It results in a hierarchy of authority vertically and it requires little need for horizontal coordination.¹⁸⁹

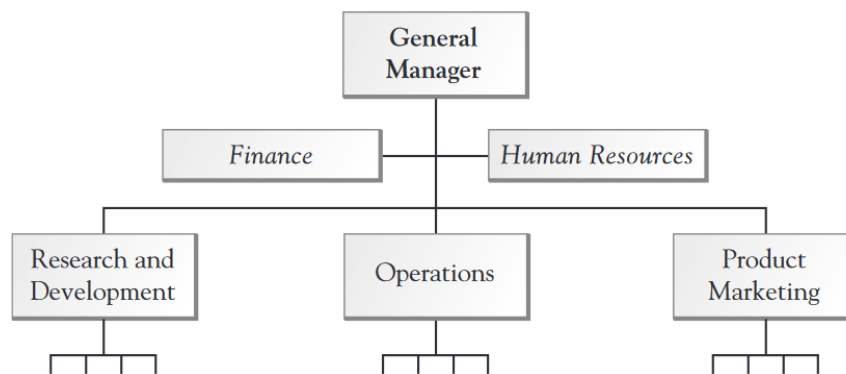


Figure 11 Functional model in an organization

Source Galbraith, 2014, p.25

The traditional way of dividing a manufacturing company's departments used to be between production and sales.¹⁹⁰ That was the origin of functional organization. In modern manufacturing companies, the necessary functions include production, R&D, marketing, sales, finance, accounting, and human resource management.¹⁹¹

One main reason a company chooses to apply functional structure is due to its strength that it promotes economy of scale within functions, when all employees work in the same place and share all facilities.¹⁹² It is efficient for companies to control and coordinate through the vertical hierarchy.¹⁹³ Another reason is because society itself is organized around specialties, and people in society choose them as their career.¹⁹⁴ For example, students graduate from

¹⁸⁵ Chandler 1998, p.14.

¹⁸⁶ Galbraith 2014, p.25.

¹⁸⁷ Galbraith 2014, p.25.

¹⁸⁸ Daft 2010, p.104.

¹⁸⁹ Daft 2010, p.104.

¹⁹⁰ Structure is not organization: <https://managementmodellensite.nl/webcontent/uploads/Structure-is-not-organization.pdf> 1980.

¹⁹¹ Daft 2010, p.106.

¹⁹² Daft 2010, p.104.

¹⁹³ Daft 2010, p.104.

¹⁹⁴ Galbraith 2014, p.26.

engineering schools by studying electrical engineering or mechanical engineering while other students graduate from business schools by studying business administration, accounting, financing and so on. Society is organized and designed by functional specialties. ¹⁹⁵

But most manufacturing companies nowadays facing fast environmental changes cannot be successful with a strictly functional structure. ¹⁹⁶ Their success requires horizontal coordination to reorganize workflows to improve their productivity. ¹⁹⁷

2. Company Strategy and Its Divisional Structure

The divisional structure of an organization refers to the approach where companies expand their range of products or services and enter businesses that are related to their main business. ¹⁹⁸ In some contexts, divisions can be organized not only according to companies' products or services, but also according to projects, programs, or profit centers. ¹⁹⁹ An example is Kellogg's, whose structure is illustrated by Figure 12.

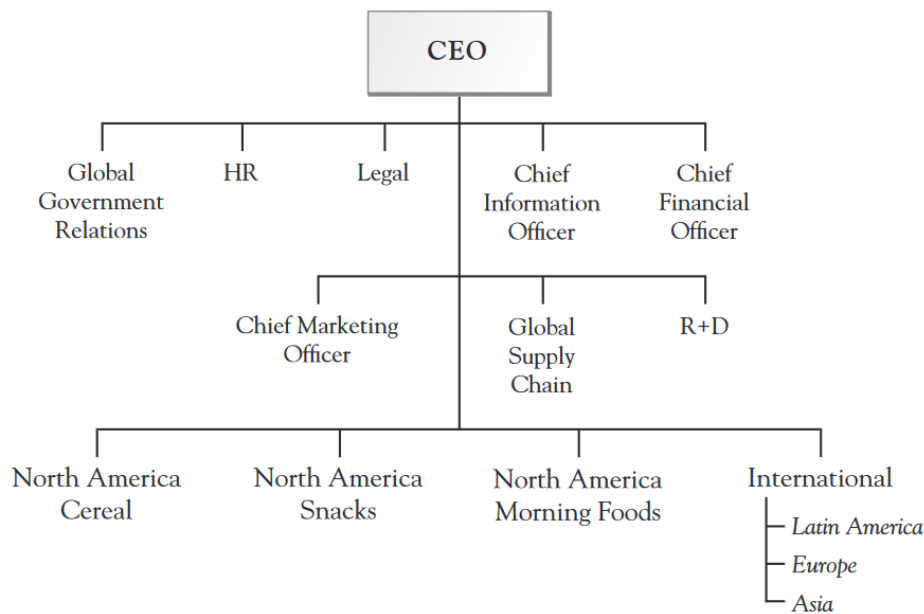


Figure 12 An example of divisional model in an organization

Source Kellogg's, Annual Report 2012

A divisional group can contain all functional departments such as R&D, production, accounting, marketing, and sales according to product lines, or sometimes according to geographic areas. ²⁰⁰ Each division is a functional organization and more decentralized than the functional

¹⁹⁵ Galbraith 2014, p.26.

¹⁹⁶ Daft 2010, p.105.

¹⁹⁷ Daft 2010, p.106.

¹⁹⁸ Galbraith 2014, p.193.

¹⁹⁹ Daft 2010, p.106.

²⁰⁰ Gibson n.y., p.403.

structure.²⁰¹ The logic is that all divisions will report to assigned divisional general managers: product lines report to product general managers while regional divisions report to regional managers.²⁰² Division managers will report to the top team in the functional structure.²⁰³ Complex and giant organizations, such as General Electric, Nestlé and Johnson & Johnson prefer to divide their services and product lines into smaller divisions because they think smaller series are better controlled and coordinated.²⁰⁴ One condition a company can separate its product lines into different divisions is when the company has enough personnel to staff each separated functional unit.²⁰⁵ And the main disadvantages of divisional structure are that its in-depth research is lost, and physical facilities must be duplicated for each separate product line.²⁰⁶

3. Company Strategy and Its Matrix Structure

The matrix structure is designed to take advantage of the strengths of both functional and divisional structures while minimizing their weaknesses.²⁰⁷ A matrix is a two-dimensional organization to give equal emphasis and attention to product and function, or product and geography and implement simultaneously.²⁰⁸

An organization needs to focus both product and function or product and geography at the same time, to achieve this is through the matrix structure.²⁰⁹ As shown in Figure 14 the market segments are listed down the left side and the functional departments are listed across the top. As an example, for the planning process in a matrix organization, both segment managers and functional managers align organizational goals and make decisions based on agreements on revenues, costs, and investments in each of the rows and columns.²¹⁰ In matrix organization, employees report to both product managers as well as functional managers since they have equal authority.²¹¹ Sometimes, one person is selected as a subproject manager (Figure 13). This person is jointly selected by both managers and works for those two managers.²¹²

²⁰¹ Gibson n.y., p.403.

²⁰² Gibson n.y., p.403.

²⁰³ Gibson n.y., p.404.

²⁰⁴ Daft 2010, p.106.

²⁰⁵ Daft 2010, p.108.

²⁰⁶ Daft 2010, p.108.

²⁰⁷ Gibson n.y., p.404.

²⁰⁸ 'How Matrix Organizational Structure Works', lfiouque.com' n. y.

²⁰⁹ Daft 2010, p.110.

²¹⁰ Galbraith 2014, p.102-103.

²¹¹ Daft, 2010 p.110.

²¹² Galbraith, 2014.

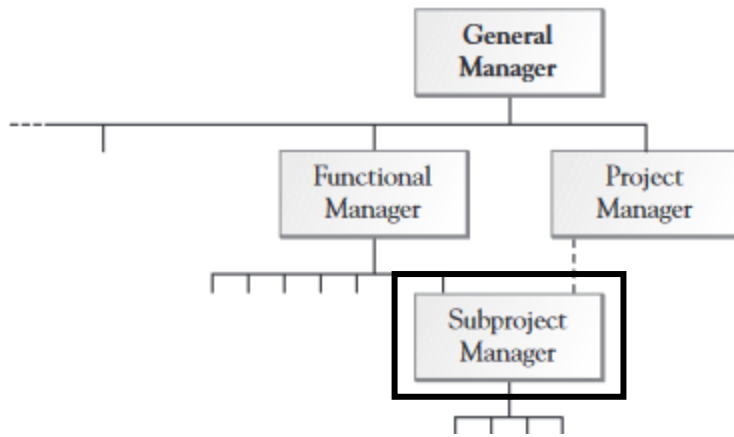


Figure 13 Matrix model with dual authority in an organization
 Source Galbraith, 2014, p.104

	Sales	Marketing	Information Technology	Install and Repair	Network Operations
Health Services					
Financial Services					
Governments					
Distribution					
Manufacturing					
Other					

Figure 14 One example of matrix model in an organization
 Source Galbraith, 2014, p.103

Also, when an organization needs not only vertical linkage, but also strong horizontal linkage between different functions and divisions, to achieve this can also go through the matrix structure.²¹³ It creates the balance of power between vertical and horizontal linkages.²¹⁴ This strong horizontal linkage speeds response to external changes, technological breakthroughs, and competitive conditions.²¹⁵ In matrix set-up, resources such as employees, or facilities can be allocated flexibly, and this provides an opportunity for employees to acquire different functional and management skills. But if roles and responsibilities are vaguely defined, conflicts

²¹³ Daft 2010, p.110.

²¹⁴ Daft 2010, p.110.

²¹⁵ Gibson n.y., p.405.

can happen when reporting to two managers.²¹⁶ That can be one disadvantage of the matrix structure.

The highest level of an organization holds the decision-making power and authority in both the functional and divisional structures.²¹⁷ In other words, a functional structure or a divisional structure is a centralized structure. In the functional organization, each department has a clear set of responsibilities and is headed by a manager who reports to a higher-level manager. And in the divisional organization, different functions will report to the division top management, division top management will report to the company top management. Thus, employees either in a functional organization or in a divisional organization follow standard procedures set by management and have little say in decision making.²¹⁸ The functional structure's design is suitable for a stable environment, in which companies have vertical structure to emphasize vertical control, to produce efficiently, and to centralize decision making.²¹⁹ The same applies the same to the divisional structure. In the multifaceted group – matrix structure, horizontal linkage is stronger than functional or divisional structures.²²⁰ It implements production division or geographic division together with functional structures (horizontal and vertical) in a project.²²¹ In this project, the managers of production or division have equal authority as functional managers, because advisory and expertise from involved departments are all needed.²²² However, outside the projects, the managers of different groups may have different powers in decision making. Apparently, the degree of hierarchy of matrix structure is lower than functional or division structure. But for other employees who are not involved in the matrix projects, they will follow the high level of hierarchy of functional or divisional structures. As discussed in the previous chapter, autonomy is highly dependent on the flexibility to make decisions and non-direct control. From the in-depth discussion above on organizational structures and autonomy, a matrix model gives employees greater autonomy than a functional or divisional structure. Even though, the autonomy is very conditional up to whether employees join a matrix project.

2.3.2 Organizational Design Theory - Contingency

Like Galbraith's portfolio strategy, Joan Woodward also thinks that organization structure is contingent on the types of production technologies employed by the firm. And technologies directly determine differences in such organizational attributes as span of control,

²¹⁶ Daft 2010, p. 112.

²¹⁷ Daft 2010, p.17.

²¹⁸ Daft 2010, p.19.

²¹⁹ Daft 2010, p.73.

²²⁰ Daft 2010, p.110.

²²¹ Daft 2010, p.110.

