Original article

DEVELOPING ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT ADJUSTMENTS IN PROJECT-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract: We found several publications on project-based organizations (PBOs) in the project management literature, but only a few deals with projects' mutual adjustment and organizational context. This research uses a qualitative methodology to develop a paradigm for organizational context–project adaptations in project-based organizations. The framework defines PBOs' activities to establish their organizational context, modify processes, and create relationships to help and support the project's needs. We used a representative sampling approach where cross-sectional, semi-structured interviews interviewed twenty-six highly experienced senior project management experts. Our findings, organized according to the blocks we used to categorize the organizational context literature: culture, strategy, structure, processes, power dynamics, state/condition, and time, provide practitioners with a background to shape their project context and academics with a basis for further theorizing.

Keywords: project-based organizations, organizational context, project needs.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the project field, we found several structures that can fulfill the organizational philosophy. This study focuses on project-based organizations (PBOs), where the project is the principal vehicle for focusing on the organization's fundamental functions in a project-based organization (PBO) (Hobday, 2000). Several academics studied some PBO aspects, like the relevance of structural traits (Lindkvist, 2004). Hobday (2000) researched various project organizations and found the more project-oriented and project-based an organization is, the more creative and adaptable it will be in responding to client needs. Several authors support it (e.g., Aubry & Lavoie-Tremblay, 2018; Eriksson & Kadefors, 2017; Gemünden & Aubry, 2017; Miterev, Mancini, & Turner, 2017). All researchers looked to describe a suitable organizational model. Müller, Drouin and

Sankaran (2019, p. 15) backed up Hobday's work, which described various project organization models and concluded: "the more project-oriented/based the organizational form, the more innovate and flexible are organizations in their response to customer requirements" (Hobday, 2000).

PBOs can't always use the proper management approaches and structures for their projects (e.g., Brady & Maylor, 2010; Miterev, Engwall, & Jerbrant, 2017) due to isomorphic processes, "a constraining process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions" (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 149).

One crucial gap we found about PBOs is how to fit them with their organizational context to respond to their project needs. That means how the organization is suited for a specific context.

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Some scholars defined context as a "concept that encompasses the entire set of conditions that make up the context of human life and functioning" (Shogren; Schalock; Luckasson, 2018,15, 101-109). The organizational context is the "background" or "actual environment" in which an organization operates, and we found it very difficult to conceptualize and inconsistent in the literature. Rousseau (1978, p. 522) defined the organizational context as "the collection of conditions or facts surrounding an occurrence... the qualities of the corporate setting, the individual, their job within the organization, and any other external aspect that may influence reactions can all be referred to as context. Awareness of the natural world requires an understanding of the organizational context. It helps us know about the organization's atmosphere or environment, history, or the variables impacting the issue. It affects the broader current concerns or problems inside a particular organizational phenomenon. In other words, context influences organizational behavior (Johns, 2006).

Management researchers have used different methodologies to conceptualize the organizational context. At a higher level of study, Cappelli and Sherer (1991) defined the organizational context as the "organizational aspects" of the individual's environment. George and Jones backed "organizational elements" in an individual's environment (1997). The organizational context is the addition of the forces at work that give the physical environment a particular personality or feel (Kitson & Michie, 1998). Later, Doolen, Hacker and Van Aken (2003) described the organizational context as the parent organization's management practices, corporate culture, and administrative systems (Doolen, Hacker, & Van Aken, 2003). Authors Wang, Kammeyer-Mueller, Liu and Li (2015) supported the definition of Johns in 2006 about the organizational context as situational opportunities and constraints.

This study aims to determine the proper context adjustment to the project needs in the PBO and that adjustment may be significant for project success. This article will address this topic by answering the question:" *How is organizational context adjusted to project needs in PBO"?*

In the following respects, this paper adds to the literature: First, we describe our findings of PBO and trace the development of several PBO approaches. Second, we develop some contingency categories that show how each PBO has a different organizational context contingent on the type of projects they manage. The article continues with a literature review, followed by the methodology section, with a subsequent section on data collection and analysis. A discussion and conclusions section will follow.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Defining PBO and project needs

PBOs differ in terms of the products and services they provide, the level of market and technical uncertainty they face, and the complexity of their organizations (Whitley, 2006). A PBO is an organization that arranges its responsibilities and selects its operational principles based on the projects it works on (AFITEP-AFNOR, 2000); however, because this definition appears limited, some scholars have attempted to expand it. There are two types of PBOs, according to Hobday (2000): first, a project-led organization, in which functional units exist but the project plays a prominent role in the organization's activities, and projects transcend beyond functional departments to influence organizational decision-making. Second, project activities are solely handled by internal and external project activities in the most severe form of project-based organization, with no functional coordination of project activities. The project's success is vital to the organization's survival.

Many authors (Choi et al., 2018; Lundin, et al., 2015) mentioned that several organizational structures require temporary systems to complete project activities in project-based organizations. It seems like a swift and adaptable response to the evolution of the primary determinants of success in a complex and uncertain environment. Midler (2019) found that the role of organizational structure focused on the firm's projectification patterns.

We found Project-based organizations in a wide range of industries. Consulting and professional services include accounting, advertising, architectural design, legal, management consulting, and public relations, to name a few. Low-cost experiments are also possible with project-based organizations, and Project-based organizations are not long-term fixed-cost resource commitments because of their short length. As a result, corporations and other organizations can use project-based organizations to start and stop various projects at a low cost and with minimal disruption to the sponsoring enterprise (DeFillippi &Arthur, 2002). Whether their core productive activity is volume-based or operations-oriented (Bouncken & Winkler, 2010), companies across industries are increasingly doing projects as part of their operations (e.g., Keegan & Turner, 2002).

