



**SELINUS UNIVERSITY**  
BUSINESS SCHOOL

**THE EFFECTS OF ORGANIZATIONAL  
HIERARCHIES ON ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP**

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## **DECLARATION**

I hereby attest that I am the sole author of this thesis and that its contents are only the result of the readings and research I have conducted.

Garrick Thomas

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I would like to extend my appreciation to Selinus University for the opportunity to develop this dissertation. As a process-focused professional, the inter-dynamic, if not dichotomous, nature of leadership and hierarchies has been a true fascination since the earliest years of my career. I have been intimately involved in the best and worst situations that can be offered in private, public, military and government organizations. Thus, this doctoral research in many ways represents a key milestone in my journey toward furthering my research interest in this topic.

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Most of all, I dedicate my doctoral research to my wife. She remains my eternal partner, a source of strength and above all, never lets me forget that dreams are worth chasing.

## **ABSTRACT**

In today's dynamic and unpredictable business environment, organizations increasingly recognize the importance of adaptive leadership in effectively navigating complex challenges. Adaptive leadership emphasizes flexibility, agility, and the ability to respond effectively to changing circumstances. Organizations have changed their respective hierarchies to support the benefits of adaptive leadership. However, it is crucial to take a practical approach and question whether hierarchical structures in personnel or systems are constructed to facilitate or hinder adaptation.

This dissertation explores the interplay between organizational structures and leadership abilities in enabling adaptive leadership. This research will examine how hierarchical structures are designed to support adaptation rather than impede it by conducting a comprehensive review of literature and studies on organizational approaches to leadership. While acknowledging the potential flaws within hierarchical structures that hinder adaptive leadership, it is essential to consider that a sole examination of the hierarchy in isolation would limit our understanding of how to enable adaptive leadership.

The findings of this research highlight that an organization's ability to deploy adaptive leadership is contingent on the individuals expected to lead rather than solely relying on the structure by which they operate. While organizational hierarchies play a crucial role in ensuring the right people with the necessary abilities are in the right positions to meet operational needs, they do not determine the success or failure of adaptive leadership on their own. Instead, the focus should be on nurturing and developing the leadership abilities of individuals within these structures.

To comprehensively investigate this phenomenon, a mixed-methods research approach will be employed. The quantitative phase will involve surveying a diverse sample of studies looking at organizations across various industries to gather data on their hierarchical structures and leadership development programs. The findings presented in those works will be reviewed for unique patterns of organizational actions, to include patterns that also indicate an absence of actions, and to identify

potential correlations and relationships between hierarchical structures, leadership abilities, and adaptive leadership.

A research phase involving in-depth interviews and focus group discussions was discounted for two reasons: existing research, if aggregated, represented a sufficient data sample for this dissertation, and interviews on this topic would need to address both hierarchy and leadership, and the creation, data acquisition, and data assessment would exceed the duration of this research effort.

The anticipated contribution of this research lies in providing a holistic understanding of the factors influencing adaptive leadership within organizations. This study will offer valuable insights for organizational leaders and practitioners seeking to foster adaptive leadership by recognizing the importance of organizational structures and leadership abilities. Furthermore, the findings will inform the development of strategies and interventions to promote adaptive leadership skills, create a culture of agility, and effectively utilize existing hierarchical structures to drive adaptive organizational practices.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background and Significance of Adaptive Leadership

In today's rapidly changing and complex business environment, the concept of leadership has undergone a significant transformation. Traditional models of leadership, which were based on hierarchical structures and top-down decision-making, are no longer sufficient to navigate the challenges posed by globalization, technological advancements, and economic uncertainties (Yukl, 2013). In this context, adaptive leadership has emerged as a critical concept that recognizes the need for leaders to possess the capacity to adapt, innovate, and guide organizations through ambiguity, change, and disruption.

Adaptive leadership refers to a set of capabilities and behaviours that enable leaders to respond effectively to the dynamic and unpredictable nature of the modern business landscape (Northouse, 2018). Unlike conventional leadership approaches that focus on stability and maintaining the status quo, adaptive leadership emphasizes flexibility, agility, and the ability to mobilize and engage individuals and teams to address complex problems and seize new opportunities (Northouse, 2018). It requires leaders to navigate the tension between maintaining organizational order and fostering adaptability and resilience.

The significance of adaptive leadership lies in its potential to drive organizational success and long-term sustainability. Research has shown that adaptive leaders are better equipped to anticipate and respond to emerging challenges, promote a culture of innovation and learning, and inspire organizational agility (Hitt et al., 2015). They empower employees to embrace change, experiment with new ideas, and take calculated risks (Dignan, 2019). Adaptive leaders foster a climate of adaptability, enabling organizations to thrive amidst uncertainty, achieve strategic objectives, and gain a competitive edge in a rapidly evolving business landscape (Hitt et al., 2015).

However, despite the growing recognition of adaptive leadership's importance, there remains a gap in understanding the nuances and practical implications of this leadership approach, particularly in hierarchical organizational structures. Many organizations need help to strike a balance between the need for adaptability and the existing hierarchical systems that often prioritize control and stability.

This dissertation aims to bridge this gap by exploring the role of hierarchy in adaptive leadership, identifying strategies for leaders to navigate this tension effectively, and examining the organizational factors and leadership behaviours that foster adaptive outcomes. By shedding light on these dynamics, this research will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on adaptive leadership and provide valuable insights for organizations and leaders seeking to embrace adaptive practices and drive sustainable success in today's dynamic business environment.

## 1.2 Research Objectives and Questions

This dissertation aims to comprehensively analyze the relationship between organizational hierarchies and adaptive leadership. Specifically, this dissertation seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the impact of organizational hierarchies on the effectiveness of adaptive leadership?
2. How do organizational hierarchies affect the ability of leaders to implement adaptive strategies?
3. What strategies can be used to mitigate the negative impact of organizational hierarchies on adaptive leadership?

This dissertation examines the relationship between leadership and hierarchy in adaptive leadership, focusing on how hierarchies affect the ability of leaders to adapt and apply dynamic approaches to solve changes in their underlying triad of leaders, stakeholders, and conditions. This study examines multiple studies on the functional approach to understanding leadership structures and processes, in addition to organizational adaptation, leadership development, and the influence

of the hierarchical level on managerial roles. This research will also explore goal orientation, organizational learning, and current work on a unified leadership theory.

### 1.3 Overview of the Dissertation Structure

This dissertation aims to explore the intricate relationship between leadership, hierarchy, and adaptive approaches within organizations. The research delves into leaders' critical role in navigating uncertainty and change, particularly during disruption and crisis. By examining various perspectives and empirical studies, this dissertation seeks to shed light on the distinct concepts of transformational leadership and adaptive leadership and their interplay with organizational hierarchy dynamics.

The dissertation begins with an introduction that emphasizes the significance of leadership in achieving organizational goals and highlights the increasing importance of adaptive leadership in today's rapidly changing business environment. It argues that leadership and hierarchy dynamics are often overlooked in discussions within the commercial literature, calling for a deeper exploration of these dynamics. Moreover, it will examine the implications of organizational hierarchies and how they influence leaders' attempts to apply adaptive techniques.

The subsequent chapter provides a comprehensive review of the existing literature on leadership structures and processes. Drawing on the functional approach proposed by Morgeson, DeRue, and Karam, the chapter explores the impact of hierarchy on leadership adaptability and problem-solving approaches. It examines how organizational hierarchy, including personnel ranking and practices, policies, and procedures, can act as a facilitator or hindrance to adaptive leadership.

The following chapters focus on specific aspects of the relationship between leadership, hierarchy, and adaptation. The first chapter examines the influence of hierarchy on leadership development programs, drawing insights from Harrison's research. It investigates how the hierarchical structure affects the design, implementation, and effectiveness of leadership

development initiatives and highlights the barriers that hierarchy can create for learning and development.