²²² Daft 2010, p.110 - 111.

centralization, delegation of authority, and formalization.²²³ However, Joan Woodward points out in her famous academic theory on organizational design - contingency that the degree of uncertainty in the external environment will affect an industrial company's organization structure.²²⁴ She also thinks that external environment is the key variable to drive a company's innovation.²²⁵ She suggests if a company faces highly uncertain situations that require ongoing adaptation, the organization is better off choosing a more flexible design.²²⁶ For example, a company operating in a stable and predictable environment may benefit from a hierarchical structure, but if a company operating in a rapidly changing and uncertain environment may benefit from a more flexible and adaptive organization structure. Therefore, Joan Woodward's contingency theory suggests that there is no best way or single way to organize a company.²²⁷ It should depend on the different situations. Different situations require different organization structures.²²⁸ As previously discussed, a company's competitive advantages depend on its employees' engagement, innovation and productivity. If the key factor innovation is mainly influenced by the external environment, the variety of a company's organization structure is also highly dependent on the environment. Lindred Greer, associate professor of management and organizations at the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business, agrees that rigid forms of hierarchy can impede innovation.²²⁹ In contrast, a flexible hierarchical organization increases innovation. This is the reason, in recent years, agile and flat working structures have gained favor with many industrial companies.²³⁰

2.3.3 Seven Elements of Organization Structure

Gibson (n.y.) states in his book *Organizations: Behavior, Structure, Processes* "All organizations have a structure of jobs."²³¹ He defines organization structure as "pattern of jobs and groups of jobs" in an organization.²³² It causes individual behavior and group behavior in an organization.²³³ In structured organizations, individuals experience the way their behavior is controlled and therefore, they must give up their freedom to act independently, because all individuals must abide by commonly held agreements, policies, and rules.²³⁴ The way they behave indicates a dominant feature of organization structure, its patterned regularity. This

²²³ 'Contingency theory' 2023.

²²⁴ MITSloan Management Review: MITSMR-How-Winning-Teams-Work[5127].pdf n.y.

²²⁵ MITSloan Management Review: MITSMR-How-Winning-Teams-Work[5127].pdf n.y.

²²⁶ MITSloan Management Review: MITSMR-How-Winning-Teams-Work[5127].pdf n.y.

²²⁷ 'Contingency theory' 2023.

²²⁸ 'Contingency theory' 2023.

²²⁹ MITSloan Management Review: MITSMR-How-Winning-Teams-Work[5127].pdf n.y.

²³⁰ MITSloan Management Review: MITSMR-How-Winning-Teams-Work[5127].pdf n.y.

²³¹ Gibson n.y., p. 398.

²³² Gibson n.y., p. 398.

²³³ Gibson n.y., p. 398.

²³⁴ Gibson n.y., p. 399.

feature explains that organization structure persists and regularizes employment activities.²³⁵ Therefore, the purpose of organization structure design is to build a stable framework of jobs and departments which can positively influence individual behavior and group behavior toward organizational strategic goals.²³⁶ The first step of design is to focus on individual jobs which includes job design in terms of specialization and responsibility. The second step is to focus on group jobs which includes the design of departmentation, span of control, delegation of authority, chain of command, centralization, and formalization (Figure 15).²³⁷ Thus, organization structure design is not to design a visible organizational chart, but to design all necessary related contents for individual and group jobs.²³⁸



Figure 15 Meanings of seven elements in organization structure design

²³⁵ Gibson n.y., p. 399.

²³⁶ Gibson n.y., p. 399.

²³⁷ Gibson n.y., p. 399.

²³⁸ Gibson n.y., p. 398.

1. Job design (division of labor)

A job can be designed by defining 1) the job description, 2) the role expectations of a position, 3) the relationships among positions, and 4) workflow patterns.²³⁹ All these components constitute an important job characteristic – job specialization.²⁴⁰ It sometimes also refers to division of labor, the extent to which jobs are specialized.²⁴¹ If specialization is extensive, each employee performs a relatively narrow range of work. Oppositely, if specialization is low, employees perform a relatively wide range of work.²⁴² Specific jobs lead to specified activities which guide employees performing their jobs in the workplace.²⁴³ Specialization is thought to be the best way to make use of individuals and to group them by giving complete responsibility and providing supportive managerial monitoring in the way to measure and analyze organizations.²⁴⁴ People in the workplace are grouped by functional specialization in terms of their specific education, skills, attitudes, and time horizons.²⁴⁵ Organizations use methods such as work standards, motion, time study, emphasized behavioral dimensions of work to implement specialization.²⁴⁶ In mass production companies, specialization is a dominant ability to obtain efficiency and economic benefits.²⁴⁷ As most managers from internal operations states: “If we move away from specialization, the rate of efficiency must go down.”²⁴⁸ Through specialization, all tasks are divided into highly specialized jobs. Consequently, employees become experts in their jobs, it maximizes benefits of the bureaucratic design.²⁴⁹ On the other hand, at the same time, some other studies point out that work simplification increases specializations, but specializations decrease job enlargement.²⁵⁰ Job enlargement increases the number of tasks for an employee to perform. For example, previously the job for an employee was designed with three tasks but the job enlargement strategy makes this employee handle six tasks instead of three.²⁵¹ Job enlargement brings a higher level of flexibility, and it requires a relatively low degree of specialization.²⁵²

2. Departmentation

Departmentation is a managerial consideration to determine the basis for grouping jobs.²⁵³ According to jobs’ shared characteristics, organization is structurally divided into different

²³⁹ Gibson n.y., p.500.

²⁴⁰ Gibson n.y., p.399.

²⁴¹ Gibson n.y., p.400.

²⁴² Daft 2010, p.17.

²⁴³ Gibson n.y., p.399.

²⁴⁴ Gibson n.y., p.387.

²⁴⁵ Daft 2010, p.495.

²⁴⁶ Gibson n.y., p.410.

²⁴⁷ Gibson n.y., p.400.

²⁴⁸ Gibson n.y., p.393.

²⁴⁹ Gibson n.y., p.411.

²⁵⁰ Gibson n.y., p.384.

²⁵¹ Gibson n.y., p.384.

²⁵² Gibson n.y., p.412.

²⁵³ Gibson n.y., p.401.

departments.²⁵⁴ These departments are created to achieve companies' strategic goals by performing specific tasks.²⁵⁵ If an organization creates new departments, it is because the company must accomplish new tasks which are deemed valuable by the organization.²⁵⁶ Specialized jobs are accordingly created in new departments and more manageable numbers of jobs are also created.²⁵⁷ In a typical manufacturing company, departments are arranged due to functions which help the organization accomplish its goals efficiently.²⁵⁸ Once departments and their work activities are defined, the next step is to fit all departments together in the organizational hierarchy which involves reporting relationships – who reports to whom. It appears in the vertical lines on an organization chart.²⁵⁹ Gibson (n.y.) states a major limitation of departmentation that departmental goals may overcome organizational goals.²⁶⁰ Specialists in one department may see their own problems only without seeing problems from other departments.²⁶¹ Also, in other words, departments may create stronger identification or culture than organizations create.²⁶²

3. Delegation

Delegation refers to the authority managers distribute downward among the jobs in an organization.²⁶³ Delegating authority specifically refers to decision making, not to doing work.²⁶⁴ All jobs have some degree of right in decision making.²⁶⁵ But not all jobs contain the right to exact obedience from others.²⁶⁶ Managers can delegate authority and exact obedience, but non-managers cannot. This distinguishes managerial jobs from non-managerial jobs.²⁶⁷ Managers who gain more authority can make significant decisions that advance the organization. Delegation of authority encourages employees to develop themselves.²⁶⁸ In addition, delegated authority to managers can motivate them, contributing to a competitive working environment because they have more rights and control of their performance measures.²⁶⁹ Finally, managers who gain relatively high authority have more autonomy. This autonomy leads to managerial creativity and ingenuity. Managers tend to be more eager to participate in solving challenging problems.²⁷⁰ Delegation of authority can motivate not only managers but also their

²⁵⁴ Gibson n.y., p.401.

²⁵⁵ Daft 2010, p.101.

²⁵⁶ Daft 2010, p.101.

²⁵⁷ Gibson n.y., p.401.

²⁵⁸ Daft 2010, p.101.

²⁵⁹ Daft 2010, p.102.

²⁶⁰ Daft 2010, p.127.

²⁶¹ Gibson n.y., p.402.

²⁶² Gibson n.y., p.402.

²⁶³ Gibson n.y., p.408.

²⁶⁴ Gibson n.y., p.408.

²⁶⁵ Gibson n.y., p.400.

²⁶⁶ Gibson n.y., p.400.

²⁶⁷ Gibson n.y., p.400.

²⁶⁸ Gibson n.y., p.408.

²⁶⁹ Gibson n.y., p.408.

²⁷⁰ Gibson n.y., p.408.

subordinates. Subordinates see their received authority as power sharing. It heightens their motivations for task accomplishment because they have relatively more freedom to think and choose how to do a task using their own creativity.²⁷¹ But Daft (2010) points out a condition for a company to delegate authority. A company should have long-range planning.²⁷² Neglect of long-range planning usually results in an overemphasis on short-run control, and this will lessen the delegated authority to lower levels of management.²⁷³ Consequently, this has adverse effects to motivate and satisfy employees in the workplace.²⁷⁴

4. Span of control

Span of control is one of the structural characteristics of an organization.²⁷⁵ It is defined as how many subordinates a manager can oversee.²⁷⁶ In other words, it also means how many subordinate employees report to a single manager.²⁷⁷ Gibson (n.y.) continually indicates that span of control not only counts assigned subordinates but also counts those who have access to the manager.²⁷⁸ But the frequency and intensity of actual relationships, rather than the total number of subordinates, are important factors to consider when determining a manager's span of control.²⁷⁹

For instance, the more complex the task, the more problems arise in which the manager will be involved.²⁸⁰ Gibson (n.y.) states that an optimum span of control is determined by three factors: required contact, degree of specialization, and ability to communicate.²⁸¹ People in a larger group have less opportunity to communicate and consequently are unable to establish cohesive work groups, because they have less interpersonal ties than people in smaller groups.²⁸² Also, Daft (2010) states: "In general, the greater the inherent ambiguity in an individual's job, the greater the need for supervision to avoid conflict and stress."²⁸³ That's the reason why a large span of control may prevent frequent contact with subordinates, and consequently this could impede the project.²⁸⁴ The important considerations to generate an optimal span of control are the frequency and intensity of the actual relationships, not the specific number of subordinates.²⁸⁵

²⁷¹ Daft 2010, p. 503.

²⁷² Gibson n.y., p.465.

²⁷³ Gibson n.y., p.465.

²⁷⁴ Gibson n.y., p.465.

²⁷⁵ Gibson n.y., p.405.

²⁷⁶ Gibson n.y., p.405.

²⁷⁷ Gibson n.y., p.405.

²⁷⁸ Gibson n.y., p.405.

²⁷⁹ Gibson n.y., p.423.

²⁸⁰ Daft 2010, p.276.

²⁸¹ Gibson n.y., p.406.

²⁸² Gibson n.y., p.381.

²⁸³ Gibson n.y., p.406.

²⁸⁴ Gibson n.y., p.406.

²⁸⁵ Gibson n.y., p.406.

5. Chain of command

Chain of command, also called reporting relationships represented by vertical lines on an organization chart, means in an organizational hierarchy who reports to whom.²⁸⁶ In the hierarchy, if a problem arises that employees cannot solve, the employee will refer up to higher levels. If a solution is found, it will be implemented to the lower levels of the organization.²⁸⁷ The lines of organization chart indicate the channels of communication.²⁸⁸ Together with departmentation, the chain of command defines how individuals are grouped.²⁸⁹ The use of the chain of command in a hierarchical organization can help with maintaining control and ensure adherence to rules since it has been tested and developed over many years in solving well-defined problems and situations.²⁹⁰ The limitation of chain of command is thought by Daft (2010) that it cannot enable the flexibility and innovation of an organization. One example is the functional structure which has a strict chain of command to achieve efficiency but is not flexible and innovative enough.²⁹¹ In addition, to add one more layer of bureaucracy, the movement of information is delayed, and more details may be taken out in the information transfer step.²⁹² Therefore, Daft (2010) suggests the most effective structure is the one that loosens the command lines in a hierarchy organization and makes individuals work across departmental lines.²⁹³ This approach will encourage employees to participate in solving unfamiliar problems.²⁹⁴

6. Centralization or decentralization

Centralization refers to the extent of hierarchy or the level of authority involved in making decisions. The organization is centralized if the decision is made at the top level; if the decision is delegated to lower levels, the organization is decentralized.²⁹⁵ A century or more ago, strong radically developed to solve the problem of inefficiency.²⁹⁶ In fact, nowadays, many organizations still use it for the same purpose.²⁹⁷ Centralization is used more in mass-production firms than other technologies such as service firms because the work in mass-production technology is highly standardized.²⁹⁸ In addition, Daft (2010) shows in his study that when a company expands internationally, for example in Japanese companies, top managers actively control overseas operations at headquarters, and the strong structural linkages ensure top

²⁸⁶ Daft 2010, p.102.

²⁸⁷ Daft 2010, p.95.

²⁸⁸ Daft 2010, p.102.

²⁸⁹ Daft 2010, p.102.

²⁹⁰ Daft 2010, p.351.

²⁹¹ Daft 2010, p.125.

²⁹² Daft 2010, p.350.

²⁹³ Daft 2010, p.351.

²⁹⁴ Daft 2010, p.351.