According to DeFillippi and Arthur (2002), a project-based enterprise is an organization created around a project that seeks to achieve a specific goal and then disbands once the project is over, such as sporting events or film production and creation. According to Lindkvist (2004), a project-based firm focuses on projects. This company creates complex services and individual tasks according to the clientele's needs. This circumstance frequently involves cross-company collaboration, which necessitates the help and coordination of functional units. Furthermore, the actors are associated with the organization instead of being identified with the project.

According to Koskinen (2010), a project-based firm develops most products to fulfill clients' unique needs. A subsidiary of a large corporation or a group of corporations could be this type of company. Scholars, consultants, and practitioners have proposed different terminologies and definitions for PBO, including project-based organization, project-led organization, project-based firm, project-based enterprise, project-based corporation, and others (Loufrani-Fedida & Saglietto, 2016; Miterev, Mancini & Turner, 2017). According to some academics, a project-based firm has purposefully chosen to manage its work using a project, program, and project portfolio management as business processes. It considers itself a project-oriented company (Miterev, Mancini & Turner, 2017).

We follow Hobday (2000, p. 871), who summarizes from his research and backed up by Sydow and Windeler (2020) that a PBO is: *"An intrinsically innovative form as it creates and recreates new organizational structures around the demands of each Community of practices project and each major customer. The PBO can cope with emerging properties in production and respond flexibly to changing client needs. It is also effective at integrating different knowledge and skill and coping with the project risks and uncertainties common in CoPS projects."*

According to researchers, PBOs differ from project to project, depending on project needs (e.g., Shenhar, 2001). A common assumption is that a project's organizational design should match the job needs. One size does not fit everyone, so we should make a suitable option from a set of well-fitting equ-functional solutions (Shenhar, 2001).

PBO is inherently innovative because it generates and reinvents new organizational structures to meet each project's and key customer's demands (Thiry & Deguire, 2007), also supported by Di Muro, Lecoeuvre and Turner (2021). According to Miterev, Mancini, and Turner (2017), a project-based organization must also be a good fit for the necessity or desire to use project-based working methods. According to Aubry and Lavoie-Tremblay (2018), the organizational PBO design perspective is gaining momentum. Some evidence about PBO is a trend is presented by Schoper et al., 2018. Turner and Ledwith, 2018, found that PBOs are doing nonroutine work and producing sustainable benefits.

2.2. The organizational context

There are few explicit definitions of organizational context in the literature. "Situational possibilities and restrictions that affect the incidence and meaning of organizational behavior and functional linkages between variables," according to management researchers (Johns, 2006, p. 386).

The management procedures, corporate culture, and organizational systems that exist within a parent organization have been identified as the organizational context under this paradigm (Doolen, Hacker, & Van Aken, 2003):

- Management processes are the methods utilized by organizational leaders to develop and achieve organizational goals. Strategic planning, goal setting, and resource allocation are some examples of management procedures employed by most firms.
- Organizational culture refers to the values, beliefs, and behavioral standards governing employees' duties.
- Organizational systems are the methods and arrangements for human resource management that are used and supported by the overall organization.

Organizational context has three dimensions, according to Johns (2006): (1) physical context (e.g., built environment), (2) social context (e.g., interaction, information sharing), and (3) labor context (e.g., autonomy, resources).

We rely on Dee and Heineman (2016), who appears to have the most refined organizational context conceptualization. They use factors including corporate culture or climate, goals, missions, procedures (policies, method of governance), power dynamics, state/condition, structure (organizational size, shape, and type, hierarchical levels), and time.

- **Organizational culture/climate:**
  Culture refers to a developed environment (within which a situation may be embedded). As a result, it's historically grounded, communally held, and complicated enough to resist repeated direct manipulation efforts (Denison, 1996). Organizational culture refers to shared beliefs, values, and customs (Schein, 1985). Corporate culture can provide a long-term competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). Empirical study shows that communication is key to organizational effectiveness (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Denison, 1990; Gordon & Di Tomaso, 1992; Ouchi &

Jaeger, 1978; Peters &Waterman, 1982; Wilkins & Ouchi, 1983). Cultural characteristics include types of culture (e.g., bureaucratic, adaptive), norms that reflect the culture, and a cultural emphasis on ethics.

- **Strategy (goals and missions):**
  According to corporate strategy, strategy is "a plan for interacting with the competitive environment to achieve organizational goals" (Daft, 2012, p.644).
- **Structure:**
  Organizational structure is a long-term arrangement of responsibilities and tasks (Skivington & Daft, 1991). Centralization is one of the most studied dimensions (Rapert & Wren, 1998). Centralization is "the amount to which decision-making power is concentrated at the top echelons of the organization" (Caruana et al., 1998, p. 18). Except for a few studies that suggest that excessive centralization improves organizational performance (Ruekert et al., 1985). Most experts feel that a decentralized organizational structure boosts efficiency (e.g., Burns & Stalker, 1961; Dewar & Werbel, 1979; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992; Rapert & Wren, 1998; Schminke et al., 2000). Because a free flow of lateral and vertical communication is encouraged in less centralized contexts, experts on the issue had a more excellent voice in decision-making than the assigned authority (Burns & Stalker, 1961). Some organizations showed a higher level of employee satisfaction and motivation with a decentralized structure (Zheng, Yang, and McLean, 2010).
- **Processes:**
  Organizational processes include governance methods, the type(s) of technology a firm uses, HRM policies, and the degree of uniformity or perceived fairness of company procedures (Dee & Heineman, 2016).
- **Power dynamics:**
  "Power dynamics" refers to how power influences two or more individuals or groups (Looman et al.,

2021). Organizations are, therefore, required to make significant investments in implementing various changes to adapt to the changing context (Errida & Lotfi, 2021)

- **State/condition:**
  The organization's current status, division, or group is the subject of this organizational context component. It considers resource availability or scarcity, the company's financial and reputational health, and whether the unit is stable or in crisis. (Dee & Heineman, 2016).

- **Time:**
  Dee and Heineman (2016) refers to the durational elements of leadership effects or effects that vary according to the corporate life cycle stage, team developmental stage, or any other time-dependent event as this organizational context component (Dee & Heineman, 2016).