The subsequent chapter explores Chadwick and Raver's work on goal orientation and organizational learning to understand how hierarchy influences employees' goal-setting behaviors. The chapter discusses how the hierarchical structure shapes goal orientation, potentially limiting creativity and innovation within the organization.

The dissertation also incorporates Paolillo's research on the influence of hierarchical levels on managerial roles. This chapter explores how different hierarchical levels demand distinct leadership styles for optimal performance. It investigates the effectiveness of strategic leadership at the top level, focusing on vision and strategy formulation, and operational leadership at lower levels, emphasizing execution and implementation.

Additionally, the dissertation integrates perspectives from prominent leadership scholars such as Kenichi Ohmae, Goffee, and Alex Alexander. These perspectives provide valuable insights into unified theories of leadership, the importance of authenticity, and the rule of three in leadership dynamics.

By examining these various dimensions and perspectives, this dissertation aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on leadership and hierarchy dynamics in adaptive contexts. It seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how we should understand the influence of hierarchy on leadership adaptability, development, goal orientation, and managerial effectiveness. The findings of this research will inform practitioners and scholars alike, offering valuable insights into effective leadership practices and the need to consider the interplay between leadership, hierarchy, and adaptation in organizational settings.

Overall, this dissertation presents a structured approach to investigating the complex relationship between leadership, hierarchy, and adaptive approaches. It establishes a framework for analyzing the distinct concepts of transformational and adaptive leadership, highlighting the

importance of differentiating these concepts within the literature. Through rigorous analysis and synthesis of existing research, this study aims to advance our understanding of leadership dynamics and contribute to the field of organizational leadership.

#### 1.4 Literature Gaps and Research Contribution

While the existing literature acknowledges the importance of leadership in organizational success, there is a notable gap in understanding the intricate relationship between leadership, hierarchy, and adaptive approaches. The commercial literature often overlooks the dynamics of hierarchy and its impact on leadership adaptability, hindering a comprehensive understanding of how leaders navigate uncertainty and change.

One significant literature gap is the lack of a clear distinction between transformational and adaptive leadership. Although both concepts have garnered considerable attention in leadership research, their differentiation, and unique implications within the context of hierarchy dynamics have not been adequately explored. This dissertation seeks to address this gap by providing a nuanced understanding of how transformational and adaptive leadership differ and how hierarchical structures influence them.

Furthermore, the literature lacks comprehensive studies that examine the specific effects of hierarchy on leadership development programs and the subsequent impact on organizational learning. While leadership development programs are widely implemented, their effectiveness is often compromised by the hierarchical structure within organizations. This dissertation aims to bridge this gap by exploring the barriers and opportunities hierarchy presents for leadership development initiatives and shedding light on how organizations can design effective programs that align with hierarchical dynamics.

Another literature gap pertains to the influence of hierarchy on employees' goal orientation. While goal setting is crucial to individual and organizational performance, the hierarchical structure may shape employees' goal-setting behaviors. The existing literature offers limited

insights into how hierarchy influences the types of goals set by employees and how this affects creativity, innovation, and the ability to challenge the status quo. This dissertation aims to contribute to this gap by investigating the relationship between hierarchy, goal orientation, and organizational learning. It provides a deeper understanding of how hierarchy impacts goal setting and its implications for adaptive leadership.

Additionally, the research on leadership effectiveness at different hierarchical levels is relatively limited. Although studies have examined leadership effectiveness in various contexts, there is a need for more focused investigations into the specific leadership styles that are effective at different hierarchical levels. This dissertation seeks to fill this gap by examining leaders' unique demands and challenges at different levels within the hierarchy, providing insights into the optimal leadership styles for strategic visioning and execution.

Overall, this dissertation contributes to the existing literature by addressing the gaps in understanding leadership dynamics and hierarchy within adaptive contexts. By differentiating transformational and adaptive leadership, exploring the impact of hierarchy on leadership development and goal orientation, and investigating effective leadership styles at different hierarchical levels, this research provides valuable insights into how leaders can navigate complexity, drive organizational adaptation, and leverage hierarchical structures for improved performance.

Through its comprehensive analysis and synthesis of existing research and incorporation of multiple perspectives, this dissertation aims to advance the field of organizational leadership by offering a deeper understanding of the interplay between leadership, hierarchy, and adaptation. The findings of this research will contribute to the development of evidence-based practices for leadership development and inform organizational strategies for creating adaptive and effective leadership structures.

## 1.5 Chapter Summary

This dissertation explores and analyses the complexities and distinctions between hierarchical structures and their effects on adaptive leadership. Leadership studies have witnessed considerable interest in understanding and examining these two leadership approaches. While organizational structure design and adaptive leadership have gained recognition for their potential to drive organizational success, particularly in the areas of resilience and change management, research on the two elements has traditionally remained distinct. It has provided minimal critique on assessing to what extent they affect each other.

The introductory chapter provided an overview of the research topic, presented the rationale for the study, and outlined the objectives and research questions that guide this investigation. Additionally, this chapter presents an overview of the subsequent chapters, providing a roadmap for the dissertation's structure and organization.

The literature review will delve into the concept of adaptive, examining its key dimensions and attributes and associated leadership behaviors. Drawing on both seminal works, such as those of Heifetz and his associates, to modern interpretations from Alexander, Roberto, Aimee, and others, the chapter explores the nature of this leadership style and its impact on an organization's performance and outcomes. Furthermore, the section highlights the research on organizational structures and underlying socio-cultural aspects that affect their sustainment and modifications.

In the following sections, the dissertation focuses on further assessing the role of hierarchy in adaptive leadership. This will involve an examination of the tensions between the two elements, and we will explore possible reasons for this dynamic. We will also look at the challenges faced by leaders in these organizations and, through assessing actual business cases that reflect both CEO success and failure, will examine the practical implications of adaptive leadership and hierarchy interaction. It discusses the adaptive leader's ability to navigate uncertainty, mobilize followers, and promote organizational resilience and innovation. Key themes such as diagnosing the adaptive challenge, regulating distress, and facilitating productive disequilibrium are examined in detail.



In later chapters, we will conclude an assessment of strategies for adaptive leadership, including additional case studies and an examination of leadership behaviors and competencies necessary for adaptive leadership. This will be followed by investigating organizational factors that enable or hinder adaptive leadership and an exploration of leadership behaviors that support adaptive outcomes.

This dissertation will conclude with a discussion of implications and a synthesis and interpretation of our key findings. In addition, the final chapter will present practical recommendations for organizations and leaders to improve adaptive leadership results.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Theoretical Foundations of Adaptive Leadership**

The theoretical foundations of adaptive leadership are rooted in key concepts that provide a framework for understanding and implementing this dynamic leadership approach. Central to adaptive leadership is the recognition of complexity and uncertainty within organizational environments. Adaptive leaders draw upon complexity theory, acknowledging that organizations operate in intricate systems with interconnected elements. They leverage this perspective to navigate the complexities, identify patterns, and respond effectively to challenges. Additionally, systems thinking is crucial to adaptive leadership, emphasizing the holistic understanding of organizations as interconnected systems. This approach enables leaders to consider the interdependencies and interactions of various elements within the organization, making informed decisions that foster adaptive responses. Furthermore, adaptive leadership addresses adaptive challenges, which are complex problems requiring transformative change. By embracing these theoretical foundations, leaders can develop the mindset, skills, and strategies necessary to navigate uncertainty, drive innovation, and achieve organizational success.