²⁹⁵ Daft 2010, p.17.

²⁹⁶ Daft 2010, p.92.

²⁹⁷ Daft 2010, p.92.

²⁹⁸ Daft 2010, p.258.

managers are fully involved in companies' strategic decision. These companies rely on centralization for international coordination to attain global efficiencies.²⁹⁹ However, centralization also has its limits. For big or growing organizations, centralization can make headquarters overloaded, and consequently the speed at which decisions are made is slow. The quality of decisions may also suffer because it is difficult for headquarters to respond to local needs in different regions.³⁰⁰ On the other hand, studies show that decentralization can encourage employee involvement and participation in decision-making.³⁰¹ The chance to participate in company strategic planning is a positive motivator for employees. Therefore, many organizations, large or small, tend to be more decentralized in authority distribution.³⁰² In decentralized organizations, more control and autonomy are granted to low levels' managers so that they can learn from "unique approach" to satisfy and exceed the expectations of unique customers.³⁰³ But at the same time, decentralization of authority brings with it the duplication of functions. That is the reason why some organizations go back to centralized authority because they cannot afford the high costs generated by decentralization.³⁰⁴ These organizations find that the cost of decentralization outweighs its benefits.³⁰⁵

7. Formalization

Formalization is another element of structural dimensions.³⁰⁶ It refers to the official written documentation in the organization. It includes, for instance, job descriptions, regulations, policies, and procedures. They are used to coordinate and control employees' behavior and activities in the workplace, and to provide labels to measure and analyze organizations.³⁰⁷ For internationally operated companies, managers recognize that diverse national and cultural values can influence organizations' coordination and control.³⁰⁸ Therefore, some U.S.-based international companies choose a formalization approach for an efficient multinational coordination and control.³⁰⁹ But the formalization approach also has limitations. Some studies point out that in the formalization approach, communication is too formal and less flexible.³¹⁰ This approach also tends to limit creativity and to slow down the speed of response.³¹¹ In service firms, formalization tends to be low because service employees need good interpersonal skills and a degree of autonomy to be able to handle customer problems to satisfy customer's

²⁹⁹ Daft 2010, p.235.

³⁰⁰ Daft 2010, p.235.

³⁰¹ Gibson n.y., p.69.

³⁰² Gibson n.y., p.408.

³⁰³ Gibson n.y., p.409.

³⁰⁴ Gibson n.y., p.409.

³⁰⁵ Gibson n.y., p.409.

³⁰⁶ Daft 2010, p.39.

³⁰⁷ Daft 2010, p.15.

³⁰⁸ Daft 2010, p.15.

³⁰⁹ Daft 2010, p.241.

³¹⁰ Daft 2010, p.241.

³¹¹ Daft 2010, p.350.

specific needs.³¹² Mechanical performance cannot achieve this goal in service firms.³¹³ Moreover, some studies show that formalization is no longer needed due to the high standard of employee behavior, and this acts as a substitute for bureaucracy.³¹⁴

³¹² Daft 2010, p.270.

³¹³ Daft 2010, p.270.

³¹⁴ Daft 2010, p.350.

3 Research Design

The research design is the plan of how researchers will go to answer the research questions.³¹⁵ After the theoretical foundation as secondary data through literature review has been established in chapter 2, the qualitative research method is chosen to collect and analyze all the primary data.³¹⁶ Qualitative research is preferred because it allows for elaborate interpretations and the discovery of new insights instead of numerical measurement to address research objectives.³¹⁷ In this sense, quantitative research does not fit the needs.

The research design sequence is depicted in Figure 16, which shows the steps from interview preparation to data collect, data analysis, and result evaluation.

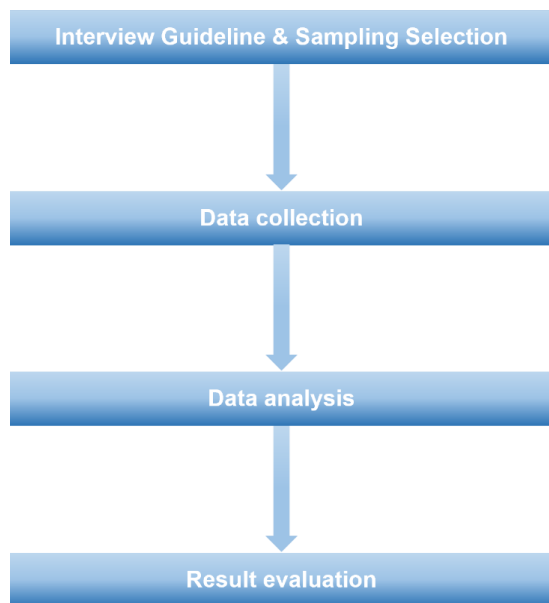


Figure 16 Research design sequence

3.1 Research Philosophy

This study will employ a qualitative method which is typically linked to an interpretive viewpoint.³¹⁸ It is interpretive because it aims to investigate the subjective interpretations and understandings that individuals have regarding a particular organizational occurrence.³¹⁹

³¹⁵ Saunders et al. 2015, p. 163.

³¹⁶ Saunders et al. 2015, p. 4.

³¹⁷ Zikmund 2013, p.132.

³¹⁸ Saunders et al. 2015, p. 168.

³¹⁹ Saunders et al. 2015, p. 168.

3.2 Qualitative Research

The purpose of this research is to explore a topic and develop a theoretical explanation. Inductive approach is adopted.³²⁰ The inductive approach allows meanings to emerge from collected data, to identify patterns and relationships to build a theory (Figure 17).³²¹ But it does not prevent researchers from using relevant literature to formulate research questions.³²² The use of the inductive approach is to build a theory or to develop a richer theoretical perspective than already exists in literature.³²³ Thus, the theory in this research is built from both the knowledge of the relevant literatures and the primary data collected only by using empirical research strategy – semi-structured interview. The nature of qualitative data collected from semi-structured interviews is associated with transcription.³²⁴ To analyze qualitative data, computer-aided qualitative data analysis software MAXQDA is used.³²⁵

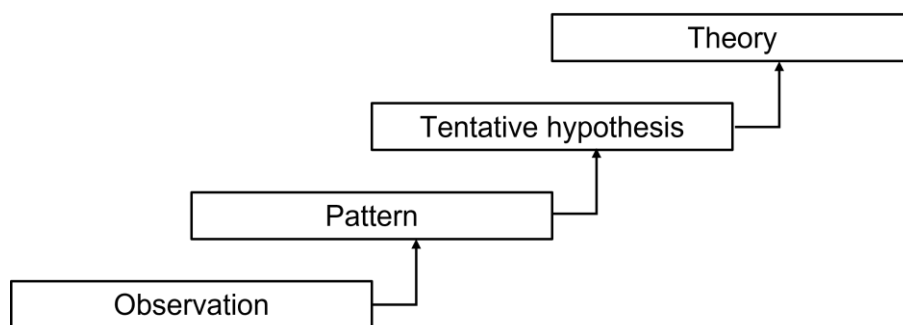


Figure 17 Inductive reasoning

Source Trochim et al., 2016, p.18

3.3 Semi-structured Interview with Selected Ambitious Employees

This research will use a single data collection technique which is a semi-structured interview. The semi-structured interview is one of the research interview types.³²⁶ Other types include structured interview and unstructured interview (also called in-depth interview).³²⁷ The choice of the semi-structured interview to collect primary data advantageous for this research is based on several considerations: 1) the research purpose, 2) the nature of interview questions, 3) the data quality, and 4) the interview length and data analysis duration.³²⁸

³²⁰ Saunders et al. 2015, p. 51.

³²¹ Saunders et al. 2015, p. 51.

³²² Saunders et al. 2015, p. 52.

³²³ Saunders et al. 2015, p. 51.

³²⁴ Saunders et al. 2015, p. 18.

³²⁵ Saunders et al. 2015, p. 18.

³²⁶ Saunders et al. 2015, p. 168.

³²⁷ Saunders et al. 2015, p. 168.

³²⁸ Saunders et al. 2015, p. 393.

In this study, the purpose is to understand the reasons and decisions of participants regarding their choices, so the interview questions are designed to guide participants to reveal their true thoughts. As the selected interview participants are assumed to have some experience or connection with the research topic, they do not require lengthy or complex processes to answer the questions. Additionally, each interview will be limited to one hour to control the duration of data analysis.

In a semi-structured interview, a set of key questions and themes are predetermined, but the process is flexible.³²⁹ Interviewees have the freedom to omit certain questions or answer them in a different order based on the flow of the conversation.³³⁰ Additional questions may be asked to gain a more thorough understanding of the interviewee's responses, but the wording of questions will be similar across all interviews.³³¹ Non-probability sampling techniques do not have any set rules. For this study, the sample size is seven interview participants, which was determined based on personal resources and availability within the research timeframe. All participants are either friends or family members and must also meet the sampling criteria outlined in section 3.3.1.

3.3.1 Interview Guideline & Sampling selection

The interview questions have been intentionally designed to elicit the opinions of highly motivated employees regarding job autonomy to address the research questions.

RQ1. What obstacles do ambitious employees face in pursuing job autonomy within manufacturing organizations?

RQ2. What organizational structure elements contribute to these obstacles?

RQ3. How do these elements of organization structure contribute to the obstacles?

RQ4. If an ideal organization structure can remove these obstacles, what would the conceptual model for such a structure look like?

The interview questions have been divided into three different themes, as shown in Tables 2, 3, and 4. During the interviews, questions are asked in a specific order, starting with theme 1 and progressing to theme 2 and then theme 3. Approximately 90% of the questions are open-ended questions, as opposed to simple 'yes' or 'no' questions, to encourage participants to provide detailed insights. Some follow-up questions are listed in Table 5, which may or may not be asked of each participant, depending on the flow of the interview. Follow-up questions are asked when participants repeatedly mention certain words during the interview, and the

³²⁹ Bryman; Bell 2007, p.391, p. 475.

³³⁰ Bryman; Bell 2007, p. 391.

³³¹ Bryman; Bell 2007, p. 474.

researcher wants to understand the importance of those words to them. Prior to the start of the interviews, all participants are provided with a consent letter (Appendix A), which informs them that the interviews will be recorded for transcription purposes and that the data will be anonymized to ensure open and honest responses.³³²

The objective of this study is to investigate the opinions of highly ambitious employees in the manufacturing industry, and therefore, the selection of participants must be done carefully to ensure high-quality data. To find suitable participants for this research, the researcher has utilized her personal and professional networks to locate respondents who are highly educated, between 20 and 40 years old, and work in various positions across different industries, including small and large companies. The researcher has a personal or professional relationship with all the selected respondents, making it easier to differentiate them from employees without ambition. Table 1 provides a summary of information about all seven interviewees, and "IP" represents Interview Participant.

Ref.	Position Type	Manager	Company Size	Industry	Company Location
IP01	Senior program manager	x	23300	Plastic packaging systems; bottles, caps and injection molded parts, preforms	Vorarlberg, Austria
IP02	Process manager	x	1100	Electrical power engineering	Vorarlberg, Austria
IP03	Product manager	x	1500	Metal	St. Gallen, Switzerland
IP04	Global marketing data specialist		27000	Manufacturing	Schaan, Liechtenstein
IP05	Project leader automation engineering	x	8000	Automotive	Eschen, Liechtenstein
IP06	Development engineer		200	Petroleum equipment	Wuhan, China
IP07	Solution architect		195000	Information and communications technology	Shenzhen, China

Table 1 Interview participants summary

³³² Mayer 2013.

Theme 1 – Autonomy Perception	
1	When you hear the word "autonomy", can you give me 3 words related to your understanding of autonomy?
2	The definition of autonomy at the workplace is Autonomy occurs when employees have freedom and discretion to decide what to carry out and how to carry out their work. Also, autonomy is considered as the ability to spread empowerment which brings employees "more choice and control" in the workplace. Which words in this definition caught your attention?
3	Why is it important for you?
4	Can you give me one example on how you percept xxx at your workplace ? (Do you have xxx at your workplace? What makes you feel you have xxx?)
5	What else from your past experience makes you feel that you exercised your autonomy at your workplace?
6	Have you ever recongized autonomy from others? (Have you observed how your colleagues spread their empowerment or whether they have freedom on certain things?) And what are they? (How did you recongnize them? They say it directly or their behavior tells you?)
7	Any things happened at your workplace make you feel that you have restrictions to exercise your autonomy?
8	Can you give me 3 words relating to your understanding of high-level autonomy?