Organizational context is generally not described consistently in project management literature about which contextual dimensions address. Nilsen and Bernhardsson (2019) found the most frequently used are corporate culture and climate, organizational support, financial resources, social relations and support, and leadership.

2.3. Adjusting organizational context to project needs in PBO

Organizational context adjustment to project needs is elaborated through the lens of the embeddedness phenomenon. According to the embeddedness notion, projects are viewed as transient systems embedded in longer-term contexts. The contexts of projects and PBOs might range from organizational units to organizational fields. When academics claim that projects are embedded in an organizational context, they refer to the parent organization's structure and business procedures (Gann & Salter, 2000). Because stakeholders can breed some structures, such as rules and resources, organizations create a context based on structures, processes, and people (Bergman, Gunnarson & Räisänen, 2013). They admit that this contextual embeddedness of projects is necessary because stakeholders can breed

some structures, such as rules and resources. During this phase, stakeholders attempt to link the project to or away from its context.

Projects are likely linked to various organizational contexts (Dille & Söderlund, 2011). As a result, the project portfolio is an essential component of the PBO framework (Bergman et al., 2013). When researching and implementing PBOs, we should consider three settings: organizational units, organizations, and inter-organizational networks (Lampel, 2011). The coupling and decoupling of a project and a PBO will be required, and they will be expected to aid the organization's renewal and survival. Projects can be linked together to form project networks, which span many organizations (Windeler & Sydow, 2001). Project networks, for example, are pretty popular in the television business and are both a product and a requirement for project-based organizing. It's critical to acknowledge that hierarchies still exist in these inter-organizational networks and that they're essential for project inter-organizational cooperation.

Dahlgren and Söderlund (2001) capture this trait nicely when they look for 'hierarchy matching' in interfirm industrial ventures. Specific domains or industries that coevolve with project-based organizing can be distinguished at the level of organizational fields (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) or 'project ecologies' (Grabher, 2002). The research has established the importance of a strong link between the PBO and its organizational context (Turner, 2020). In some cases, multi-contexts apply, suggesting that the two must work together to continue to exist as organizations in the event of a change. In research efforts, different scenarios for a PBO may be uncovered. Despite this, we could not find any organizational context classification in the literature that corresponded to each PBO. Projects and the organizations they come from interacting in a circular cycle in which projects constrain and enable one another (Sydow et al., 2004, p. 1479). PBO scholars do not favor one set over another; they typically refer to a primary organizational unit that spans multiple settings as a "project."

In conclusion, we discovered that the needs of PBO projects are critical in adjusting organizational context. This paper's theoretical model (Figure 1.) depicts how each PBO must define the organizational climate/culture, strategy, structure, and processes, depending on their project needs. And it must be a dynamic process because each PBO's projects must be supported as they change.
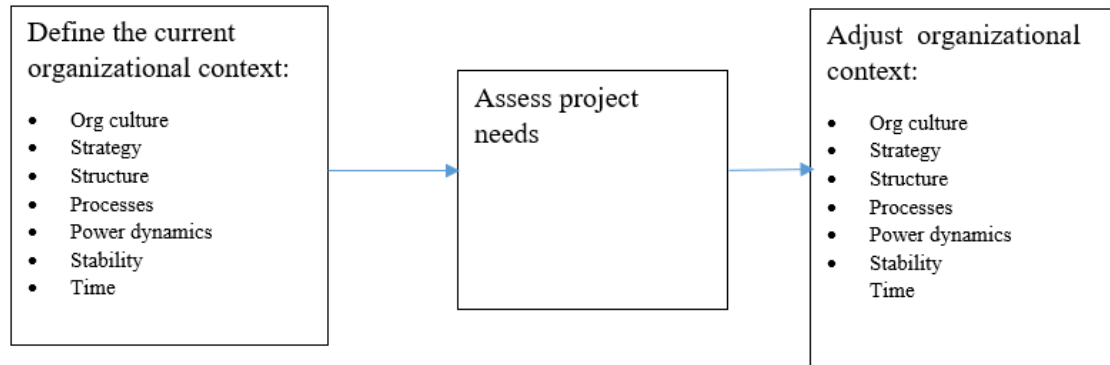
Figure 1: Theoretical Model: Organizational context adjustment

3. METHODOLOGY

We followed the procedure Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2007) outlined, which requires determining the underlying concept before deciding on techniques, strategy, and data collection methods. Critical realism is the underlying philosophical approach for this study because it identifies the adjustment between a PBO's needs and organizational context (e.g., Archer, Bhaskar, Collier, Lawson, & Norrie, 1998). We conducted twenty-six interviews with professionals using a qualitative interpretive approach by exploring the research question by interpreting the phenomenon regarding people's meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:3).

We developed our data collection instrument containing a set of interview questions (see Table 1 in the Appendix), which addressed the following areas:
- Describing PBO and project needs
- Describing organizational context
- Explaining how organizational context is adjusted depending on project needs

The first area deals with the interviewees' specific organizational behaviors and experiences while working on a PBO based on how context influences organizational behavior (Johns, 2006). This area is to understand from which perspective the interviewees shared their experiences (Project

Manager, PMO manager, Project Sponsor, Executive, or Project Management Consultant). The second area looks for information about the PBO structure, processes, and value that a PBO may add to the organization (Hobday, 2000; Vargo & Lusch, 2008), how a PBO may add value to the project manager, the PMO, the sponsor, or the management team. We also gathered processes, structure, and opinions in this set of questions. When working on a PBO, these questions elicit the interviewee's feelings and emotions (Fullan, 2002), support, flexibility, customer satisfaction, and evolution. The third area gathers the interviewees' context characteristics and PBO types to explain how organizational context is adjusted to project needs.