Morgeson et al. (2010) provided a comprehensive analysis of team leadership by adopting a functional approach that focuses on understanding leadership structures and processes. The authors recognize the critical role of teams within organizations and the need to study leadership in this context to enhance team effectiveness, coordination, and member satisfaction. By reviewing the existing research and theory, Morgeson et al. proposed a team leadership model that considers three essential components: leadership, leadership, and leadership dynamics. Through this model, they argue that certain leadership functions can emerge from both positional (i.e., formal leaders) and emergent sources (i.e., team members who exert influence). In addition, the authors highlight the importance of understanding leadership dynamics, which includes contingencies that influence the occurrence and effectiveness of various leadership functions. Ultimately, this functional

approach sheds light on the critical dimensions of team leadership and offers valuable insights for future research and practice.

Sarta, Durand, and Vergne (2021) examine the process and implications of how organizations adapt to changes in environmental and internal conditions. The authors delve into the nuances of the adaptation process, drawing from the insights of interdisciplinary research to consolidate a comprehensive understanding of organizational adaptation. With an overarching focus on the importance of flexibility and responsiveness to change, the authors emphasize that organizations must continuously adapt to maintain competitiveness and viability. The article further synthesizes the different dimensions and factors contributing to organizational adaptation, including strategic decision-making, resource access, and the interaction between the organization and its environment. By doing so, they provide valuable guidance for practitioners seeking to foster adaptability in their organizations and set the stage for future academic research examining the multifaceted nature of adaptability and its implications for organizational success.

Ohmae (2005) examined the intricate dynamics and challenges corporate leaders face navigating the complex realm of international business. At the core of his argument, Ohmae asserts that to attain success and maintain a competitive edge, corporations must adapt to the ever-evolving global landscape and proactively engage in robust and strategic decision-making processes. He elucidates the significance of factors such as cultural adaptability, technological awareness, and geopolitical considerations, all of which have significant implications for the trajectory of multinational corporations. Moreover, Ohmae astutely recognizes the importance of fostering effective leadership that transcends national boundaries, enabling organizations to tackle intricate issues and capitalize on emerging opportunities.

Goffee and Jones (2005) underscored the significance of cultivating a genuine work culture and the role of the realness factor in attracting top talent, fostering innovation, and achieving long-term success. Questioning traditional modes of leadership, they argued that embracing transparency, vulnerability, and honesty is paramount in the contemporary business world. Goffee and Jones build on empirical observations and provide practical insights, which make this article

an invaluable resource for anyone examining organizational dynamics, strategic management, and 21st-century leadership models in their dissertation.

Goffee and Jones's (2005) additional work delved into the complexities and paradoxes of great leadership, a subject relevant to numerous academic fields, by exploring the concept of managing authenticity. The authors presented an intriguing notion that effective leaders must balance the apparent contradiction between maintaining their genuine selves and adapting their leadership styles according to situational demands. Through a careful analysis of various examples and instances, they identified four key traits that contribute significantly to a leader's capacity for authenticity: self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing, and moral capacity. Particular emphasis is placed on the need to cultivate mature self-awareness, which allows leaders to understand and successfully navigate the complexities and paradoxes inherent in their roles. Furthermore, Goffee and Jones posited that embracing vulnerability, understanding the emotional landscape of organizations, and addressing the organization's unique context all serve as vital elements in fostering authenticity. Consequently, this thought-provoking article contributes valuable insights and perspectives for understanding the dynamics of effective leadership and the role of authenticity in achieving success, both for leaders and their respective organizations.

Alexander (2005) analyzed the often-nebulous realm of leadership by ambitiously proposing a unified theory rooted in the principle of three core dimensions. Alexander delineated these dimensions as individual leaders, followers, and contexts, emphasizing their intricate interplay. By synthesizing a vast array of prior research, Alexander illustrated that effective leadership transcends the confines of any specific model and hinges upon the delicate balance and alignment of the three dimensions.

Harrison (2017) offers a comprehensive view of how the jazz world has contributed to leadership development and provides numerous thoughts on how its unique qualities can be leveraged. Using interviews, observations, and reviews of jazz performances, Harrison highlighted many key findings by demonstrating how adaptability, interpretation, and risk-taking combine to give an individual the foundation required for success in a collaborative environment. In addition,

one's ability to listen and engage with others improvisationally was identified as a critical factor in both the characteristics of leaders and music makers. Although corporations have adopted these qualities to lead their teams, Harrison contends that a more dedicated focus is needed to foster these skills among individuals who are responsible for developing effective development plans while managing resources efficiently.

Van Vugt and Smith (2019) proposed a dual model of leadership and hierarchy that synthesizes the theories of evolutionary game theory, differential roles in hierarchies, and the cooperative-despotic model. Their article presented key findings from their research on this new model. They argue that egalitarian forms of leader-follower relationships can arise within any hierarchical structure, when necessary, with leaders demonstrating more general skills when leading to more complex tasks than simpler ones. Furthermore, they suggest that desirable admiration for leaders develops through shared identity and mutual dependence rather than exploitative competition and inequality between members. The results of their study further suggest that cooperation is less common in larger group contexts when restrictions to enforce rules are lower, instead tending toward despotism or competitive forms of dominance.

Paolillo (1981) found that higher-level managers place greater emphasis on technical roles, whereas lower-level managers place greater emphasis on interpersonal behavior. This suggests that the hierarchical level is essential in understanding the manager's role and its effect on the organization. Additionally, the study found that lower-level managers reported more active participation in theoretically neutral activities than their higher-level counterparts. This highlights the potential challenge higher-level management faces in accounting for their influence on collaborative decision-making processes. Overall, this study provides key insights into how different management levels perceive managerial roles and participation in organizational tasks.

Chadwick and River (2015) examined how the concept of goal orientation plays a significant role in influencing organizational learning. This aspect is particularly salient for the development of businesses in today's rapidly changing environment, where adaptability and innovation are key drivers of success. The authors built upon contemporary research on

organizational behavior. They offered valuable insights into the impact of learning versus performance goal orientations, integrating them within the broader context of organizational culture. Key findings highlight that organizations with a learning goal orientation are more inclined to promote knowledge acquisition, experimentation, and innovation. In contrast, those emphasizing performance goal orientations base their success on demonstrating competence, potentially limiting their ability to respond effectively to novel and complex situations.

Cheng et al. (2013) explored two distinct paths for acquiring social status and power in human society. The authors argue that individuals may attain social prominence through either dominance or prestige, with each route characterized by distinct behavioral patterns, psychological motives, and cognitive processes. Dominance refers to achieving social power through force, coercion, or manipulation, whereas prestige emerges from the deference, respect, and admiration earned due to an individual's skills, knowledge, or achievements. By employing a multi-method approach encompassing experimental, longitudinal, and cross-cultural research, Cheng et al. argued that these two pathways to social rank exist and can operate independently or in tandem. Furthermore, the authors illuminate these social rank mechanisms' cognitive and evolutionary underpinnings, thereby contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics of human social hierarchy.

Maner (2017) assessed the power dynamics underlying human social hierarchies. Using psychological perspectives, Maner elucidated that there are two distinct ways of gaining and maintaining social rank: dominance and prestige. Dominance refers to the use of force, coercion, or manipulation to achieve status, whereas prestige is attained by demonstrating valued skills, knowledge, or qualities. By examining the intricacies and nuances of these contrasting means, Maner highlighted the importance of considering both approaches while investigating how individuals navigate and attain their respective positions within social hierarchies. This finding not only advances our understanding of the complex nature of human social interactions but also holds significant implications for the study of leadership, group dynamics, and organizational behavior. By studying hierarchy structures in different animal species, he provided evidence that while they experience some similarities, they both lead to different outcomes when trying to attain influence.

Most importantly, the research presented in this article provides a further understanding of how these two distinct methodologies can be tapped into to gain influence within social networks.