Table 2 Interview questions on theme 1 autonomy perception

Theme 2 – Element Manification	
1	Do you have the willing to contribute to your company?
2	Can I say that you want to realize your values at the workplace, you want to achieve something and you also want to influence others?
3	What do you need in order to realize your values in terms of achieving something or influencing others? (What can positively support you to...?)
4	Any negative factors or issues may affect you to achieve your values at the workplace?
5	Do you think if you have enough or specific autonomy, you can overcome those negative factors so that you can still realize your values at the workplace? Why?
6	If autonomy helps, any difficulties to receive autonomy at the workplace? (I mean restrictions)
7	Have you ever experienced that you have to give up your autonomy? Can you give one example? (It means that you have your own autonomy but in certain cases, you are under pressure to use it.)
8	What are the pressures making you to give up your autonomy?
9	What else you think are contradicted to autonomy at the workplace? (Prevent you to persue autonomy)

Table 3 Interview questions on theme 2 element manification

Theme 3 – Organization Structure	
1	What is your position in your company? Which department does your position belong to?
2	Do you know your company organization structure? What is it?
3	In general, in your opinion, how important is an organization structure for a company?
4	Can this structure provide the autonomy you need? Why?
5	In general, what can an organization do in order to improve employees' autonomy?
6	Can you tell me one specific objective of your company? (For example, do you know your company's goals this year?)
7	How does your position contribute to achieve this objective? (Do you need any resources to support your position?)
8	What is the degree of your own autonomy in achieving this objective? (High, middle, or low? In terms of what to carry out and how to carry out.)
9	If you need more autonomy in the corporation with other teams or other departments, what kind of support or help do you need from organization?
10	Can you also tell me one case that in the corporation with other teams and departments you give them more autonomy?
11	Ideally, do you think a company can provide every employee enough autonomy? Why?
12	What restricts a company to give its employees autonomy?

Table 4 Interview questions on theme 3 organization structure

Follow-up Questions	
1	Why you think if your colleague overachieving the tasks shows he has willing to gain more autonomy?
2	What do you mean that you have too much autonomy?
3	You mentioned trust for many times, how do you build trust with your company?
4	What do you mean when you say the measurement is already made at the stage of distributing task?
5	Do you mean that you are not care about whether you can contribute to your current company but you want to have a good profile for your next job?
6	In your opinion, how much autonomy should give to specialists? Should they have more autonomy than their managers?
7	What kind of organization structure can solve the problem of centralization?
8	Your point is very interesting. Why do you think organization structure is important because it provides an escape possibility?

Table 5 Interview follow-up questions

During the stage of generating interview questions, there is a lot of buzz and discussion about an AI chatbot called ChatGPT, which was launched as a prototype in November 2022. ChatGPT is capable of conversing like a human, and can even compose music, write stories, essays, and answer questions. To test the accuracy of the interview questions generated by the author, the author decides to send the questions to ChatGPT and uses the answers to refine and improve the questions to ensure that they are clear and easily understandable by the interviewees. An example of how ChatGPT answers one interview question can be seen in Figure 18.

Any things happened at your workplace make you feel that you have restrictions to exercise your autonomy?

As an AI language model, I don't have a physical workplace, and I don't experience emotions or feelings like a human being. However, I can provide some general examples of situations where employees may feel restricted in their ability to exercise autonomy at work.

One common scenario is when a company has strict policies and procedures that limit an employee's ability to make decisions or take actions independently. This can make employees feel like they have little control over their work and can lead to a lack of motivation or engagement.

Another scenario is when managers or supervisors micromanage employees, constantly scrutinizing their work and dictating how tasks should be done. This can create a sense of mistrust and can make employees feel like they are not trusted to make decisions or take ownership of their work.

Additionally, workplace cultures that prioritize conformity and discourage dissent can limit employees' autonomy. This can create a culture of fear, where employees are hesitant to speak up or offer new ideas, leading to a lack of innovation and creativity.

Overall, it's important for companies to create a culture that values autonomy and empowers employees to make decisions and take ownership of their work. This can lead to increased engagement, productivity, and innovation.

Figure 18 One example of how ChatGPT answers interview question

3.4 Data Collection

3.4.1 Recording interview

The choice to record all interviews has been made to facilitate later transcription and data analysis. Instead of writing everything down, the interviewer can take notes on key points during the interview. Recording also allows the interviewer to be more engaged in the conversation without having to worry about missing anything. This extra time can be used to consider follow-up questions that were not previously prepared.

3.4.2 Utilizing software for transcription

As recommended by other researchers, the online student version of Microsoft® Word is utilized to transcribe all recorded interview audio files. This transcription feature changes speech into a written transcript and separates each speaker individually (refer to Table 6). It also provides timestamps, making it easier for the author of the thesis to locate answers. Additionally, it can transcribe over 80 different locations, giving people the option to choose from 11 various local English and 3 distinct local Chinese.

00:03:14 Speaker 2 Can you give one example on how you perceive freedom at your workplace?
00:03:21 Speaker 2 Do you have any freedom at your workplace, and what makes you feel you have this?
00:03:25 Speaker 1 Freedom, I have.
00:03:26 Speaker 1 A lot of freedom in my workplace.

Table 6 One example of transcription by Microsoft® Word online student version

As previously stated, while interviewees are answering questions, the interviewer takes notes on the key points for each question asked. Although the Microsoft® Word student online version transcribes a significant amount of text automatically, which saves a lot of time for the interviewer, the interviewer still cross-checks her notes with the transcribed texts. About 90% of the computer-aided transcription is precise and does not require any rephrasing to be understood. The remaining 10% of the transcription have wording mistakes that only require the interviewer to rewrite them correctly.

3.5 Data Analysis

3.5.1 Utilizing software for data analysis

The author of this thesis has imported the transcribed data to MAXQDA, which is a software that can assist in both qualitative and quantitative data analysis. However, since the research is only qualitative, the author has chosen to use the functions of MAXQDA that are specific to qualitative data analysis. Access to the software has been granted through the AppsAnywhere platform provided by FHV for its students.

3.5.2 Process for data analysis

Figure 19 illustrates a very basic process of how codifying usually follows the ideal and streamlined scheme.³³³ Moreover, the essence of inductive reasoning and analysis is accurately reflected by showing a progression from the particular to the general. This process follows by starting from raw data to single code and then categorizing clusters of codes to generate themes or concepts to develop a theory. According to Richards and Morse (2013), “*categorizing is how we get ‘up’ from the diversity of data to the shapes of the data, the sorts of things represented.*”³³⁴ *Concepts (or themes) allow researchers to get up to more general, higher-level, and more abstract constructs.*”³³⁵ The author of this thesis uses this model as a source of inspiration for the categorization, arrangement, and examination of the obtained raw data.

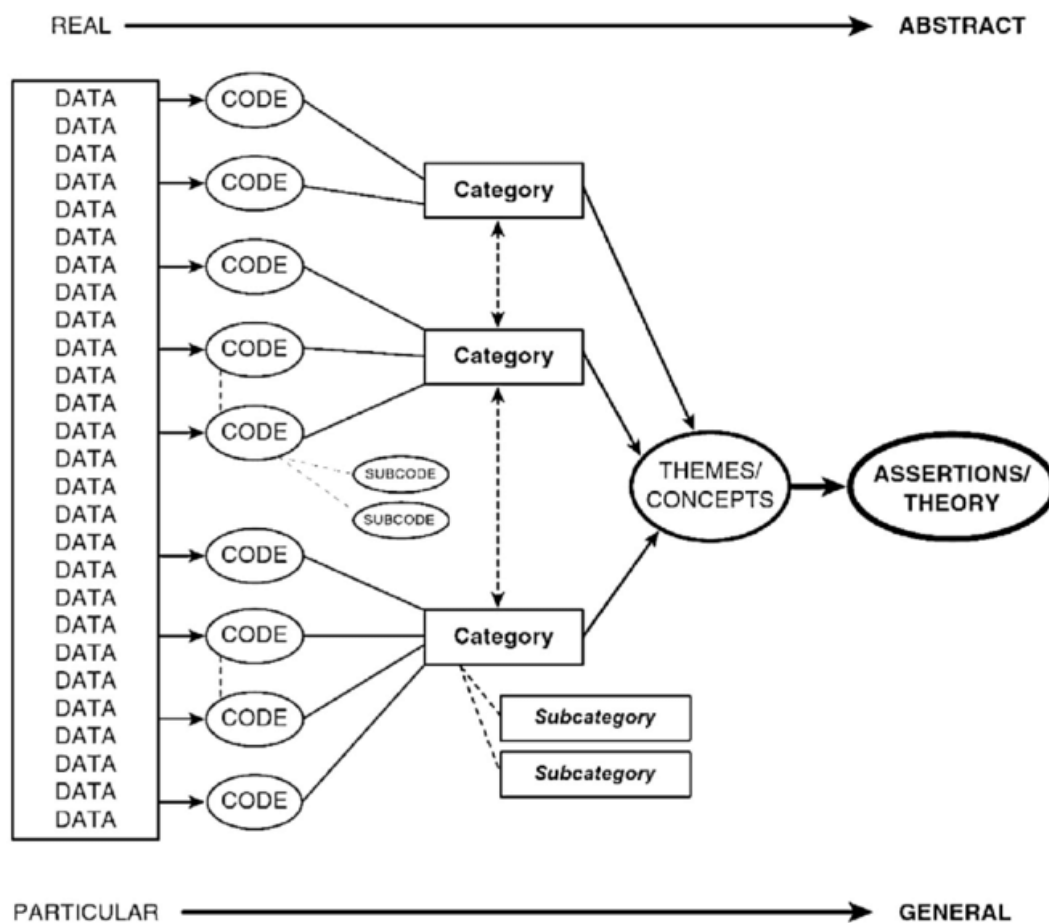


Figure 19 A simplified codes-to-theory model for qualitative research
 Source Saldaña 2016, p.14

³³³ Saldaña 2013, p.12.
³³⁴ Mayer 2013.
³³⁵ Saldaña 2013, p.13.

3.5.3 Coding the data and categorizing the codes

One way of analyzing qualitative data is coding. ³³⁶ Saldaña points out “A code in qualitative research is most often a word or short phrase which assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based.” ³³⁷ Thus, a code is not just to simply reduce information but to summarize or condense data. ³³⁸ And each researcher has his or her own way to name codes. Therefore, coding is not a precise science, but an interpretive act. ³³⁹ The researcher of this thesis has assigned codes to each interview question theme. Theme 1, which is autonomy perception, is assigned with codes starting with CO1-xx (Table 7). Theme 2, which is element magnification, is assigned with codes starting with CO2-xx (Table 8). Theme 3, which is organization structure, is assigned with codes starting with CO3-xx (Table 9). The same codes, such as CO1-01, which appears under theme 1, may also appear under theme 3 as CO3-37.

The next step after coding the data is to categorize them to better understand their relationships and connections. Four categories were generated (Table 10): 1) Perception of autonomy, 2) Influence factors on perception of autonomy, 3) Consequences of more autonomy, and 4) Workplace trend. The first three categories were generated based on the cause-and-effect principle, starting from people's perceptions of autonomy (category 1) to understanding the factors that influence or cause these perceptions (category 2) and then to identify the consequences of perceiving autonomy (category 3). Additionally, respondents mentioned how they believe the workplace could be different in the future, which became a separate category called workplace trend (category 4). Note that the marked codes are color-coded to represent the different categories.

To aid with analysis, a frequency counter has been implemented, which counts the number of times a particular code is mentioned by respondents. This helps to determine the importance of each code to the respondents. The five most frequently mentioned codes in each theme are marked green. Table 1 summarizes the total number of times the most frequently mentioned codes were used. Additionally, the interviewees were asked about their organization's structure, and Table 1 shows that all but one of the seven companies use a combination of functional, matrix models, and only IP06 the company using just one model.

³³⁶ Saldaña 2013, p.2.

³³⁷ Saldaña 2013, p.3.

³³⁸ Saldaña 2013, p.4.

³³⁹ Saldaña 2013, p.4.