We dealt with ethical issues by being mindful of the sensitive nature of the interview questions and using extra caution while discussing the respondents' moral concerns. The purpose was to obtain informed consent from the interviewees by carefully explaining the study and its objectives. We also informed them that they had the right to terminate the interview at any moment, that we would not use personal information in the research, and that no published results would be traceable to companies or individuals.

Sampling

Sampling belongs to the data collection sixth onion level (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill,

2007). In this case, researchers used a representative sampling approach. Interviewees were selected based on the following criteria: role, tenure, practical experience on PBOs, international background, organization size, and country.

- *Role:* Those professionals playing different functions (e.g., PMO director, PM Consultant, PMO Manager, Senior PM Consultant, Senior Organizational Consultant, and project manager).
- *Tenure*: Those professionals with a high level of seniority as project professionals (from 20 to 54 years of experience) in the project management community and their backgrounds with PBOs.
- *Practical experience on PBOs*: Those with practical experience working on PBOs from 10 to 45 years.
- *International background*: professionals were working on PBOs for multinational firms.
- *Size of the organization*: Some small but many large multinational organizations.
- *Country*: Belgium, Spain, Panama, Italy, the UK, USA, Chile, Austria, Germany, Brazil, Kuwait, Mexico, and Egypt.

Data Collection

After a pilot test, we collected the data cross-industrial and cross-geographical to identify the most basic commonalities and differences in the data (see Figure 1).

The interviewees had many years of experience in PBOs in different industries (e.g., financial, construction, consulting services, and IT services), spanning Spain, the USA, the UK, Italy, Belgium, Chile, Panama, Brazil, Mexico, Egypt, and Kuwait. The participant roles included PMO lead, project manager, PMO Director, and Senior PM Consultant. We used semi-structured interviews, which lasted around 60 minutes on average, were transcribed verbatim, and were cross-validated. We followed up through Zoom and email when additional questions or clarification where required. The semi-structured interview is used for this study because it has proved flexible and adaptable. Galletta (2013) discovered that using this interview style fosters reciprocity between the interviewer and the participant. It allows the interviewer to improvise follow-up questions based on the participant's responses (Polit & Beck, 2010; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Semi-structured interviews necessitate some prior investigation into the research issue because the interview questions contain basic information (Cohen & Crabtree, 2008; Kelly et al., 2010; Wengraf, 2001).

Data analysis method

We began by analyzing our data to better grasp the various organizational PBO situations. Then we concentrated on the interviewees' explanations and experiences concerning their work on multiple PBOs, and then we looked at how they explained their answers in their roles. We used Miles and Huberman's criteria for data reduction, data display, deduction conclusions, and verification procedures to evaluate the interview data (1994). We read the transcripts numerous times to thoroughly understand the facts (Eisenhardt, 1989). We understood how people see the PBO context as we worked with the data. Our discoveries were made possible by the open coding of our data.

We used the following factors to ensure validity and reliability:
Reliability:
- Peers reviewed the interview guide, and we collected data from several industries and countries (USA, UK, Belgium, Italy, Panama, Spain, Chile, Brazil, Kuwait, and Mexico).
- The patterns discovered were cross-validated for accuracy.

Internal Validity:
- The theoretically constructed model, based on existing research, demonstrated concept validity.
- The data from the interviewees were converged to attain construct validity.
- We asked a selection of interviewees to review our findings and confirm our interpretation.

We confirmed the findings from the interview notes and transcripts. We used the Miles and

Huberman (1994, pp. 278–279) checklist to verify the processes' analyses and outcomes to ensure that the results were reliable. We utilized the Miles and Huberman (1994, pp. 278–279) checklist to validate the processes' analyses and outcomes to ensure that the results were reliable. We verified the results from the interview notes and transcripts.

4. FINDINGS

Our research reveals how PMO managers and senior consultants have handled PBOs in various situations. We spoke with these professionals about their work experiences and examples in PBOs. We have organized our findings according to the blocks we used to categorize the organizational context literature: *culture, strategy, structure, processes, power dynamics, state/condition, and time.*

Regarding *culture,* most interviewees stated their PBOs executives were not highly involved. Project managers needed to get the buy-in from executives through good project results and educating their managers about the need for their involvement in managing projects in the organization for project success. Most interviewees believe that the PBO is a value-based organization, which means that PBOs are oriented to obtain results, be profitable, be efficient with people, and get high customer satisfaction.

In terms of *strategy*, most interviewees believed that having a defined PBO plan is critical for organizational performance. Because change is the norm, PBO members are crucial players in developing a change management strategy. Interviewees said PBO's strategic focus is on creating value and delivering successful customer solutions. In some circumstances, they may not find a link between the PBO strategy and everyday operations actions.

All interviewees said they discovered numerous PBO contexts in terms of *structure*. They all agreed that contexts must be flexible, adaptable, and agile to respond to each organization's simple project and customer demands, threats, and issues. PBO is trying to catch up with the right content to work. All interviewees agreed that different types of

PBOs exist according to context level. According to the fifth interviewee, some interviewees claimed that their PBO built a structure before they knew what kind of project they needed, resulting in disagreements and delays.

"The most successful PBO set an objective first and assessed the organizational project needs from the type of projects they would be managing."

Another crucial aspect made by interviewees is that organizational capabilities and people competencies must be created while creating a specific setting from the top down. Because of its focus on project management development, the PBO maximizes the project manager's autonomy, according to the majority of interviewees. In conclusion, PBOs can exist depending on projects and client requirements.

Based on the interview results, we found that the *processes* of a PBO must be flexible, efficient, agile, and adjustable, depending on the project and customer requirements. Their development and recognition processes were the most critical processes for preparing individuals for new and changing efforts in various contexts. Because of their bureaucracy, most individuals in attendance felt that certain PBOs use wasteful tactics. When some inefficient activities stopped, the PBO results improved. Those processes must be modified in order for the organization to succeed.