Henrich et al. (2015) provided insights into the social-evolutionary foundations of leadership and cooperation. The researchers present the Big Man Mechanism as a means of promoting cooperation within communities while simultaneously creating prosocial leaders through prestigious means. By exploring the cognitive and cultural constructs of prestige, Henrich et al. delved into the core aspects of human societies that foster prosocial behavior and commendable leadership qualities. The authors examined an array of cross-cultural examples that enrich the depth of the discussion, ultimately highlighting the universality of the Big Man Mechanism within diverse societies. Their analysis affirms the significance of prestige as a steppingstone toward nurturing collaboration and establishing morally upright leaders who act in the best interests of their communities.

Aime et al. (2014) delved into the intricacies of power transitions in cross-functional teams and uncovered the enigmatic concept of heterarchy. The authors discuss the unique challenges faced by these teams that arise due to the inconsistent distribution of authority and influence in organizations, leading to heterarchy. By analyzing power dynamics, this research sheds light on the conditions that drive power transitions within a heterarchical framework. A key finding of this study is that power transitions are commonly influenced by two factors: differential task expertise and situational uncertainty. Furthermore, cross-functional teams successfully navigate a complex heterarchical structure by adopting adaptability and alignment practices that holistically contribute to team performance. As a valuable resource for understanding power transitions in organizations, this study opens avenues for further research into managing and effectively functioning cross-functional teams in a multifaceted heterarchical system.

Seibert, Wang, and Courtright (2011) examined the antecedents and consequences of psychological and team empowerment within organizations. This research specifically unearthed the critical role of contextual factors, such as leadership behaviors, structural characteristics, and contextual support, in fostering an environment that fosters empowerment. Furthermore, the study

highlighted the potent link between empowerment and vital individual and team outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and performance. Psychological empowerment was strongly associated with employee well-being, whereas team empowerment was linked to increased team effectiveness. By synthesizing the fragmented literature on empowerment, the authors provided valuable insights for organizations and scholars alike, the former in terms of developing optimally synergistic workforces and the latter in terms of identifying promising directions for further research in this domain.

Anderson and Brown (2010) explored the complexities of organizational hierarchy and provided valuable insights into both its functional and dysfunctional aspects. The authors elucidate how hierarchy serves an organization's vital purpose by effectively coordinating resources, establishing clear lines of authority, and promoting greater accountability. They argue that when hierarchies are well-designed and competently managed, they contribute to organizational effectiveness, innovation, and overall member satisfaction. However, the study also revealed the potential pitfalls of poorly structured or overly rigid hierarchies, which may give rise to power imbalances, reduced creativity, and decreased morale. Anderson and Brown further highlight the nuances of status and power dynamics within hierarchical structures, cautioning that leaders must remain mindful of the intricate interplay between structure, culture, and human behavior to ensure the successful functioning of their organizations.

Edmondson, Roberto, and Watkins (2003) presented a dynamic model of top management team effectiveness that focuses on managing unstructured task streams. The authors argued that unstructured tasks require effective coordination and collaboration among top management teams to achieve successful outcomes. The model proposes that team processes such as communication, coordination, and conflict management mediate the relationship between task characteristics and team performance. The authors also highlighted the importance of psychological safety within the team, which enables members to express ideas, ask questions, and learn from failures without fear of negative consequences. This model suggests that effective leadership in managing unstructured tasks involves creating an environment that encourages psychological safety and supports team learning and adaptation.



## 2.2 Historical Evolution of Leadership Theories

The earliest theories of leadership focused on identifying the inherent traits or qualities that distinguished effective leaders from followers. These trait theories posited that certain characteristics, such as intelligence, confidence, and decisiveness, were essential for effective leadership (Stogdill, 1948). Notable researchers like Stogdill and Mann explored various traits associated with leadership but found limited consistency in the traits exhibited by successful leaders across different contexts.

In response to the limitations of trait theories, behavioral theories emerged, shifting the focus from innate qualities to observable behaviors. Researchers began to investigate the behaviors exhibited by leaders and their impact on followers and group outcomes. The Ohio State studies conducted by Fleishman et al. (1951) and the University of Michigan studies led by Likert (1961) were instrumental in categorizing leadership behaviors into dimensions such as consideration (i.e., concern for relationships) and initiating structure (i.e., focus on task accomplishment). These studies highlighted the importance of leader behaviors in influencing followers' satisfaction and performance.

Contingency theories introduced the notion that effective leadership is contingent upon various situational factors. These theories proposed that different leadership styles and behaviors are more effective in specific situations. One of the influential contingency theories is Fiedler's Contingency Model (Fiedler, 1967), which suggests that the match between leadership style (task-oriented or relationship-oriented) and situational favorableness determines leadership effectiveness. Similarly, Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership Model (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969) emphasized adapting leadership behaviors based on the maturity level of followers.

The 1980s witnessed the emergence of transformational and transactional leadership theories, which focused on the relationship between leaders and followers. Transformational

leadership theory, proposed by Bass (1985), highlighted the leader's ability to inspire and motivate followers to exceed their self-interests for the sake of the collective goal. Transactional leadership, on the other hand, emphasizes a transactional exchange between leaders and followers, where leaders provide rewards and punishments to motivate desired behaviors (Bass & Riggio, 2006). These theories emphasized the importance of leaders' influence on followers' intrinsic motivation and engagement.

Leadership research has expanded to incorporate diverse perspectives and approaches in recent years. Contemporary theories include authentic leadership, servant leadership, and shared leadership, among others. Authentic leadership theory, proposed by Avolio and Gardner (2005), emphasizes the leader's genuine and ethical behavior, fostering trust and followers' self-expression. Servant leadership, introduced by Greenleaf (1977), focuses on leaders' commitment to serving the needs of others and the greater good. Shared leadership recognizes that leadership is not solely confined to formal leaders but can emerge from various team members based on their expertise and influence (Pearce & Conger, 2003).

The historical evolution of leadership theories reflects a shift from trait-based perspectives to a more nuanced understanding of leadership as a complex and dynamic phenomenon. From trait theories to contemporary perspectives, the focus has expanded to include behaviors, situational contingencies, and the leader-follower relationship. Contemporary theories emphasize the importance of authenticity, service, and shared responsibility in effective leadership. By examining the historical trajectory of leadership theories, researchers and practitioners gain valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of leadership and can apply these insights to develop effective leadership practices in diverse contexts.

### 2.3 Concepts and Models of Adaptive Leadership

Adaptive leadership is critical to effective leadership within organizations, particularly in today's dynamic and rapidly changing business environment. Various researchers have explored

different perspectives and themes within the literature to shed light on the models and dynamics of adaptive leadership.

One key theme that emerges from the literature is the significance of team leadership and collaboration. Morgeson et al. (2010) emphasize the need to study leadership within the context of teams to enhance team effectiveness, coordination, and member satisfaction. They propose a team leadership model that considers the emergence of leadership functions from both formal leaders and team members who exert influence. This suggests that adaptive leadership is not solely dependent on positional authority but can emerge from various sources within the team.

Another crucial aspect of adaptive leadership is organizational adaptation and flexibility. Sarta, Durand, and Vergne (2021) highlight the importance of continuous adaptation to maintain competitiveness and viability in a rapidly changing environment. They stress that organizations need to be responsive and flexible to adapt their strategies and operations to external and internal conditions. Similarly, Ohmae (2005) underscores the need for proactive and strategic decision-making processes to navigate the complexities of the global landscape. His work emphasizes the significance of factors such as cultural adaptability, technological awareness, and geopolitical considerations in achieving success and maintaining a competitive edge.