	Code Ref.	Theme 1 - Autonomy Perception	Frequency				
6				28	CO1-22	Type of task	2
7	CO1-01	Free to make decision	30	29	CO1-23	Supply	2
8	CO1-02	Choice	11	30	CO1-24	Driving force	2
9	CO1-03	Trust	7	31	CO1-25	Open communication	2
10	CO1-04	Control	5	32	CO1-26	Agility	2
11	CO1-05	Independency	5	33	CO1-27	Support from supervisor	2
12	CO1-06	Job profile	5	34	CO1-28	Predictable	1
13	CO1-07	Responsibility	4	35	CO1-29	Innovation	1
14	CO1-08	Efficiency	4	36	CO1-30	System	1
15	CO1-09	Hierarchy	4	37	CO1-31	Not machine	1
16	CO1-10	Type of instruction	4	38	CO1-32	Knowledge	1
17	CO1-11	Experience	4	39	CO1-33	Emotional humanbeings	1
18	CO1-12	Micromanagement	4	40	CO1-34	Power	1
19	CO1-13	Proactiveness	3	41	CO1-35	Attitude - Overachieving the task	1
20	CO1-14	Permission from supervisor	3	42	CO1-36	Authority	1
21	CO1-15	Resource (Tools)	3	43	CO1-37	Diversity	1
22	CO1-16	Passion	3	44	CO1-38	Trade-offs	1
23	CO1-17	Alignment	3	45	CO1-39	Pressure	1
24	CO1-18	Supervisor's open mind	3	46	CO1-40	Supervisor's evaluation	1
25	CO1-19	Empowerment	2	47	CO1-41	Routine	1
26	CO1-20	Flexibility	2	48	CO1-42	Not only look for money	1
27	CO1-21	Process	2	49	CO1-43	Young generation	1
				50	CO1-44	Digital age	1
				51	CO1-45	Psychological support	1
				52	CO1-46	Company's culture	1
				53	CO1-47	Position	1
				54	CO1-48	Reserved mindset	1
				55	CO1-49	Respect	1
				56	CO1-50	Department's isolation	1
				57	CO1-51	Self-recognition	1
				58	CO1-52	Commitment	1

Table 7 Generating codes for theme 1 autonomy perception

6	Code Ref.	Theme 2 - Element Manification	Frequency
7	CO2-01	Supervisor's evaluation	4
8	CO2-02	Specialist	3
9	CO2-03	Priority	3
10	CO2-04	Personality	3
11	CO2-05	Supervisor	2
12	CO2-06	Budget	2
13	CO2-07	External / internal situation	2
14	CO2-08	Power	2
15	CO2-09	Old-fashion	2
16	CO2-10	Responsibility	2
17	CO2-11	Type of task	2
18	CO2-12	Routine	2
19	CO2-13	Control	2
20	CO2-14	Time restriction	2
21	CO2-15	Productivity	1
22	CO2-16	Robot	1
23	CO2-17	Empowerment	1
24	CO2-18	Awareness	1
25	CO2-19	Economy	1
26	CO2-20	Politics	1
27	CO2-21	Hiring freeze	1
28	CO2-22	Resource	1
29	CO2-23	Trust	1
30	CO2-24	Choice	1
31	CO2-25	Too much autonomy	1
32	CO2-26	No guidance	1
33	CO2-27	Innovation	1
34	CO2-28	No uni education, work long only	1
35	CO2-29	Restructure	1
36	CO2-30	Reassignment	1
37	CO2-31	Reallocate	1
38	CO2-32	Structure not up to date	1
39	CO2-33	Communication	1
40	CO2-34	Company politics	1
41	CO2-35	Money	1
42	CO2-36	Micromanagement	1
43	CO2-37	Passiveness	1
44	CO2-38	Pressure	1
45	CO2-39	Authority	1
46	CO2-40	Personal relationship with supervisor	1
47	CO2-41	Job distribution	1

Table 8 Generating codes for theme 2 element manification

Code Ref.	Theme 3 - Organization Structure	Frequency			
			CO3-26	Revenue	1
CO3-01	Company goal	7			
CO3-02	Efficient system	4	CO3-27	Cost	1
CO3-03	Job description	4			
CO3-04	Alignment	4	CO3-28	Function	1
CO3-05	Responsibility	3	CO3-29	Development cost	1
CO3-06	Open communication	3	CO3-30	Workflow	1
CO3-07	Hierarchy	2	CO3-31	Escape possibility	1
CO3-08	Supervisor	2	CO3-32	Incentive	1
CO3-09	Trust	2	CO3-33	Reward	1
CO3-10	Resource (Tools)	2	CO3-34	Recognition	1
CO3-11	Company politics	2	CO3-35	Punishment	1
CO3-12	Priority	1	CO3-36	Choice	1
CO3-13	Isolation	1	CO3-37	Free to make decision	1
CO3-14	New generation	1	CO3-38	Amount of order	1
CO3-15	80%20% in different position	1	CO3-39	Authority	1
CO3-16	Sustainability	1	CO3-40	Innovation	1
CO3-17	KPI	1	CO3-41	Commitment	1
CO3-18	Grow product market	1	CO3-42	Flexibility	1
CO3-19	Strategy	1	CO3-43	Training	1
CO3-20	Personality	1	CO3-44	Risk	1
CO3-21	No.1 in the market	1	CO3-45	Proactiveness	1
CO3-22	Specialist	1	CO3-46	Honest	1
CO3-23	Focus	1	CO3-47	Role	1
CO3-24	Old fashion	1	CO3-48	Interface	1
CO3-25	Centralization	1	CO3-49	Power	1
			CO3-50	Position	1
			CO3-51	Flat structure	1
			CO3-52	Boundary	1
			CO3-53	Rules	1
			CO3-54	Diversity	1
			CO3-55	New department - task distribution centre	1

Table 9 Generating codes for theme 3 organization structure

Category 1 Perception of autonomy		Category 2 Influence factor on perception of autonomy							Category 3 Consequence of more autonomy		Category 4 Workplace trend	
CO1-01	CO2-09	CO1-03	CO1-24	CO2-01	CO2-22	CO3-05	CO3-24	CO3-47	CO1-08	CO1-26		
CO1-02	CO2-16	CO1-04	CO1-25	CO2-03	CO2-23	CO3-06	CO3-25	CO3-48	CO1-29	CO1-43		
CO1-05	CO2-17	CO1-06	CO1-27	CO2-04	CO2-26	CO3-07	CO3-26	CO3-49	CO2-15	CO1-44		
CO1-13	CO2-24	CO1-07	CO1-30	CO2-05	CO2-29	CO3-08	CO3-27	CO3-50	CO2-27	CO3-14		
CO1-16	CO2-25	CO1-09	CO1-32	CO2-06	CO2-30	CO3-09	CO3-28	CO3-51	CO3-02	CO3-15		
CO1-19	CO2-28	CO1-10	CO1-34	CO2-07	CO2-31	CO3-10	CO3-29	CO3-52	CO3-40	CO3-55		
CO1-28	CO2-32	CO1-11	CO1-36	CO2-08	CO2-33	CO3-11	CO3-30	CO3-53				
CO1-31	CO2-37	CO1-12	CO1-37	CO2-10	CO2-34	CO3-12	CO3-32	CO3-54				
CO1-33	CO2-38	CO1-14	CO1-40	CO2-11	CO2-35	CO3-13	CO3-33					
CO1-35	CO3-22	CO1-15	CO1-41	CO2-12	CO2-36	CO3-16	CO3-34					
CO1-38	CO3-31	CO1-17	CO1-45	CO2-13	CO2-39	CO3-17	CO3-35					
CO1-39	CO3-36	CO1-18	CO1-46	CO2-14	CO2-40	CO3-18	CO3-38					
CO1-42	CO3-37	CO1-20	CO1-47	CO2-18	CO2-41	CO3-19	CO3-39					
CO1-51	CO3-41	CO1-21	CO1-48	CO2-19	CO3-01	CO3-20	CO3-42					
CO1-52	CO3-44	CO1-22	CO1-49	CO2-20	CO3-03	CO3-21	CO3-43					
CO2-02	CO3-45	CO1-23	CO1-50	CO2-21	CO3-04	CO3-23	CO3-46					

Table 10 Grouping codes into categories

Ref.	Company's organization structure
IP01	functional, divisional and matrix
IP02	functional, divisional and matrix
IP03	functional, divisional and matrix
IP04	functional, divisional and matrix
IP05	functional, divisional and matrix
IP06	functional, matrix
IP07	functional, divisional and matrix

Table 11 Company current used organization structure

3.5.4 Generating concepts and theories

*“Concepts are how we get up to more general, higher-level, and more abstract constructs”.*³⁴⁰

The author of the thesis has summarized 27 concepts (labeled C1 to C27) that were generated during the coding process. These concepts are organized into four categories based on the cause-and-effect principle. Concepts C1 to C11 relate to the perception of autonomy, C12 to C19 relate to the influence factors on the perception of autonomy, C20 to C21 relate to the consequences of more autonomy, and C22 to C27 relate to workplace trends. Each concept represents an independent and more general aspect of the data. The development of theory involves systematically grouping and summarizing interrelated concepts. One theory is generated for each category, labeled T1 to T4.

Category	Concept	Theory
1. Perception of autonomy	C1	Available to choose and free to make decision
	C2	Gaining autonomy makes employees feel more proactive, more passionate.
	C3	Autonomy also brings risks and pressures.
	C4	Who has autonomy, who has the right of tradeoff.
	C5	Who has autonomy, who feel more independent and self-recognized.
	C6	Autonomy can motivate employees to take on commitment.
	C7	Escape possibilities of responsibility to a higher level of autonomy.
	C8	Specialists should be provided more autonomy, even more than their supervisors.
	C9	Employees are emotional human beings. Don't treat them as machines by only given instructions. They need to have autonomy.
	C10	The behavior of overachieving a task indirectly shows the employee has willing to receive more autonomy.
	C11	No guidance from supervisor makes people feel too much autonomy.
	T1	Autonomy has a positive impact on employee behavior and motivation, but the level of autonomy should be balanced to avoid negative consequences. Specialists should be granted more autonomy than their supervisors, as they have the expertise to make informed decisions. However, too much autonomy can also lead to risks and pressures, and guidance from supervisors is necessary to avoid feeling overwhelmed. The desire for more autonomy can be seen in employees who overachieve in their tasks, and providing autonomy can lead to increased commitment and passion. Ultimately, autonomy should be viewed as a tradeoff, where employees have the right to make decisions but also have the responsibility to accept the consequences of their choices.

³⁴⁰ Richards and Morse, 2013, p.173.

2. Influence factor on perception of autonomy	C12	External factors - politics, economy	T2	A combination of external and internal factors can shape an employee's ability to pursue autonomy in the workplace. Companies need to consider both objective and subjective elements of their organization design. First of all, PESTLE external factors - political, economic, sociological, technological, legal, and environmental - can affect employees' pursuit of autonomy in a company. Secondly, a company's organization design also plays a crucial role in shaping an employee's ability to receive autonomy. This is particularly relevant to the 7-S Model's hard factors, such as shared values, strategy, structure, and systems. And then, very important is the design of the 7 elements of organization structure in order to 1) decentralize, decrease hierarchy; 2) have more alignment of departments; 3) lessen the direct control and strict instructions of supervisors; give employees more authorities; 4) most importantly, rethink positions in a company requiring a shift in mindset towards a more outcomes-focused, flexible, and skill-based approach to work. In addition, an employee's level of professionalism and skills can also influence his amount of autonomy to receive. Also, a supervisor's behavior in terms of how to motivate, support, and assess staffs can also have a significant impact. A supervisor who exhibits excessive control and supervision of their employees' work, and who delegates tasks and decisions in a limited manner, can be a significant obstacle to employees' pursuit of autonomy. Last but not the least, a company's culture should be more flexible, diverse, communicated, and bring more respect and trust to employees.
	C13	Internal factors 1 - company internal politics, company's objective, strategy, system, regulations		
	C14	Internal factors 2 - job profile, position, hierarchy, centralization, department alignment / isolation, authority, control, power		
	C15	Internal factors 3 - resource, priority, budget, time restriction, working routine, training program		
	C16	Internal factors 4 - trust, respect, flexibility, diversity, supervisor's personality, communication		
	C17	Internal factors 5 - working experience, knowledge		
	C18	Internal factors 6 - supervisor's evaluation on employee performance, incentive plan and support		
C19	Internal factors 7 - supervisor's micromanagement			
3. Consequence of more autonomy	C20	A high level of job autonomy can bring companies high efficiency and high productivity. An employee who has a higher level of autonomy, more tends to feel empowered to contribute his efforts to achieve company's goals.	T3	A high level of job autonomy can lead to high efficiency and productivity in companies, particularly when it comes to innovation. When employees have a significant degree of autonomy in their work, they are more likely to feel empowered and motivated to contribute their best efforts towards achieving the company's goals. They can take ownership of their work, experiment with new ideas and processes, and find creative solutions to challenges.
	C21	A high level of job autonomy can bring innovation to the company. An employee who has a higher level of autonomy, more tends to experiment with new ideas and processes to create solutions for the challenges.		
4. Workplace trend	C22	The workplace is already in a digital age. Online platforms provide fruitful learning materials.	T4	In this digital age, the availability of online platforms and resources for learning has made the young generation more independent and self-directed in their learning approach. This independence extends to the workplace, where they desire more autonomy and freedom to decide how they carry out their work. As a result, the traditional model of training and supervision, which relies heavily on instructions from supervisors, is no longer effective. In addition, if there is a new department, providing an open communication platform directly between employees and top managers, it will make the work more efficiently. Employees can know the open tasks, available resources, and tools of the company, they can directly give feedback to top managers in order to make the production work efficiently.
	C23	The way of learning is changed. Young generation knows how to choose and what to choose from online		
	C24	Trainings in the workplace also need to be changed.		
	C25	Young generation needs less instructions from supervisors than before. They want to have more freedom to decide what to carry out and how to carry.		
	C26	The mechanism of fixed position is not attractive to young generation any more. Young generation seeks more challenged and dynamic positions for their careers.		
C27	A "bridge" department is needed. It plays its role like an agency between employees and top managers. This department helps employees' feedbacks to directly reach top managers and at the same time, employees know from this department what tasks are open to finish, what the resources or tools can be used in finishing the tasks. It can help the production more efficiently.			