Most interviewees said that behaviors such as collaboration, facilitation, connection building, and value-added customers become part of the daily PBO activities when implementing a specific context. Customer connection is crucial for project success and enhances customer relationships throughout the project life cycle. Those learning processes are formed, facilitated, and constrained within power dynamics. Given that power and politics have historically played a part in traditional attempts to comprehend change management issues, this situation is unsurprising.

Indeed, implementing change entails more than simply putting new knowledge into an organizational environment from its abstract form. Existing project management practices must be understood, how they connect to new

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approaches being introduced, and how new practices disrupt preexisting power dynamics inside organizations. The interviewees agreed that PBO *people* must possess the skills necessary for PBO initiatives. As the nature of projects evolves, such skills must be upgraded to meet the current project requirements. Most interviewees stated that their resources didn't always have the right skills for the projects they were in charge of, and people recognition and empowerment were found to be a must.

In terms of *state/condition,* all interviewees' opinions talked about different requirements for each organization. We found different PBOs' levels (organizational, unit, and inter-organizational). Most of them had a scarcity of resources initially; some of them were stable in business, while others were not and tried to generate more business by adding value to their customers to be more stable.

Regarding *time*, most interviewees stated that the duration of leadership effects in the organizational context varied from context to context, according to the level of team development and the type of management leadership. PBOs must transform the company by changing the organizational context to meet project requirements.

We identified three stages derived from the interview findings that may contribute to determining how organizational context is adjusted:
1. Defining the current organizational context
2. Assessing project needs
3. Adjust the organizational context

4.1 Defining the current organizational context

The interviewees have mentioned that their PBOs look for the right *culture, strategy, structure, processes, and people* with the qualifications needed to manage and support their projects.

Culture:
According to most interviewees, attributes like freedom, flexibility, openness, teamwork, critical thinking, collaboration, and team mindset shape their PBOs culture. Professionals with good energy levels, people excited, trusting and supporting each other, learning from each other, and being productive. Most of the interviewees felt supported in their PBO roles by their organization. People feel recognized and empowered. PBO is recognized as an added-value organization. The absence of a relationship between the daily activities and the PBO strategy seems familiar. In most cases, we deducted from our interviewees that the changing mindset was part of their culture. Power and politics were present in all the responses from the interviewees to comprehend change management challenges.

Strategy:
The interviewees' opinion about PBO's strategic focus is on creating value and delivering successful customer solutions. They said that openness (increasing maturity, commitment, and obtaining good results) was part of their strategy. PBOs must-have professionals with different know-how to contribute to achieving business goals. However, we identified cases where a PBO was established without a clear strategy. We found some strategic parameters that should be considered vital in a PBO: focus on employees, customer value, creating value, and knowledge management.

Structure:
Regarding structure, our approach based on most interviewees' responses is that the organizational context must respond to each organization's simple project and customer demands, threats, and issues. Upper management support is crucial. Solving organizational inefficiencies, threats, and challenges

Processes:
All the interviewees' responses said that the PBO needs to respond to project needs in terms of processes. Hence, our approach is that the PBO needs to define flexible, adaptable, and agile processes aligned to their project needs.

People:
Most interviewees emphasized the importance of people-related aspects, as described further. As one of the participants says:
"*Project management hard and soft skills like communication, collaboration, facilitation,*

recognition, empowerment, and executive support need to be developed to create a context where our projects are successful."

Organizations require skilled project managers with the essential hard and soft skills to manage their projects and ensure success. On the other hand, project managers must improve their hard and soft skills in the PBO. Upper management should assist project managers and their teams by fostering an environment that encourages communication, collaboration, facilitation, recognition, and empowerment. The need for strong leadership skills arose during the interviews on several occasions. We got comments like: *"Strong leadership is needed to inspire the organization from executives to down in the organization to create the right context for success."*

A strong sense of moral purpose, a clear understanding of change dynamics, academic and emotional intelligence, the capacity to connect with people, and a dedication to generating and sharing new ideas and knowledge are all characteristics of good leadership.

4.2 Assessing project needs

According to the interviews, the first common comment from all professionals interviewed was that the organization needed to assess the project needs to develop a proper organizational context.
From our perspective, the project's requirements must determine the proper organizational framework. Because each project is unique and has its own features, it requires the backing of the appropriate organization. The associated organization evaluates the project types to be managed and determines their organizational capabilities (processes, resources, tools).

Talking about project needs is mainly related to customer demands. I7 interviewee stated: *"I need to satisfy my customer in terms of achieving customer expectations, but it would be better if the customer tells me that they want to work with me on the next project."*

As a result, creating trusting connections between PBOs and clients is critical for the

project and organizational success. Throughout the project life cycle, value is created with clients (Kerzner, 2019), beginning with an agreement on the benefits of collaborating. From the interviews, we found that a trusted relationship between the PBO and the customer is necessary for the project and organizational success. The importance of creating value also appeared in the comments of the majority of the interviewees:
"We can create value through interactively discussing with the customer during the whole project life cycle." (I8). *"The PBO needs to convince the customer about the benefits of working together."* (I10)

All interviewees agree that the PBO must expand its capabilities to achieve value and customer satisfaction. That is, better connections may be developed by exercising collaboration, competence development, and agility. In conclusion, a PBO context should be adjusted to project needs in PBO processes, resources, tools, and outcomes. PBOs must create an organizational context in which customer connection, engagement, and support drive positive results and the growth of future business partnerships.

4.3 Adjust organizational context

According to project needs, PBOs must adjust their *culture, strategy, structure, processes, and people* with the qualifications to manage and support their projects.

Culture:
Moreover, several interviewees stated, *"The PBO needs to focus on value."* When we asked them to define value, the majority said it was a balance between achieving benefits and objectives, so we propose that a value-added culture needs to be created in the PBO from top to bottom in the organization.