Authentic leadership and work culture are also prominent themes in the literature on adaptive leadership. Goffee and Jones (2005) challenge traditional notions of leadership and advocate for cultivating a genuine work culture. They argue that embracing transparency, vulnerability, and honesty attracts top talent, fosters innovation, and contributes to long-term success. Similarly, Harrison (2017) explores the link between jazz and leadership development, emphasizing the importance of adaptability, interpretation, risk-taking, and collaboration. These findings suggest that adaptive leaders foster an environment that encourages authenticity, creativity, and collaboration among team members.

A unified theory of leadership is proposed by Alexander (2005), which emphasizes the interplay between individual leaders, followers, and contexts. His work highlights that effective

leadership transcends any one specific model and depends on the delicate balance and alignment of these three dimensions. This notion is echoed in the study by Maner (2017), who assesses the power dynamics underlying social hierarchies. He argues that dominance and prestige are two distinct means of gaining and maintaining social rank. Understanding the interplay between these two approaches is crucial in comprehending leadership dynamics within social hierarchies.

Furthermore, research on goal orientation and learning provides insights into adaptive leadership. Chadwick and River (2015) explore the influence of goal orientation on organizational learning. They find that organizations with a learning goal orientation are more inclined to promote knowledge acquisition, experimentation, and innovation. In contrast, those emphasizing performance goal orientations focus on demonstrating competence. These findings highlight the importance of a learning mindset and adaptability in fostering innovation and responding effectively to complex and evolving situations.

Finally, studies by Cheng et al. (2013), Henrich et al. (2015), and Maner (2017) delve into the social dynamics and hierarchy associated with adaptive leadership. Cheng et al. identify dominance and prestige as two distinct pathways for acquiring social status and power. Henrich et al. focus on the social-evolutionary foundations of leadership and cooperation, emphasizing the role of prestige in fostering prosocial behavior and commendable leadership qualities. Maner's work explores the power dynamics underlying social hierarchies and the two means of gaining and maintaining social rank: dominance and prestige. These studies provide insights into the complex interplay between social dynamics, power, and leadership.

Goffee and Jones (2005) and Aime et al. (2014) both highlight the importance of adaptive leadership in different contexts. Goffee and Jones argue that effective leaders must balance authenticity with the need for adaptation. They emphasize traits such as self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing, and moral capacity as crucial for authentic leadership. Aime et al., on the other hand, focus on power transitions in cross-functional teams. They emphasize the significance of adaptability and alignment practices for teams to navigate the complexities of organizational power dynamics.

Seibert, Wang, and Courtright (2011) and Anderson and Brown (2010) contribute to our understanding of the contextual factors that influence effective leadership. Seibert et al. emphasize the role of leadership behaviors, structural characteristics, and contextual support in fostering empowerment within organizations. They highlight the link between empowerment and outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and performance. Anderson and Brown, on the other hand, explore the functional and dysfunctional aspects of organizational hierarchy. They emphasize the importance of well-designed hierarchies that coordinate resources, establish clear lines of authority, and promote accountability while cautioning against the potential pitfalls of poorly structured or rigid hierarchies.

Edmondson, Roberto, and Watkins (2003) provide insights into the management of unstructured tasks within organizations. They emphasize the importance of effective coordination and collaboration among top management teams when dealing with unstructured tasks. The authors highlight the role of team processes such as communication, coordination, and conflict management in mediating the relationship between task characteristics and team performance. They also emphasize the significance of psychological safety within the team, which enables members to express ideas, ask questions, and learn from failures without fear of negative consequences.

According to Alexander (2005), adaptive leadership emphasizes the ability of leaders to adjust their behaviors and approaches in response to complex and uncertain environments. Adaptive leaders are agile and flexible, continuously adapting their strategies to meet rapidly changing circumstances. This concept is particularly relevant in dynamic industries and turbulent markets, where traditional leadership approaches may prove inadequate.

Similarly, Roberto (2013) emphasizes the importance of adaptive leadership in facilitating organizational learning, fostering creativity, and encouraging innovation. Adaptive leaders promote a culture of experimentation, where failures are seen as learning opportunities and

employees are empowered to challenge existing norms and develop novel solutions. This aspect of adaptive leadership is critical in promoting organizational agility and responsiveness.

Contrasting the perspectives of Alexander and Roberto with Ghasabeh and Reaiche's work on transformational leadership (Ghasabeh & Reaiche, 2015), it becomes evident that the two concepts differ in focus and underlying principles. Transformational leadership emphasizes inspiring and motivating followers through a compelling vision, whereas adaptive leadership emphasizes agility, flexibility, and promoting a culture of learning and innovation.

Moreover, additional research provided (Northouse, 2022) supports the argument that transformational and adaptive leadership are distinct concepts. While Northouse does not directly analyse the two leadership styles, his work presents clear distinctions between them. He posits transformational leadership as leadership that engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and mortality in both the leader and follower. In contrast, he offers that adaptive leadership is focused on the adaptations required of people in response to changing environments.

By acknowledging and delineating the unique characteristics of transformational and adaptive leadership, researchers can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the different leadership styles and their implications for organizations in various contexts. This distinction is crucial in recognizing each leadership approach's specific challenges and strategies.

In conclusion, the research by Alexander, Roberto, and Northouse, all of whom represent current research trends in the field of study, the argument that transformational leadership and adaptive leadership are distinct concepts. Adaptive leadership emphasizes adaptability, flexibility, and organizational learning, while transformational leadership focuses on inspiration and vision. By differentiating these concepts, future research can deepen our understanding of leadership dynamics and inform effective leadership practices.

## 2.4 Relationship Between Leadership and Hierarchy

The relationship between hierarchies and leadership has been explored by several authors, shedding light on the impact of hierarchies on leadership effectiveness (Avolio & Bass, 1991; Frohman, 1988). It has been found that hierarchies can restrict creativity, innovation, and the ability of leaders to motivate employees (Avolio & Bass, 1991). This is due to the rigid structure created by hierarchies, which hinders leaders' adaptability to changing circumstances and their capacity to employ novel problem-solving approaches (Avolio & Bass, 1991). Consequently, hierarchies can impede the development of new ideas and limit the cultivation of an empowered and innovative culture within organizations (Frohman, 1988).

Furthermore, hierarchies can contribute to establishing a culture characterized by obedience rather than empowerment (Frohman, 1988). This phenomenon is particularly prevalent in organizations with inflexible hierarchies, where employees are expected to comply with orders without questioning (Frohman, 1988). Such an environment can stifle innovation and hinder the exploration of new ideas.

Another significant finding is that hierarchies can create a power imbalance between leaders and followers, making it challenging for leaders to establish trust and respect (Chen & Silverthorne, 2008). This imbalance often leads to a lack of commitment and engagement among employees (Chen & Silverthorne, 2008). Additionally, hierarchical structures can hinder effective communication between leaders and subordinates, resulting in misunderstandings and the need for increased clarity (Chen & Silverthorne, 2008).

The impact of hierarchies extends beyond leadership dynamics and permeates organizational culture. Hierarchical structures tend to foster a culture of conformity and obedience, which can impede innovation and creativity (Frohman, 1988; Avolio & Bass, 1991). This is particularly problematic in rapidly changing environments where organizations must adapt quickly to new challenges and opportunities (Frohman, 1988; Avolio & Bass, 1991). Furthermore, hierarchies can generate a culture of mistrust and suspicion, particularly when strict rules and

regulations are enforced (Chen & Silverthorne, 2008). This negatively affects employee cooperation and collaboration within the organization (Chen & Silverthorne, 2008).

On the other hand, it has been argued that hierarchies can promote a sense of organizational identity and loyalty among employees (Kumar & Beyerlein, 1991). Hierarchies provide clear role definitions and responsibilities, fostering a sense of belonging and pride in their work (Kumar & Beyerlein, 1991).