Table 12 Generating concepts and theories

3.5.5 Answering research questions

Once the raw data has been analyzed, including coding, and generating theories, the research questions can be addressed. Table 13 provides a summary of theory 2, which can be useful in addressing the research question.

	Theory
T2	<p>A combination of external and internal factors can shape an employee's ability to pursue autonomy in the workplace. Companies need to consider both objective and subjective elements of their organization design. First of all, PESTLE external factors - political, economic, sociological, technological, legal, and environmental - can affect employees' pursuit of autonomy in a company. Secondly, a company's organization design also plays a crucial role in shaping an employee's ability to receive autonomy. This is particularly relevant to the 7-S Model's hard factors, such as shared values, strategy, structure, and systems. And then, very important is the design of the 7 elements of organization structure in order to 1) decentralize, decrease hierarchy; 2) have more alignment of departments; 3) lessen the direct control and strict instructions of supervisors; give employees more authorities; 4) most importantly, rethink positions in a company requiring a shift in mindset towards a more outcomes-focused, flexible, and skill-based approach to work. In addition, an employee's level of professionalism and skills can also influence his amount of autonomy to receive. Also, a supervisor's behavior in terms of how to motivate, support, and assess staffs can also have a significant impact. A supervisor who exhibits excessive control and supervision of their employees' work, and who delegates tasks and decisions in a limited manner, can be a significant obstacle to employees' pursuit of autonomy. Last but not the least, a company's culture should be more flexible, diverse, communicated, and bring more respect and trust to employees.</p>

Table 13 Theory 2

RQ1. What obstacles do ambitious employees face in pursuing job autonomy within manufacturing organizations?

- 1) Obstacles exist if external factors – PESTLE (Political, Economic, Sociological, Technological, Legal and Environmental) have a negative impact on an organization's strategic decision-making process.
- 2) Obstacles exist if a company's organizational design requires strict adherence to politics, objectives, strategies, systems, and regulations without any room for negotiation from employees.

- 3) Obstacles exist if a company has a highly hierarchical and oppressive system in which decision making is centralized, and employees have no participation in the decisions.
- 4) Obstacles exist if departments are highly isolated and only focus on their own goals without aligning with other departments.
- 5) Obstacles exist if job profiles are highly specialized and narrowly defined.
- 6) Obstacles exist if positions are designed with very clear limited authority and clear boundaries.
- 7) Obstacles exist if a company's budget, priority, project deadline and working routine must be followed exactly without any room for discussion.
- 8) Obstacles exist if training programs do not target employees' potential for growth.
- 9) Obstacles exist if a company does not provide a flexible and diverse working environment.
- 10) Obstacles exist if an employee lacks the necessary skills, professional knowledge, and experiences for their job requirements.
- 11) Obstacles exist if a supervisor's personality displays a lack of trust or respect towards his employees.
- 12) Obstacles exist if a supervisor micromanages his employees during communication by solely providing instructions and not taking employee feedback into account.
- 13) Obstacles exist if a supervisor does not have an incentive plan in place to motivate employees; does not provide support for employees in what to carry out and how to carry out; or unfairly evaluates employee performance.

RQ2. What organizational structure elements contribute to these obstacles?

To start, all seven components of organization structure were mentioned by different interviewees, as shown in Table 14. The most mentioned elements were centralization, including aspects like hierarchy, decision-making freedom, supervisor evaluation, and more (totaling 64 mentions), as well as span of control, which included factors like control, independence, type of instruction, specialist roles, and more (totaling 50 mentions). This suggests that for the respondents, these two elements were particularly important in influencing their level of autonomy within their organization. However, it's worth noting that the other components, which were mentioned less frequently, also had a significant impact on job autonomy, especially in the case of job design (with a total of 23 mentions) and departmentation (with a total of 31 mentions).

Ref.	Job design	Fre.	Departmentation	Fre.	Span of control	Fre.
1	Job profile	10	Responsibility	9	Specialist	4
2	Type of task	4	Alignment	7	Escape possibility	1
3	Routine	3	Position	1	No guidance (too much autonomy)	1
4	Workflow	1	Isolation	2	Personal relationship with supervisor	1
5	Experience	4	Function	1	Supervisor	4
6	Knowledge	1	Commitment	2	Personality	4
7			Role	1	Independency	5
8			Diversity	2	Control	7
9			Resource (Tools)	6	Type of instruction	4
10					Support from supervisor	2
11					Micromanagement	5
12					Supervisor's open mind	3
13					Open communication	6
14					Permission from supervisor	3
	Total	23	Total	31	Total	50

Ref.	Delegation of authority	Fre.	Chain of command	Fre.	Centralization	Fre.	Formalization	Fre.
1	Authority	3			Hierarchy	6	Rules	1
2					Centralization	1	Company politics	3
3					Flat structure	1		
4					Supervisor's evaluation	5		
5					Old fashion	2		
6					Free to make decision	31		
7					Choice	13		
8					Incentive	1		
9					Reward	1		
10					Recognition	2		
11					Punishment	1		
12								
13								
14								
	Total	3	Total	0	Total	64	Total	4

Table 14 Coding relating to seven organization structure elements

In addition to the seven elements of organization structure, respondents identified other factors that create obstacles in the workplace. These factors include external factors like the economy and politics, internal factors related to the company's goals, structure, strategy, and regulations, as well as the supervisor's management style and behavior, such as micromanagement and personality.

RQ3. How do these elements of organization structure contribute to the obstacles?

- 1) The process of decision-making is centralized on the top management or supervisors without involving the participation of employees, particularly the specialists. Specialists typically possess greater professional experience than supervisors or top managers, but they have minimal authority. This centralized decision-making process lowers the

engagement of employees, particularly the specialists, and lacks diversity in perspectives.

- 2) A highly hierarchical organization structure makes decision-making slow and complicated, as the chain of command is long, and authority is limited to higher levels. Lower levels have little power to make decisions.
- 3) Supervisors exercise excessive control over employees, micromanaging tasks and leaving no room for employees to make decisions or provide feedback. This can create a closed-minded environment that stifles innovation.
- 4) Job content is designed to be extremely specialized, with very narrowed responsibility. It constrains employees to have more authority. Also, employees taking very specialized roles may find it challenging to keep up with changes in the industry or to adapt to new technologies or working practices. Accordingly, these employees may feel far behind in terms of their skills and knowledge in the industry.
- 5) Departments in an organization often operate in isolation and focus only on their specific goals rather than collaborating with other departments to achieve the organization's common objectives. This approach can limit employees' ability to work collaboratively with colleagues from other departments and can also limit their understanding of the organization's overall strategy.
- 6) Positions within departments are designed with restricted responsibilities and functions. This leads to employees having limited opportunities to develop broader skills and knowledge as their work is focused on a narrow area. This also means that the learning programs available to employees are restricted to their current position rather than providing broader skill and knowledge development for potential future positions.
- 7) Supervisors engage in unfair evaluations of employee performance and fail to provide adequate support to motivate their staff.
- 8) An organization that is highly formalized operates with strict policies, regulations, strategies, budgets, timelines, and working routines that must be adhered to with minimal room for negotiation.
- 9) The external factors – PESTLE (political, economic, sociological, technological, legal, and environmental) may have a negative impact on companies. This, in turn, can affect a company's internal factors, such as its goals, strategies, structures, systems, and regulations, in adapting to the external influences, which may hinder its pursuit of autonomy.

RQ4. If an ideal organization structure can remove these obstacles, what would the conceptual model for such a structure look like?

According to the responses in RQ3, a conceptual model aimed at removing the obstacles created by organization structure should consider the following aspects:

- 1) Employees, especially specialists, should be involved in decision-making processes and the authority to make decisions should be distributed more widely within the organization.
- 2) The process of giving feedback to supervisors and top management should be made easier.
- 3) The responsibilities of employees should be wider in scope to avoid being limited to a narrow function or position.
- 4) A wider range of employee development programs should be provided to ensure that the focus is not solely on the current positions.
- 5) To prevent each department from focusing solely on its own internal goals and not on the company's overall objectives, it is essential for departments to align with each other.
- 6) Supervisors need to be fairer when evaluating employee performance and should provide better support to motivate employees.

Furthermore, the findings from theories T1, T3, and T4 were indirectly relevant to answering this research question and are presented in Table 15.

Theory	
T1	Autonomy has a positive impact on employee behavior and motivation, but the level of autonomy should be balanced to avoid negative consequences. Specialists should be granted more autonomy than their supervisors, as they have the expertise to make informed decisions. However, too much autonomy can also lead to risks and pressures, and guidance from supervisors is necessary to avoid feeling overwhelmed. The desire for more autonomy can be seen in employees who overachieve in their tasks, and providing autonomy can lead to increased commitment and passion. Ultimately, autonomy should be viewed as a tradeoff, where employees have the right to make decisions but also have the responsibility to accept the consequences of their choices.
T3	A high level of job autonomy can lead to high efficiency and productivity in companies, particularly when it comes to innovation. When employees have a significant degree of autonomy in their work, they are more likely to feel empowered and motivated to contribute their best efforts towards achieving the company's goals. They can take ownership of their work, experiment with new ideas and processes, and find creative solutions to challenges.

T4	<p>In this digital age, the availability of online platforms and resources for learning has made the young generation more independent and self-directed in their learning approach. This independence extends to the workplace, where they desire more autonomy and freedom to decide how they carry out their work. As a result, the traditional model of training and supervision, which relies heavily on instructions from supervisors, is no longer effective. In addition, if there is a new department, providing an open communication platform directly between employees and top managers, it will make the work more efficient. Employees can know the open tasks, available resources, and tools of the company, they can directly give feedback to top managers in order to make the production work efficiently.</p>
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Table 15 Theories T1, T3 and T4

A conceptual model can also include aspects:

- 1) The appropriate level of delegated autonomy needs to be determined to prevent negative outcomes resulting from excessive autonomy.
- 2) The level of autonomy granted to specialists should be higher than that of supervisors.
- 3) It can create a sense of proactivity and passion among employees towards their work.
- 4) It can motivate employees to exceed expectations and go above and beyond in completing a task.
- 5) It can motivate employees to take on commitments as well as risks.
- 6) It should also benefit on a company's efficiency, productivity and innovation.
- 7) The focus group should be on young generations, who prefer more autonomy in their learning and development in the workplace, with less direction from their supervisors.
- 8) It can establish a direct communication channel between employees and top management, enabling employees to provide feedback directly to top managers and to have the freedom to choose their own tasks, resources, and tools.

These elements will contribute to the development of a conceptual model for a feasible organizational structure in the following chapter.

4 The Design of A Viable Organization Structure

4.1 The target group and the target times

The author of this thesis recalls a famous college student debate years ago when she studied in China. The topic of this debate was: Is management about managing people, or about managing things? The reason why this debate is still remembered by the author is because she is of the group of thought that management is not about managing people. Although many influential thinkers and scholars who have contributed to the development of management theory and practice including Frederick Winslow Taylor, Henri Fayol, Peter Drucker, Douglas McGregor, and Mary Parker Follett, have written extensively about management principles, functions, and skills, including the importance of effective people management, the author of this thesis still believes a good and efficient management is not to manage its people, but to provide its people enough power and freedom to manage things. This is because the goal of a manufacturing company is to produce and deliver products (the things) that meet customer needs and generate profits. To achieve this goal, a manufacturing company typically focuses on a few key objectives: quality, productivity, innovation, and customer satisfaction (measurements of the things). In this context, people are not the target of management, but rather the driving force to manage things. This set of individuals within a company is highly determined to achieve their professional aspirations and progress in their career. They are usually self-starters who actively seek out opportunities to acquire new skills, take on new challenges, and strive for personal growth and advancement. As a result, the organizational framework is tailored to support and empower this group of people within the company.