Strategy:
Most interviewees notice that strategic goals are typically related to financial KPIs, e.g., *"Finance is a driver for a successful PBO."* Another takeaway from the interviews is that one way for a PBO to progress is to add value by adjusting project organizational processes. As a result, financial processes in the PBO must be linked with financial goals and

restrictions. PBOs are formed to obtain benefits and outcomes by managing successful projects and establishing more stable commercial partnerships. Financial PBO objectives must be included because they were identified as a PBO driver during the interviews. Those procedures must be in sync with the organization's goals and the increasing uncertainty and complexity, knowledge exchange, and PBO evolution.

Structure:
PBOs generate bureaucracy for project managers by establishing generic procedures, and it overburdens them and adds no value. First and foremost, we must cease those operations that do not now offer value to the firm. Interviewee 6 gave the following example: "Stopping doing some project reports in which frequency and content were not adding value *for the organization."* According to the interviewees, Changing organizational processes necessitates PBOs defining contingency processes and utilizing organizational support, competence development, and people recognition to minimize inefficiencies and address threats and difficulties.

Processes:
The PBOs' context, in our opinion, should adapt their organizational processes or activities and convert them into single, simple processes or tasks that are easy to utilize and more efficient for the company. According to numerous interviewees: "*Some processes for competence development need to exist and be the foundation to develop the professional competencies needed to deal with the PBO evolution and changes.*"
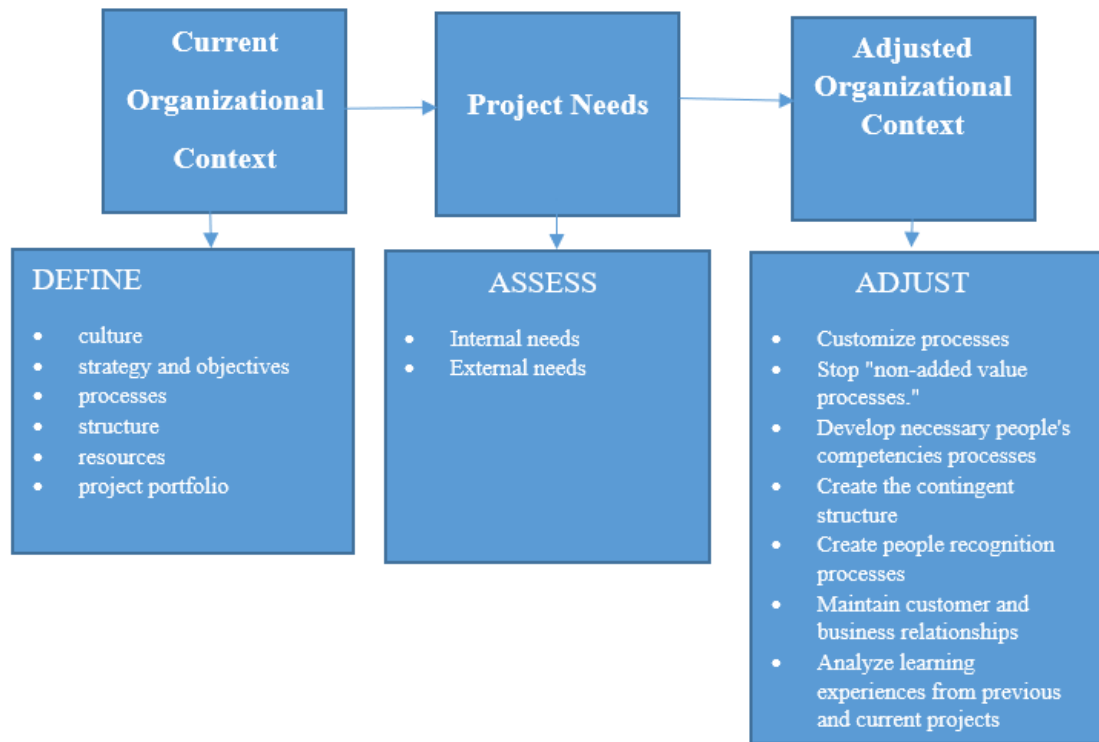
People:
Acknowledging people's efforts may boost their motivation. According to the seventh interviewee: *"People recognition was considered crucial because it increases people's motivation. "We believe a culture of facilitation, collaboration, and team mindset must be created.*

PBO is a value-based organization, and freedom, flexibility, openness, critical thinking, change management, and team mindset shape the PBO. Executives are not highly involved in creating a PBO but become more engaged as they perceive results and value (*culture findings*). Creating value and delivering successful solutions need to be part of the PBO and adjusting organizational processes to financial goals and restrictions is necessary. A PBO strategic plan is critical for organizational success (*strategy findings*). We found different PBO structures according to the context level. Characteristics like flexibility, adaptability, and agility must be embedded in the structure, responding to each organization's simple project and customer demands (*structure findings*). According to project needs, PBO processes must be flexible, adaptable, and agile. Successful PBOs stop processes that do not add value to the organization (*processes findings*). Human, organizational and soft skills must be developed, and people recognition from management usually increases people's motivation in a PBO (*people findings*).

5. DISCUSSION

The research question was *how is organizational context adjusted to project needs in PBO"?*. Figure 2 depicts a process model based on our findings. A three-stage method is proposed in our approach (see Figure 2 below). The *first stage* begins with *defining the current organizational context*. In the *second stage*, the PBO should *assess project needs.* The project requirements should then be assessed to create an organizational profile, and this profile should comprise the essential needs and traits for managing a project portfolio. Previous research backs up our findings from the interviews (e.g., Hobday, 2000). In the *third stage*, PBOs adjust the organizational context based on the project needs by creating contingent processes and structures to achieve their needs (Hobday, 1998).

Figure 2: Context framework

We will use the blocks of *culture, strategy, structure, processes, and people* to discuss our findings through our proposed three-stage method.