Considering the impact of hierarchies on employee motivation, research highlights that hierarchical structures can create a sense of powerlessness among employees, leading to reduced motivation (Chen & Silverthorne, 2008). This is especially true in organizations where centralized decision-making limits employee input (Chen & Silverthorne, 2008). Additionally, hierarchical structures may hinder employee growth and advancement opportunities, resulting in a lack of motivation and engagement (Kumar & Beyerlein, 1991).

Analyzing the effects of hierarchies from the perspective of power dynamics, Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) emphasize that hierarchies play a significant role in shaping power dynamics within organizations. Concentrating power at the top can lead to various outcomes, including increased job satisfaction and commitment among those in positions of authority. However, it can also result in adverse effects such as employee turnover, conflict, and mistrust among lower-level employees (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003).

Furthermore, hierarchies can contribute to the formation of organizational silos, where employees identify more with their individual teams or departments than with the overall organization (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). Silos hinder collaboration, communication, and coordination, impeding the achievement of organizational goals (Cameron & Quinn, 2011).

Despite potential disadvantages, hierarchies remain prevalent in many business organizations. The perception is that hierarchies are necessary for maintaining order and efficiency, particularly in stable environments with well-defined tasks and roles (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967).



However, alternative organizational structures, such as flat structures and empowerment initiatives, offer potential solutions to the challenges posed by hierarchies.

Flat organizational structures, as suggested by Daft and Weick (1984), can foster innovation and creativity by providing autonomy and facilitating cross-functional collaboration. Moreover, empowerment initiatives that grant employees more control and autonomy over their work have been found to increase job satisfaction, motivation, and engagement (Conger & Kanungo, 1988).

It is important to note that the effectiveness of alternative structures and empowerment initiatives depends on various factors, including organizational culture, employee readiness, and the nature of the work being performed.

In conclusion, the relationship between hierarchies and leadership has been extensively examined, revealing both positive and negative impacts. While hierarchies can provide order and stability, they can also limit leadership effectiveness, foster power imbalances, create cultural challenges, hinder employee motivation, and impede organizational agility. Alternative structures and empowerment initiatives offer potential remedies; however, their implementation requires careful consideration of organizational dynamics and contextual factors.

## 2.5 Impact of Adaptive Leadership on Organizational Outcomes

In today's fast-paced and complex business environment, organizations face numerous challenges that require them to adapt and navigate uncertainty effectively. In this context, leadership plays a crucial role in driving organizational success by providing guidance, making strategic decisions, and mobilizing resources (Yukl, 2013). However, traditional leadership approaches may fall short of addressing the ever-changing demands and complexities of the modern business landscape. This has given rise to the concept of adaptive leadership, which emphasizes the leader's ability to adapt, innovate, and facilitate change (Heifetz et al., 2009). This section explores the impact of adaptive leadership on organizational outcomes and highlights its significance in achieving sustainable success.

## Enhancing Organizational Agility

One of the key ways in which adaptive leadership impacts organizational outcomes is by enhancing organizational agility. Adaptive leaders possess the ability to anticipate and respond to changes in the external environment swiftly. They actively scan the market, identify emerging trends, and adjust the organization's strategies and operations accordingly. By promoting a culture of agility, adaptive leaders enable their organizations to stay ahead of the competition, seize new opportunities, and mitigate potential risks (Heifetz et al., 2009).

Adaptive leaders also foster a climate of innovation and experimentation within the organization. They encourage employees to generate new ideas, challenge existing practices, and explore novel solutions. This emphasis on innovation enables organizations to adapt their products, services, and processes to meet evolving customer needs and market demands. As a result, organizations with adaptive leaders are better positioned to drive innovation and achieve sustained competitive advantage (Yukl, 2013).

## Driving Organizational Change

Another significant impact of adaptive leadership on organizational outcomes is its ability to drive and manage organizational change effectively. Adaptive leaders recognize the need for change and are adept at mobilizing and aligning their teams toward a common goal. They engage stakeholders, communicate the rationale for change, and provide support throughout the change process (Heifetz et al., 2009). By promoting a shared vision and empowering employees to embrace change, adaptive leaders facilitate smooth transitions and reduce resistance to change, resulting in higher change success rates (Yukl, 2013).

Furthermore, adaptive leaders excel at navigating organizational complexities and addressing competing priorities. They understand the intricacies of organizational systems, identify bottlenecks, and implement strategies to overcome barriers to change. Their ability to leverage

resources effectively, build coalitions, and manage conflicts enables them to drive change initiatives to fruition (Heifetz et al., 2009). As a result, organizations led by adaptive leaders experience smoother change implementations, increased employee buy-in, and improved overall change outcomes (Yukl, 2013).

### Enhancing Organizational Resilience

In today's volatile and uncertain business environment, organizational resilience is essential for long-term success. Adaptive leadership contributes significantly to enhancing organizational resilience by fostering a culture of learning, adaptability, and continuous improvement. Adaptive leaders encourage their teams to reflect on past experiences, learn from failures, and extract valuable insights to inform future actions (Heifetz et al., 2009). By promoting a growth mindset and embracing a learning orientation, they create an environment where employees are encouraged to experiment, take risks, and innovate (Yukl, 2013).

This focus on continuous learning and adaptability enables organizations to respond effectively to unforeseen challenges and disruptions. Adaptive leaders empower their teams to quickly identify and implement necessary changes, adjust strategies, and reallocate resources as needed. By fostering organizational resilience, adaptive leaders enable their organizations to bounce back from setbacks, navigate crises, and thrive in the face of adversity (Yukl, 2013).

Furthermore, adaptive leaders also play a crucial role in building and nurturing high-performing teams. They create an inclusive and supportive work environment where individuals feel empowered, motivated, and engaged. By leveraging their team members' diverse strengths and talents, adaptive leaders foster collaboration, trust, and open communication. This results in higher employee satisfaction, increased productivity, and improved overall organizational performance (Heifetz et al., 2009).

### Conclusion

In conclusion, adaptive leadership has a profound impact on organizational outcomes. Adaptive leaders enable organizations to thrive in today's complex and dynamic business landscape by enhancing organizational agility, driving effective change, and promoting resilience. The ability to adapt, innovate, and navigate uncertainty effectively distinguishes adaptive leaders from their traditional counterparts. Organizations led by adaptive leaders are better equipped to respond to market changes, drive innovation, and achieve sustainable success.

Through their focus on continuous learning, team empowerment, and fostering a culture of adaptability, adaptive leaders create a positive organizational climate that supports employee engagement, high performance, and overall organizational effectiveness. As organizations continue to face increasing levels of complexity and uncertainty, the role of adaptive leadership becomes even more critical in achieving superior organizational outcomes.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research Design and Approach

This chapter evaluates the impact of organizational hierarchies on adaptive leadership by examining existing academic literature and research articles. A comprehensive search strategy was employed to achieve this objective, and inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to identify relevant studies. Data extraction and synthesis were conducted, and the quality of the studies included in the review was assessed. In addition, this chapter considers the psychological aspects of organizational power structures that are likely to play a crucial role in the study of adaptive leadership in hierarchical organizations.

#### Search Strategy:

To support this dissertation, the research comprised a comprehensive literature review to identify relevant studies on adaptive leadership, organizational hierarchies, power structures, and psychology. The purpose of the literature review was to gain a deep understanding of existing research on these topics and to identify gaps in the literature that the researcher could address in their dissertation.

A systematic search was conducted across various academic databases, including the British Library, SAGE Journals, Google Scholar, Web of Science, Scopus, and PsycINFO to identify relevant studies. These databases are widely used in academic research and provide access to a vast range of scholarly articles, conference papers, and other academic resources (Clarivate Analytics, 2021; Elsevier, 2021; American Psychological Association, 2021).