In practical terms, organizations encounter real-life challenges and must figure out how to adjust to a constantly evolving business environment. A forward-thinking organization not only deals with challenges but also actively seeks out new possibilities. However, identifying new opportunities for a company can be a difficult task due to various factors, such as industry differences, specific long-term goals, target market, and technological advancements. Nonetheless, it is widely accepted that manufacturing companies aim to enhance productivity and innovation.

The first industrial revolution occurred during the late 1700s until the mid-1800s, which allowed factories and mass production to expand by utilizing steam power and mechanization.³⁴¹ New technologies were introduced during the second industrial revolution, which took place from the late 1800s until the early 1900s. These technologies included automobiles, telecommunications, electricity, and mass production techniques.³⁴² The third industrial revolution

³⁴¹ 'Industrial Revolution' 2023.

³⁴² 'Second Industrial Revolution' 2023.

transpired in the late 20th century to the early 21st century with the advent of computers, the internet, and digital technologies which considerably transformed the way we communicate and access information. ³⁴³ This transformation accelerated the pace of work and expanded the range of work. Currently, we are undergoing the fourth industrial revolution. ³⁴⁴

The current revolution is powered by the Internet of Things (IoT), robotics, and artificial intelligence. The exact ways in which this revolution will change our lifestyle and working patterns are still uncertain. Also, it is too early to predict if the deployment of advanced technologies like ChatGPT will positively impact productivity or result in job displacement. Nevertheless, it is crucial to have discussions about this topic. Companies need to consider the subsequent changes resulting from implementing new technology. If AI is utilized to enhance a company's productivity, it may automate specific tasks and processes, facilitate communication and collaboration, and transform job roles. It may also lead to changes in the organizational structure. Since AI can execute most repetitive and routine tasks, a company may need to restructure roles, responsibilities, alignment, and decision-making processes. Therefore, the proposed organizational model is designed to promote human-AI interaction, where the future organization structure encourages creative human intelligence.

4.2 Present organization structures and the future organization structure

According to the literature review in the previous chapter, a typical manufacturing company is characterized by its focus on creating tangible products through a series of processes, and the emphasis on quality, productivity, and innovation. It is production oriented and has certain standard processes to be followed. The currently used organization structures, such as functional model, divisional model and matrix model are intended to ensure smooth of production processes by assigning resources and coordinating activities within an organization. All these models aim to achieve organizational effectiveness and efficiency by clarifying roles and responsibilities, promoting collaboration and communication, and aligning resources with strategic goals. However, according to interview results, employees working in companies that utilize one or more of these organizational models are dissatisfied with the setup of specializations and positions, department alignment and communication, and decision-making process.

Furthermore, while most companies aim for innovation and creativity, only a few departments are capable of innovating. Typically, manufacturing companies prioritize innovation in their research and development (R&D) activities but may also dedicate space for innovation in areas such as product design, supply chain management, and customer service. Many other

³⁴³ 'Industrial Revolution' 2023.

³⁴⁴ 'The Fourth Industrial Revolution: what it means and how to respond' 2018.

functions in a company focus on routine or technical tasks that are currently performed by humans but may eventually be replaced by AI in the near future. This shift towards AI will lead to significant changes in manufacturing companies, including a decrease in the need for human workers to perform routine tasks, the need to reposition remaining employees for this transformation, a restructuring of functions, a focus on disruptive innovation to remain competitive, and a need for the restructured organization to provide opportunities for employees with ambitions to contribute to disruptive innovation.

The primary distinction between present and future organization structures is centered around the group of employees they prioritize. The existing organization structures prioritize employees who carry out repetitive and routine tasks and have limited opportunities for innovation. In contrast, the future structure will concentrate on a particular set of employees who stay with the company and are specialized in innovative work. A possible future-oriented organization structure will be introduced in 4.3 The conceptual model.

4.3 The conceptual model

Figure 20 depicts an abstract model that combines three traditional organization structures, namely functional, divisional, and matrix models (in dashed line). The model is called Duality Concept Model. It includes physical departments (PD) marked with blue lines, and a new addition, virtual departments (VD), marked with yellow lines. Unlike the physical departments, the virtual departments are online workplaces accessed through the internet. Virtual departments serve as central hubs that connect positions at the same horizontal level and link vertically to one level down and one level up to other virtual departments. This illustrates an information transfer between different horizontal levels through vertical links.

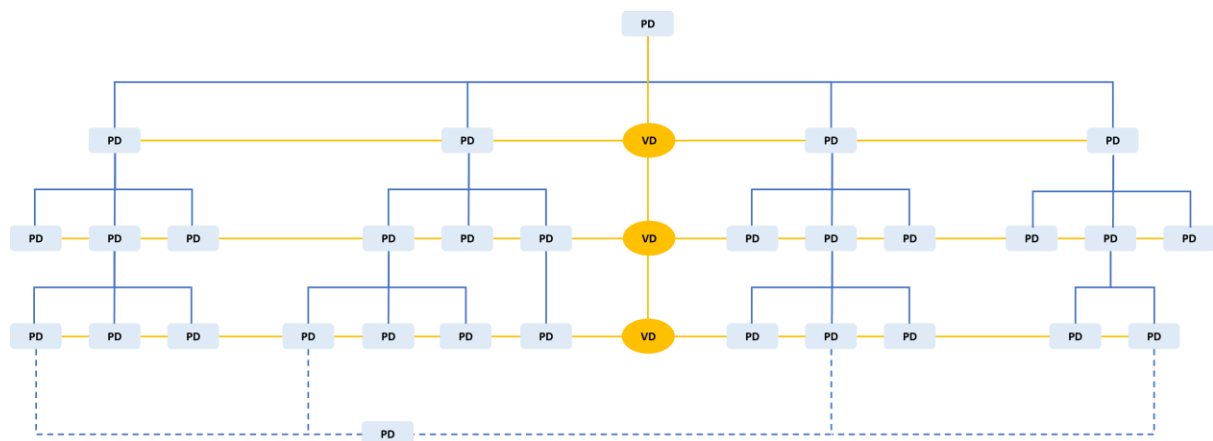


Figure 20 Abstract of the duality concept model

The concept of creating virtual departments is aimed at creating a new management framework within an organization that supports increased autonomy in work practices. Unlike the

traditional approach of changing the internal structure of existing departments, virtual departments are designed to overlap with current physical departments, providing a parallel management structure. The introduction of a new layer of management is necessary because virtual departments serve different functions that cannot be achieved by merely changing the internal setting of physical departments.

A virtual department performs its functions from various perspectives:

1. Connecting positions at the same horizontal level: the same horizontal level in an organization that means the positions at this level have a similar level of hierarchy. They have a similar degree of decision-making power and responsibility. Horizontal connections between these positions from different departments can help break down departmental isolation. This allows for better communication, collaboration, and a bigger picture understanding of the company's goals and strategies. Shared information may include company goals, strategies, open tasks, available resources/tools, and feedback. How detail the information been shared is determined by the higher-level virtual department.
2. Free selection of tasks: With the availability of open tasks and resources/tools, employees in the same virtual department have the freedom to select their own tasks and resources/tools. The tasks can be mainly focused on innovation rather than specialization, such as design thinking, problem solving, process improvement, research and development, and new venture creation. However, it is also possible for employees to request cross-functional specialized tasks in virtual departments. For instance, a product manager who wants to broaden his knowledge in HR or Finance can request learning materials and matched tasks in his virtual department. These two types of tasks provide employees with more opportunities to be involved in a broad range of tasks that are not limited to their physical positions. Employees can take on different responsibilities and functions to unleash their potential. By joining different types of tasks and facing different challenges, employees can motivate themselves to learn new skills and gain knowledge to develop their professions and increase their engagement. Especially for certain extremely centralized departments, employees can find the right tasks in virtual departments to increase their decision-making power.
3. Better evaluation of employee performance: When employees are allowed to take on responsibilities outside of their physical departments, the evaluation system can be changed to be fairer. This new evaluation system involves a formula that considers both the evaluation of the employee's performance in the virtual department and the evaluation in the physical department, weighted by their respective ratios:
$$\text{Evaluation (VD)} \times \text{Ratio VD} + \text{Evaluation (PD)} \times \text{Ratio PD} = \text{Evaluation of Employee Performance}$$
A fairer evaluation system can increase employee motivation and engagement, and encourage them to take on more responsibilities.
4. Giving feedback directly to the top management: The vertical linking of virtual departments also enables the efficient transfer of feedback from lower levels to the top management. In traditional reporting, top management only hears feedback from one level lower than top management. However, with this vertical channel, each level of the

hierarchy has the power to influence the company's decision-making and development. Virtual departments can provide feedback directly to top management, regardless of their position in the hierarchy. This freedom to provide feedback to top management can encourage employee engagement in the organization.

5. Give anonymous feedback: The concept of keeping feedback anonymous to encourage diversity of perspectives within a company. By allowing employees to give feedback or express disagreement without revealing their identity, it creates a more open-minded and respectful environment. This approach also allows for more honest and open discussions about sensitive issues that employees may feel uncomfortable sharing if their identity is revealed.

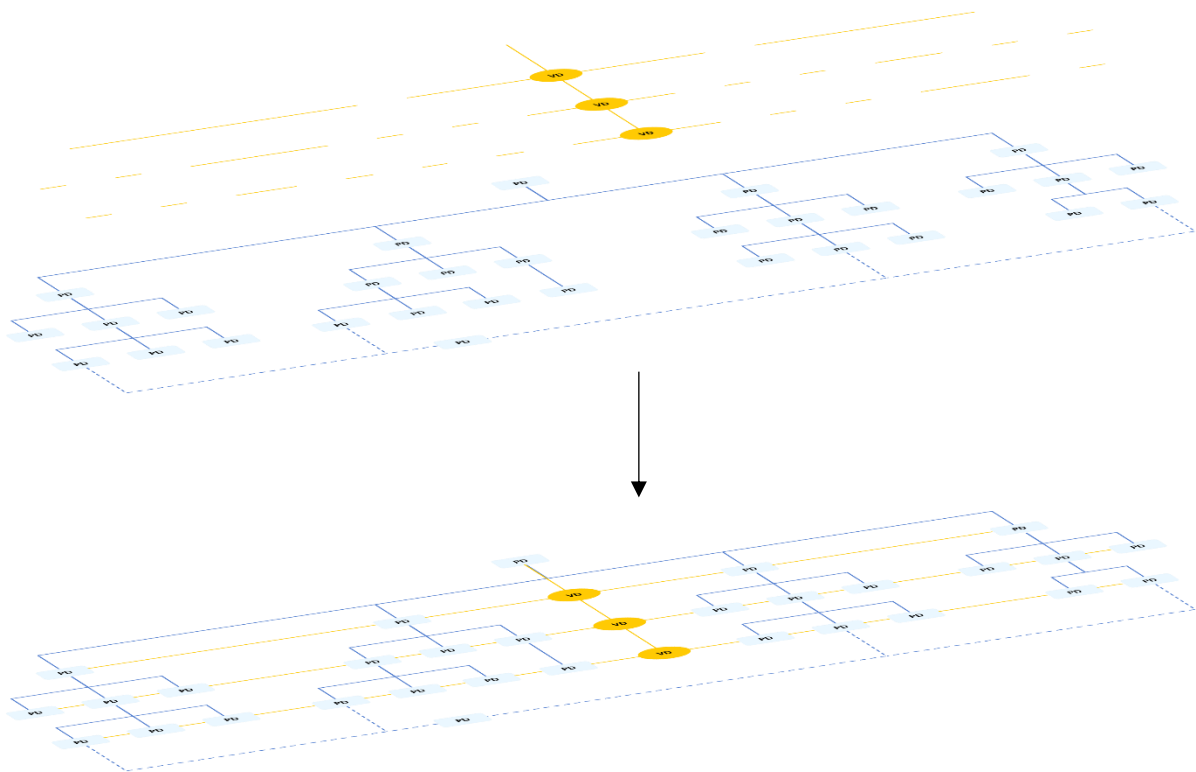


Figure 21 Virtual department layer overlaps physical department layer

5 Discussion

5.1 The working process

An organization structure and the working process are interrelated. A new organizational structure will typically result in a new process for accomplishing tasks and achieving company goals. In the duality concept model introduced above, the working process remains unchanged under the physical department setup but undergoes significant changes when virtual departments are introduced, as illustrated in Figure 22.