5.1 Culture

When *defining the organizational context,* most interviewees said management involvement was low, mainly when the PBO was created, and dynamic capabilities were required in the organization. Our approach is that project management knowledge and awareness should be developed from the beginning of the PBO creation. We propose that several partial contexts may arise because each context should be contingent on its PBO. Several studies show that a defined PBO approach that can adjust to changing conditions is essential for PBO success (e.g., Turner, 2018). The literature supports the need for dynamic capabilities in the PBO (Choi et al., 2018). Nilsen and Bernhardsson (2019) found that one of the most frequently used organizational context dimensions is organizational culture and climate.

According to Gareis and Huemann's (2007) research, project-oriented organizations adopt a project management culture by training their

members with the necessary abilities to deal with uncertainty, conflict, change, and teamwork. Authors Miterev, Mancini and Turner (2017) stated that functional managers may be unwilling to adopt a project culture in particular instances, and the functional hierarchy can provide coherence and culture. Projects, as transient organizations, are unable to provide the organization with cohesion and culture. Because they are just temporary, they hinder organizational cohesion and cannot establish their culture. The functional organization must provide cohesion and culture. It must, however, understand that project and program management are the most critical business operations and must adopt a culture that supports them. The ability of a functional organization to do so is referred to as "projectivity" (Turner, 2014). In traditional attempts to comprehend change management difficulties, power and politics have long played a role (Pettigrew, 1972; Pettigrew & Whipp, 1993).

The interviewees found a culture of openness, facilitation, collaboration, and communication when assessing project needs in several PBOs. It has been supported in the literature, and empirical research shows that it is an important component of organizational performance

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(Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Denison, 1990; Gordon & Di Tomaso, 1992; Ouchi & Jaeger, 1978; Peters &Waterman, 1982; Wilkins & Ouchi, 1983).

We must *adjust the organizational context,* which means creating and developing an open culture of collaboration with a team mindset, flexible and agile-creating the appropriate contingent context according to the project needs. Organizational culture is a source of long-term competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). Empirical research demonstrates a critical component in organizational effectiveness (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Denison, 1990; Gordon & Di Tomaso, 1992; Ouchi & Jaeger, 1978; Peters &Waterman, 1982; Wilkins & Ouchi, 1983).

5.2 Strategy

When *defining organizational context,* we identified that the PBO's strategic focus must be on creating customer value and delivering successful customer solutions. Strong leadership is defined by a strong sense of moral purpose, a clear understanding of the dynamics of change, academic and emotional intelligence, the ability to connect with people, demonstrating a commitment to developing and sharing new ideas and knowledge, and the ability to remain coherent in the face of chaos (Hilliard, 2010). We found that customer focus must be the main strategy when assessing project needs. That means maintaining customer and business relationships, interacting with the customer in the whole project life cycle, identifying needs and changes, and then asking for customer feedback during the entire project life cycle. The organizational strategy has long been a hot topic in the strategy literature, and it is inextricably tied to organizational success (Rapert, Lynch, & Suter, 1996; Smith et al., 1986).

Adjusting the organizational context here means trusting PBO people and the customer is necessary for the project and organizational success. Interaction between PBO people and customers is a key strategy to satisfy customer project demands. According to organizational strategy, strategy is described as "a plan for interacting with the competitive environment to achieve organizational goals" (Daft, 2012, p.644). The strategy focus was also supported by Nilsen and Bernhardsson (2019).

5.3 Structure

When *defining organizational context,* we found numerous PBO contexts that must be flexible, adaptable, and agile to respond to project demands in organizations. Most experts feel that a decentralized organizational structure boosts efficiency (Burns & Stalker, 1961; Dewar & Werbel, 1979; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992; Rapert & Wren, 1998; Schminke et al., 2000).

We found that the context must be based on project needs by assessing project needs. PBOs may have various organizational contexts; most experts agree that a decentralized organizational structure promotes organizational effectiveness (Burns & Stalker, 1961; Dewar & Werbel, 1979; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992; Rapert & Wren, 1998; Schminke et al., 2000).

Adjusting the organizational context means creating a flexible structure contingent on project needs regarding people, roles and responsibilities, authority, and power. Most experts agree that a decentralized organizational structure promotes organizational effectiveness (Burns & Stalker, 1961; Dewar & Werbel, 1979; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992; Rapert & Wren, 1998; Schminke et al., 2000; Nilsen and Bernhardsson (2019).

5.4 Processes

When defining organizational context, PBOs must define adaptable and flexible processes to meet their project requirements. As a result, the customer relationship is finally maintained and sustained. The PBO literature promotes efficient, versatile, and flexible processes (e.g., Bakker, 2010). It also demands its inculcation in shared understandings, norms, and values and its incorporation into systematic routines and working practices (Goussevskaia, Scarbrough, Swan & Bresnen, 2006). It was also supported by other academics (e.g., Clark & Staunton, 1989; Blackler, 1995). Their development and recognition processes were

the most critical processes for preparing individuals for new and changing efforts in various contexts. The PBO literature also backs it up (e.g., Bergman et al., 2013).

When *assessing project needs,* flexible, adaptable, efficient, and agile processes are needed for a successful PBO. Organizational processes include governance methods, the type(s) of technology a firm uses, HRM policies, and the degree of uniformity or perceived fairness of company procedures (Dee & Heineman, 2016). *Adjusting the organizational context* means defining customized processes that stop "non-added value processes." Developing necessary people's competencies processes and creating people recognition processes. The degree of standardization or perceived fairness of organizational procedures is an example of organizational processes (Dee & Heineman, 2016).

5.5 People

When *defining organizational context,* we found a scarcity of resources, supported by the literature by Dee and Heineman (2016). Between 1993 and 2001, six conceptual essays were produced, each of which featured a discussion of the organization's state or situation (Bess & Goldman, 2001; Boal & Hooijberg, 2000; Choi & Mai-Dalton, 1998; Eggleston & Bhagat, 1993; Hunt & Ropo, 1995). And people must possess the necessary skills for PBO initiatives. We found that not all PBO people have the right skills to manage their projects.