A combination of keywords and subject headings was used to ensure that the search was comprehensive and included all relevant articles. This study used various keywords related to adaptive leadership, organizational hierarchies, power structures, "adaptive leadership,"

"organizational power," "hierarchy," "employee behavior," "employee engagement," "organizational culture," and "organizational change". These keywords helped ensure that the search focused on articles directly related to the research topic (Booth et al., 2016). The research also used a variety of subject headings related to the topic, including "leadership," "organizational behavior," "psychology", and "social psychology." Using both keywords and subject headings, the research was able to conduct a comprehensive search that included all relevant articles on the topic (Fischer & Zigmond, 2011).

English articles published after 2005 were prioritized to focus on the most current and relevant research. This was performed to ensure that the literature review focused on recent research and included the most up-to-date findings in the field. This is important because research in many fields, including psychology and organizational behavior, constantly evolves, and new findings may have emerged since earlier research was conducted (Banks, 2014). However, articles demonstrating significant findings or assessments prior to 2005 were also included, given either their relevance to the dissertation or demonstration of time leadership or hierarchy theories have been held.

The research also excluded articles not peer-reviewed or published in academic journals. This ensured that the articles in the literature review were of high quality and met academic standards (Bettany-Saltikov, 2012).

After conducting the search, the titles and abstracts of the articles were analyzed to determine whether they met the inclusion criteria. Articles that met the inclusion criteria were then reviewed to determine their relevance to the research topic. This resulted in a final set of articles that were directly relevant to the research topic and formed the basis of the literature review.

### 3.2 Data Collection Methods

The following inclusion and exclusion criteria were used for the research question:

Inclusion criteria:

- Articles that focus on adaptive leadership, organizational hierarchies, power structures, and psychology
- Articles that are published in English
- Articles that are peer-reviewed
- Articles published after 2005 (with controlled exception)

Exclusion criteria:

- Articles that are not peer-reviewed
- Articles that are not published in academic journals
- Articles that are not written in English
- Articles published before 2005, unless the article remains a primary component used by current scholars and students of leadership in their definitions and hypotheses of leadership and organizational dynamics.

The inclusion criteria ensured that the articles in the literature review were directly relevant to the research question and met academic standards. The first criterion ensures that the articles focus on the key topics of interest: adaptive leadership, organizational hierarchies, power structures, and psychology. The second criterion ensured the articles were in a language the researcher could read and understand. The third criterion ensures that the articles have been reviewed by experts in the field, and the fourth criterion ensures that the articles are recent and reflect the most recent research.

Exclusion criteria were used to ensure that the articles excluded from the literature review did not meet the inclusion criteria or were of low quality. The first criterion ensures that experts in the field review the articles; the second criterion ensures that the articles are published in reputable academic journals; and the third criterion ensures that the articles are in a language the researcher

can read and understand. The fourth criterion ensured that the articles excluded from the literature review were not outdated and did not reflect current research.

By applying these inclusion and exclusion criteria, the researcher identified a set of high-quality, relevant, and current articles for inclusion in the literature review. This approach ensures that the literature review is based on the best available evidence and focuses on the most relevant and current research.

#### Data Extraction:

Data extraction from the articles involved using a standardized form that included relevant information on the study design, sample size, data collection methods, data analysis methods, key findings, and conclusions. Additionally, the form incorporates psychological aspects of organizational power structures, such as rewards and punishments, communication patterns, and decision-making processes.

### 3.3 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size Considerations

The extracted data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach that involved identifying common themes and patterns across the studies and organizing them into categories. These categories were then used to develop an overall understanding of the relationship between organizational hierarchies and adaptive leadership.

#### Quality Assessment:

The Cochrane Collaboration tool for assessing the risk of bias was used to evaluate the quality of articles included in the review. This tool assesses the risk of bias in individual studies based on criteria such as randomization, blinding, and selective reporting. Studies were classified as having a low, moderate, or high risk of bias based on their scores. We found most if not all, studies showed a low risk for bias. While some authors may not have discussed certain aspects of



leadership or organizational hierarchy, it was evident the gap in their product derived from their research focus, not bias against elements not assessed. Moreover, we determined that when gaps were present in research articles, they did not undermine or invalidate the specific findings of the authors.

### Psychological Aspects of Organizational Power Structures:

This study used a qualitative research design to explore the psychological aspects of power structures in hierarchical organizations and their impact on adaptive leadership. Specifically, this study uses a case study approach to examine three organizations with different power structures, communication patterns, and decision-making processes.

Finally, the results of this study contribute to our understanding of the psychological aspects of power structures in hierarchical organizations and their impact on adaptive leadership. The findings may inform the development of interventions to promote adaptive leadership in hierarchical organizations, such as training programs for managers and employees on effective communication and decision-making. Additionally, this study may have implications for organizational design and structure, including the potential for flatter organizational structures and more decentralized decision-making processes to promote adaptive leadership.

### 3.4 Data Analysis Procedures

The data analysis procedures employed in this study aim to explore the key themes and concepts related to leadership dynamics and their implications in various organizational contexts. The analysis follows a systematic approach that allows for a comprehensive examination of the literature while maintaining a manageable level of rigor.

1. **Data Familiarization:** The first step involves familiarizing the collected literature. This includes reading and understanding the articles, identifying key concepts, theories, and findings, and gaining an overall understanding of the content.

2. Thematic Coding: The identified literature will be subjected to thematic coding. This involves identifying recurring themes and concepts related to adaptive leadership, transformational leadership, and hierarchy dynamics. The articles will be read and annotated to highlight relevant passages, quotes, or ideas contributing to the identified themes.

3. Data Organization: Once the thematic coding is complete, the extracted data will be organized based on the identified themes. This step involves collating the relevant passages, quotes, or ideas under each theme to facilitate easy retrieval and analysis.

4. Comparative Analysis: The organized data will be subjected to comparative analysis. This process involves comparing and contrasting the literature's findings, theories, and perspectives. The goal is to identify similarities, differences, and patterns related to adaptive leadership, transformational leadership, and hierarchy dynamics.

5. Interpretation and Integration: The comparative analysis will be interpreted and integrated to draw meaningful conclusions. This step involves examining the relationships between the identified themes and exploring their implications for leadership practices and organizational outcomes. The interpretation will consider the different perspectives in the literature and seek to develop a holistic understanding of the topic.

6. Synthesis of Findings: The interpreted findings will be synthesized to summarize the key insights and conclusions drawn from the analysis. This synthesis will highlight the main themes, theories, and findings related to adaptive leadership, transformational leadership, and hierarchy dynamics.

7. Theory Development: Based on the synthesized findings, this study aims to contribute to the existing theoretical frameworks on leadership. The analysis will identify potential areas for theoretical development, propose conceptual models, and suggest avenues for future research. This

step involves synthesizing the insights gained from the literature to develop new perspectives or refine existing theories.

It is important to acknowledge that this study relies solely on analyzing existing peer-reviewed academic literature. No primary data collection from human participants is involved, ensuring compliance with ethical guidelines regarding informed consent, confidentiality, and privacy. The research has been conducted to provide a comprehensive and insightful analysis of the literature on leadership dynamics.

### 3.5 Ethical Considerations

As this dissertation is based solely on a comprehensive analysis of peer-reviewed academic literature, it does not involve the participation of human subjects. However, ethical guidelines were followed to ensure the integrity of the research process and the responsible use of existing scholarly work.

In pursuing academic excellence and ethical scholarship, this study acknowledges the importance of proper citation and attribution. All sources consulted in the research will be appropriately credited and cited according to the guidelines of the selected citation style (e.g., APA). By properly recognizing the authors and researchers whose work has contributed to the field of study, this dissertation upholds the principles of academic integrity and intellectual honesty.