1. Determine tasks for the lower level: the open tasks and available resources/tools will be given from a higher level of management which collaborates with all employees at that level. The tasks will be established with specific objectives (expected results and outcome), deadlines, requirements (details of the tasks), responsibilities (individual or group work), and required competencies. If the task is a group project, each member's role should be clearly defined.
2. Deliver tasks to the lower level: after open tasks for the lower level have been identified, they can be transmitted to the lower level through the virtual link.
3. Select tasks at the lower level: employees at the same level in the organization have access to a list of open tasks, and they are free to select any task that matches their skills and interests. The tasks come with a description that includes objectives, requirements, responsibilities, and necessary skills. Additionally, there is a case study provided, which serves the purpose of evaluating the candidates' suitability for the assigned task. All candidates who have chosen the same tasks are required to complete the case study. The candidate who achieves the highest score on the case study is then designated to conduct the task. If an employee lacks a necessary skill, they can request a training program. For group tasks, employees should choose a role during the selection process.
4. Conduct tasks at the lower level: when a task needs to be done individually, the employee can begin working on it right away. However, if the task requires a group of people, they should all come together and hold brainstorming meetings before starting to work on it.
5. Submit tasks to the higher level: the completed tasks can be submitted to the higher level through the virtual link. A list will be maintained to record who did what for evaluation purposes.

6. Evaluate tasks at the higher level: the virtual department at a higher level receives the completed tasks and begins evaluating the results and outcomes. In the case of team-work, each person involved in the task will receive an individual evaluation.

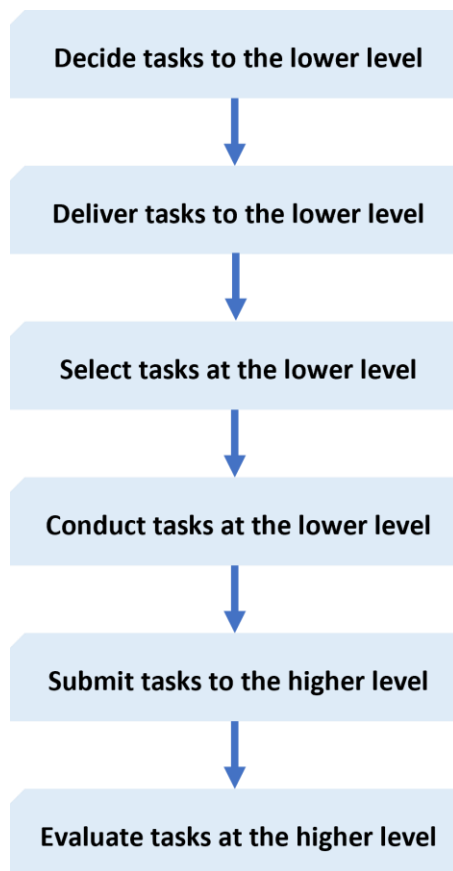


Figure 22 Tasks deliver process.

The working process for giving feedback is shown in Figure 23.

1. Collect feedback at the same level: the company can establish a frequency for gathering feedback from each level of the hierarchy. Employees can choose to provide feedback anonymously, and all feedback will be visible to employees at the same level of the hierarchy.
2. Give feedback directly to the top level: the feedback that is collected can be given directly to top management without being passed through any other higher levels.
3. Share replies from top at the same level: If there are any responses or replies from the top management regarding the feedback, they will be sent directly to the respective level, and all employees at that level will have access to view them.

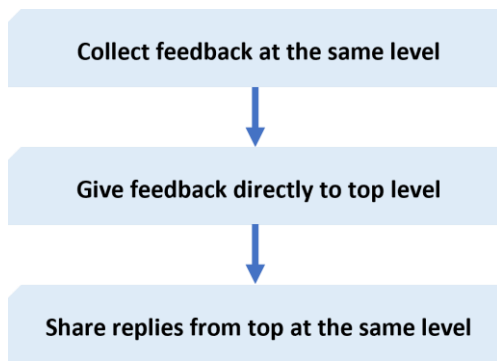


Figure 23 Feedback process

5.2 The implementation of the virtual departments

By implementing virtual departments alongside the current physical departments, the channels for employees to access information, select tasks, provide feedback to the top management, and receive equitable performance evaluations are enhanced. Introducing virtual departments in a company does not alter an organization's hierarchical structure. Instead, introducing virtual departments aims to offer additional opportunities to employees without flattening the structure. These channels can lead to increased job autonomy for employees.

The virtual departments are separate from the physical departments. The information to be shared and the tasks to be delivered through the virtual departments come from the decisions of the physical departments. As a result, the physical departments have extra responsibilities to determine which information and tasks to be assigned to the virtual departments following their implementation. Companies must establish policies specifying the nature of information and tasks to be assigned to the virtual departments. Additionally, coaching should be provided by companies to managers of the physical departments to clarify their additional responsibilities delegated to them. In addition, adjustments must be made to the current employee performance evaluation standards in the physical department settings. Furthermore, a channel for anonymous feedback from all virtual departments to the top management should be established.

5.3 The possible downside of the conceptual model

The most concern from employees and management could be whether the duality concept model will create conflicts with existing physical department settings.

The duality concept model may have several downsides:

1. **Too much flexibility:** the new duality model compared to traditional department settings is less rigid and provides more flexibility through virtual departments, allowing for easier interconnection between departments, task selection and distribution, and feedback giving. However, too much flexibility may result in demotivated employees who prefer

working within virtual departments rather than physical ones, potentially lowering the company's productivity and efficiency. The idea to introduce virtual departments is to increase the company's innovation power by giving employees more autonomy while physical departments remain responsible for efficiency and productivity. The company should consider the balance between flexibility and efficiency.

2. Too much accountability: While virtual departments offer the freedom to choose tasks, it may also create an excessive amount of accountability for employees. As employees hold positions within physical departments, they may also desire to take on tasks from virtual departments. If the desire to take on virtual department tasks is strong, employees may become overloaded with work from both virtual and physical departments. As a result, employees may prioritize tasks from virtual departments over those in physical departments, leading to a lack of motivation to take responsibility or make decisions in physical departments, ultimately blaming their workload from physical departments.

If these downsides have been predicted, are companies available to overcome them? The opinion of the author is that a company would need to vary its leadership.

5.4 Request for new leadership

In contrast to management, which is about coping with complexity, leadership is about coping with change.³⁴⁵ A leader's primary responsibility is to deal with various changes, which can be faster technological advancements, market competition, and work-force change.³⁴⁶ To do this, leaders of an organization must establish concrete goals and clear directions along with workable strategies to adapt changes from external environments.³⁴⁷ A good leader is one who can understand and adapt changes from external environments. The difficulty is not in understanding changes, but in efficiently guiding the organization to adapt to them.

The manufacturing industry is currently experiencing a major shift towards increased automation and artificial intelligence (AI), which is expected to continue in the future. However, a significant number of business executives are solely concentrating on utilizing these technologies as a substitute for human workers, without contemplating on how to combine human intelligence with these novel technologies.

The duality concept model is developed to address this issue, by recognizing that the roles and responsibilities of human workers will change in the future workplace. Therefore, it is crucial for leaders to restructure and reorganize work for human workers. The author of this thesis believes that this requires a new type of leadership and suggests that leaders should be trained in the duality concept model to effectively navigate these changes.

³⁴⁵ 'HBR's 10 must reads on leadership' 2011.

³⁴⁶ 'HBR's 10 must reads on leadership' 2011.

³⁴⁷ 'HBR's 10 must reads on leadership' 2011.

1. To put new focus on ambitious employees who are willing and capable to contribute to a company's innovation and creation. The employees who mainly spend their time on repetitive and routine work are not the focus of this new leadership.
2. To have a "manpower automation" mindset where employees work with autonomy and willingness instead of being forced. Leaders should not only focus on the efficiency and productivity brought by technology and software automation, but also on the innovation power brought by the employees' autonomous work. To increase a company's innovation power, employees should have autonomy in their work.
3. To delegate appropriate decision-making authority to employees, both in virtual and physical settings, in a way that balances their contribution to the company's innovation and productivity.
4. To have a fair system to evaluate the employee performance using the duality concept model. This system should be designed in a way that is fair and encourages employees to work on innovation projects while also keeping their productivity in mind. Additionally, a fair reward system should be put in place to recognize and appreciate employees who contribute to the company's innovation and productivity.
5. To keep learning new things and be open to different voices to help their company gain a competitive advantage in the long term. This approach also includes being receptive to feedback from employees, which can help prevent leaders from making misguided decisions.

6 Conclusion

The primary intention in this work is to design a viable organization structure model for ambitious employees. To achieve this, the researcher of this thesis starts by acknowledging that ambitious employees are crucial in obtaining a company's competitive advantages. Later, the study then examines the definition of ambitious employees and their need for autonomy. Additionally, the study investigates the most used organization structures and the level of autonomy within them.

This study focuses on gathering new information about the current level of organizational autonomy in different manufacturing companies, using semi-structured interviews as an empirical research method. The findings indicate that both external and internal factors contribute to obstacles in achieving job autonomy. Internal factors include a company's goals, strategies, organizational components, and the behavior of supervisors. Specific factors such as centralization, span of control, job design, departmentation, and supervisor behavior during performance evaluation have a significant impact on autonomy within an organization. To address these issues, a conceptual model for a practical organizational structure is proposed, which aims to address problems such as centralization, isolation resulting from departmentation, limited focus due to job specialization, and unfair evaluation by supervisors.

The author of this thesis believes that ambitious employees are the primary drivers of a company's competitive advantage. The outcome of this thesis is a conceptual model, which puts its focus on a company's ambitious employees. The focus on a company's ambitious employees highlights the significance of employees in contributing to the success of the company. The outcome of this thesis provides a new insight for other researchers and scholars who are interested in the same topic in improving employee performance to enhance a company's competitive advantage. Moreover, the outcome of this thesis can be deemed applicable in real-world scenarios, such as in manufacturing companies, to address issues related to job autonomy. Furthermore, the outcome of this thesis also suggests manufacturing companies to take actions to modify their working environment for human workers in a future workplace dominated by AI.

Throughout the process of developing a new model, the author of this thesis has learned several important skills through a systematic research approach:

1. **Research skills:** When writing a thesis, a significant amount of research is required, and this helps the researcher develop important academic research skills. These skills include defining a specific topic to focus on, searching for relevant scientific sources to support the topic, collecting fresh data through interviews, analyzing data and categorizing it for various purposes, summarizing clear results to answer research questions, and creating a meaningful conceptual model.

2. Holistic thinking skills: this thesis requires the researcher to understand the interconnectedness of various elements within one concept and the approach of problem-solving in a comprehensive manner. Through conducting this research, the researcher has improved her skills in synthesizing information from multiple sources and perspectives to develop a comprehensive understanding of a situation or problem. In addition, the author also improved her ability to consider the broader context in which a situation or problem exists, including various factors such as social, political, cultural, and economic aspects.
3. Future-focus thinking skills: the author of this thesis believes that the author has a responsibility to do something meaningful for her generation and for people who want to contribute to their companies and society. They also want to do something meaningful for themselves as well as to be proud of what they did. During the process of conducting this thesis, the author always criticizes herself, whether her thoughts are future oriented. According to the author, the actions we take now are only meaningful if we can predict future challenges well. Therefore, conducting research is essential in providing visions and solutions to adapt to future challenges.

Finally, the analysis of organization design is limited in scope and only deals with the situation of removing obstacles to job autonomy. The principles and insights presented in this thesis have potential applicability beyond the specific circumstances discussed. Considering job autonomy can be beneficial in enabling one to think about requirements more effectively. Basically, not so much on “should we remove obstacles to job autonomy?” and more like “How can we remove obstacles in the right way?”. This type of thinking can be relevant to various professional scenarios where achieving a desirable outcome requires specific actions or a combination of actions. This approach could be applicable to many professions that involve the involvement and empowerment of workers in some aspects of their job. The fact that this approach could have practical implications in professional contexts is not surprising. However, what's more intriguing is that it could also have advantages in one's personal life. When facing challenges in life, we recognize the need to overcome them and alter our circumstances, but there are often several factors that can impact those circumstances. The question is not “should we change?” but “how should we change it in the right way?” In addition, “how to change” can bring multiple different perspectives together in discussion. Through systematic discussions, it evokes the desire for truth.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Participant consent form



Participant Consent Form

This research study titled *Designing A Viable Organization Structure For Ambitious Employees, A conceptual model to advance employee performance in manufacturing companies* is built with an interview part. I voluntarily agree to participate in the interview and agree to my interview being recorded. I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated in strict confidentiality, and my answers to the interview will be used only for the purpose of the researcher's Master Thesis. My name and my organization will remain anonymous in researcher's Master Thesis.

Signature of research participant

Date

Signature of researcher

Date

Statement of Affirmation

I hereby declare that all parts of this thesis were exclusively prepared by me, without using resources other than those stated above. The thoughts taken directly or indirectly from external sources are appropriately annotated.

This thesis or parts of it were not previously submitted to any other academic institution and have not yet been published.

Dornbirn, 23.05.2023

Yi Ju,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of the characters 'Yi' and 'Ju' written in a cursive, flowing style.