Some researchers looked into the long-term consequences of transformational leadership (Avolio & Bass, 1995). They predicted that transformational leaders' individualized consideration behaviors would become institutionalized as group normative behaviors and ultimately institutionalized cultural norms. Other researchers investigated how time influences a leader's behavior in the workplace (Hunt & Ropo,1995). The latter two were concerned with determining the impact of a leader's current behavior on their future behavior choices. According to Hackman & Wageman (2005), leadership is described as coaching behaviors, and there are three types

of coaching behaviors, each of which is successful at a particular point in a team's life cycle.

According to Nilsen and Bernhardsson (2019), leadership is an important organizational context dimension.

We detected that current people skills are not required to manage PBO projects when assessing project needs, which means that PBO professionals are not equipped with the right skills. "Power dynamics" refers to how power influences two or more individuals or groups (Looman et al., 2021).

Adjusting the organizational context regarding people means shaping the appropriate organizational context. This stage will be dynamic due to the potential changes in the PBOs' project profiles, and this stage's output will be the different organizational context that matches each PBO type.

This stage validates the PBOs customers' satisfaction with their project results. PBOs must build, sustain, and maintain business connections with their clients to serve them by reaching their goals and ensuring customer happiness, as well as learning from existing projects and applying what they've learned to future projects (e.g., Tikkanen et al., 2007). Customer engagement is critical to project success and improves customer connections throughout the project life cycle. It is also supported by research (e.g., Hobday, 2000, p.87).

In the following respects, our research adds to the current body of knowledge. We constructed a three-stage model of activities to accommodate contexts and PBOs, as illustrated in Figure 2. According to our results, PBOs advance from stage 1 to stage 2, based on the organizational context assessment. In stage 2, PBOs must assess their project needs, competencies, and recognition to manage projects successfully. Finally, PBOs must adjust their organizational context by creating the contingent context, creating and sustaining customer relationships, and leveraging consumer contact and feedback to improve project outcomes. Changes in PBOs, which result in organizational context change, are

highlighted in our model. It is based on PBO dynamics and can be altered (e.g., Shenhar, 2001).

6. CONCLUSIONS

By establishing the organizational context framework of PBOs (figure 2), we could better understand how organizational context is adjusted to project needs in a PBO. The first step in defining the current organizational context is crucial because it allows businesses to examine their current PBO situation and construct the appropriate processes and structure to create the right environment. Organizations that do not define a particular PBO type are bound to their existing structure and cannot engage in open-minded improvement. We show that if PBOs have time and space to creatively adapt their procedures and structure to achieve positive client outcomes, they can learn to appreciate new work in contexts that match their projects' demands. The three-stage paradigm adds to our understanding of creating an adequate context for PBOs.

To answer the research question, we interpreted that the organizational context may change from organization to organization based on their project needs. Each PBO must create the corresponding contingent processes and structure depending on each context level's project portfolio. And it needs to be a dynamic process because each PBO change needs to support their projects. Then we can say that *many* organizational context categories for PBOs may exist, such as project or project portfolio types.

6.1 Implications

Practical implications are that our study explains how managers can facilitate required organizational context changes aligned with PBO project needs. Because professional and organizational standards must regulate professional activity, the interaction between organizational managers and project managers will always be complex. On the other hand, managers can help by setting the stage and creating the conditions for a better context to emerge. Some examples are developing project management competencies and professional

recognition, providing encouragement and time for project professionals, and pushing them to improve their project management skills.

Our findings also reveal how PBOs can respond positively to process and structural redesigns and other adjustments made to suit specific organizational environments to their corresponding PBO. Project managers should take an active role in managing PBO projects and learning firsthand how they and their clients are affected. Project managers must refrain from passing judgment on anomalies and set aside their long-held beliefs about what their PBOs should do to help their projects and earn more revenue.

Theoretical implications include the advancement of understanding regarding PBOs' ability to respond to the demands and changes of their projects, mainly when those changes are caused by circumstances beyond their control, such as imposed project redesign or organizational reorganization. As with all qualitative studies, we can't say how generalizable our findings will be; however, we recommend that more case studies and quantitative research confirm the results.

6.2 Limitations

Study limitations. The large sample, which does not allow for industry or geography-specific conclusions, is one of the study's flaws. Furthermore, the small sample size of twenty-six interviews necessitates further research, even though the experts chosen were thought leaders in project management with high degrees of seniority. We believe that our study will encourage practitioners to use the findings in their organizations and academics to research the area of contingencies further.

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Appendix
Table 1: Interview Guide

Type of Question	Questions
1. Organizational context	1. From which perspective are you sharing your experiences as a PM, PMO, Sponsor, executive, or Consultant? 2. What experiences did you have in PBOs? 3. You know that the organization's characteristics and the individual and his role inside the organization or any other environmental factor determine its organizational context. In which type of context do you live your PBO experiences? 4. From an organizational perspective, which roles or functions did you find in PBOs? 5. What type of behaviors did you observe in PBOs in the different roles?
2. PBO Structure, processes, and value-added	1. How do you think a PBO may add value to a company? 2. How do you think a PBO may add value to the Project Manager, the PMO, the Sponsor, or the management team? 3. What are the things you believe are not adding value to a PBO? 4. What is your opinion about the PBOs organizing their structures, strategies, and capabilities around projects' needs? 5. Regarding processes, what is your opinion of the characteristics of the PBO processes? 6. Which project parameters may be likely used to shape the structures and business processes of PBOs?
3. PBO Support and flexibility	1. What do you feel when working in a PBO? 2. Did you feel well-supported in your role? 3. How flexible or rigid was your PBO? 4. How would you evaluate customer satisfaction in the PBO? 5. What is your experience in the PBO evolution?
4. Context and PBO types	1. Please share some facts that were significant for you in the PBO 2. To your knowledge, do you consider only one type of PBO or many according to the project needs? 3. When organizations create contexts, are they based on structure, processes, people, and others? 4. What type of services were provided in your PBO? 5. How was your PBO supporting changes? 6. What different contexts are you able to identify in a PBO?