Furthermore, this study recognizes the importance of intellectual property rights and respects the copyright restrictions associated with the literature reviewed. The researcher will adhere to copyright laws and regulations, ensuring that excerpts, quotations, and references to the literature are used within the boundaries of fair use and applicable permissions. Care will be taken to avoid unauthorized use or plagiarism, and efforts will be made to obtain necessary permissions for using copyrighted materials when required.

The researcher will also ensure the accuracy and reliability of the information presented in the dissertation. Critical evaluation and analysis of the selected literature will be conducted with rigor and objectivity. Misrepresentation or distortion of the authors' original work will be strictly avoided, and the findings and conclusions drawn from the reviewed literature will be based on a fair and balanced interpretation.

Moreover, this study acknowledges the significance of maintaining confidentiality and privacy in handling academic literature. All sources consulted will be treated with respect and professionalism. The literature reviewed will be used solely for research purposes and will not be shared or disclosed to unauthorized individuals or entities.

Finally, this study acknowledges the importance of complying with relevant ethical guidelines and regulations academic institutions and publishers set forth. By adhering to these guidelines, the researcher ensures that the dissertation meets the highest ethical standards and upholds the integrity of the academic community.

In summary, this dissertation, which exclusively relies on peer-reviewed academic literature, upholds ethical considerations by properly attributing and citing all sources, respecting intellectual property rights, ensuring the accuracy and reliability of the information, maintaining confidentiality and privacy, and complying with relevant ethical guidelines. By doing so, this study promotes ethical research conduct and upholds the principles of academic integrity.

## **4. THE ROLE OF HIERARCHY IN ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP**

### 4.1 Examination of the Tension Between Hierarchy and Adaptability

The tension between hierarchy and adaptability is a topic of sustained interest in the field of organizational studies. This section aims to examine this tension through the lens of perception, individual factors, and organizational dynamics, as these combine to directly impact a leader's efforts to execute adaptive traits. Based on the findings of the current research, it is argued that the perceived conflict between hierarchy and adaptability is often overstated, and the root of the issue lies more in the personality and leadership style of individuals within the organization rather than the organizational structure itself.

#### Perception versus Reality:

Contrary to common assumptions, research suggests that hierarchy, as a structural element, does not inherently inhibit adaptability. Organizational hierarchies serve important functions within an organization, including providing a sense of order, accountability, and facilitating efficient decision-making processes (Chandler, 1962). Hierarchy allows for clear reporting lines, delegation of tasks, and allocation of resources, which can enhance the coordination and execution of organizational goals.

Therefore, the tension between hierarchy and adaptability is largely a matter of perception rather than an inherent constraint imposed by the organizational structure (Daft, 2018). Individuals within an organization may perceive hierarchical structures as rigid and resistant to change, leading to the belief that adaptability is hindered. This perception can arise from experiences of bureaucratic processes, slow decision-making, and limited autonomy within hierarchical systems. However, it is important to recognize that a multitude of factors beyond the organizational hierarchy alone influence adaptability.

Adaptability is a complex phenomenon influenced by various individual, group, and contextual factors. While hierarchy can influence individuals' degree of formal authority and decision-making power, it does not necessarily determine their ability to adapt. Individual factors such as leadership style, personality traits, and mindset play crucial roles in determining an individual's adaptability (Judge et al., 2002). Effective leaders can navigate hierarchical structures by fostering a climate of innovation, encouraging open communication, and empowering employees to take risks and embrace change.

Moreover, adaptability is influenced by contextual factors such as organizational culture, communication processes, and the presence of support mechanisms for innovation (Eisenbeiss et al., 2008). Organizations that foster a culture of learning, experimentation, and continuous improvement can promote adaptability even within hierarchical structures. Open and transparent communication channels enable the flow of information, facilitating the exchange of ideas and timely decision-making. Additionally, creating mechanisms for employee involvement and participation in decision-making processes can enhance adaptability by leveraging diverse perspectives and knowledge.

#### Role of Individual Factors:

The research findings suggest that the tension between hierarchy and adaptability is more closely linked to individual factors, particularly the personality and leadership style of individuals within the organization. A range of personality traits influences the ability to adapt, and certain traits may make it more challenging for leaders to embrace and drive adaptability effectively (Judge et al., 2002).

For instance, individuals with a preference for stability and predictability may struggle to navigate the dynamic and uncertain nature of adaptability. These individuals may find it difficult to let go of established routines and processes, inhibiting their ability to respond flexibly to changing circumstances. Research has shown that leaders with a high need for stability and a low tolerance for ambiguity tend to exhibit less adaptive behavior (Judge et al., 2002). Such leaders

may rely on rigid hierarchical structures and resist deviating from established norms, hindering organizational adaptability.

Furthermore, leadership style is crucial in resolving the tension between hierarchy and adaptability. Autocratic or controlling leadership styles, characterized by a top-down decision-making approach and limited input from subordinates, can stifle innovation and impede adaptability (Avolio et al., 2009). Employees may feel disempowered and less inclined to suggest or implement changes in such leadership contexts. Leaders who exercise excessive control may also discourage risk-taking and experimentation, which are vital for organizational adaptability.

On the other hand, leaders who exhibit more participative and empowering leadership styles are better equipped to foster an environment conducive to adaptability. These leaders involve employees in decision-making processes, encourage open communication and idea-sharing, and provide autonomy to explore new approaches (Avolio et al., 2009). Such leadership styles promote a sense of ownership and psychological safety, empowering employees to contribute their diverse perspectives and actively engage in problem-solving and innovation.

#### Organizational Dynamics:

While the organizational structure itself may not inherently impede adaptability, the dynamics within the organization significantly influence the extent to which adaptive behaviors can flourish. Several key factors, including organizational culture, communication processes, and power dynamics, shape the interaction between hierarchy and adaptability.

Organizational culture is pivotal in enabling or hindering adaptability within hierarchical structures. A culture that values innovation, learning, and openness to change provides a fertile ground for adaptive behaviors to thrive. Research has shown that organizations with a strong innovation culture are more likely to embrace change and exhibit higher levels of adaptability (O'Reilly et al., 2014). Such cultures foster an environment where employees are encouraged to challenge the status quo, experiment with new ideas, and continuously learn and improve.

Effective communication channels and practices also play a critical role in facilitating adaptability within hierarchical organizations. Timely and transparent communication is essential for sharing information, aligning goals, and enabling swift decision-making. Clear and open communication channels ensure that relevant information reaches the right individuals, enabling them to make informed decisions and respond promptly to changing circumstances. Studies have highlighted the importance of effective communication in promoting adaptive behaviors and enhancing organizational responsiveness (Bass et al., 2003).

Power dynamics within the organization can either enable or hinder adaptability. Leaders who distribute power and decision-making authority throughout the organization foster a sense of empowerment and ownership among employees. This encourages them to make autonomous decisions, take calculated risks, and innovate at various levels of the hierarchy. Leaders create an environment where adaptive behaviors are valued and encouraged by delegating authority. Research has shown that empowering leadership styles positively influence adaptive behaviors and enhance organizational adaptability (Eisenbeiss et al., 2008).

In conclusion, the tension between hierarchy and adaptability is largely rooted in perception and individual factors rather than the structure itself. Organizational hierarchies can coexist with adaptability when accompanied by the right individual characteristics and organizational dynamics. Leaders' personality traits, leadership styles, and the overall organizational culture and communication processes significantly influence the ability to foster adaptability within hierarchical structures. Recognizing the importance of these factors can guide leadership development efforts and enhance the organization's capacity for adaptability in today's complex and dynamic business environment.

#### 4.2 Impact of Hierarchical Structures on Adaptive Leadership Behaviors and Practices

The interplay between hierarchical structures and adaptive leadership behaviors has been a subject of significant interest and debate in organizational research. While some argue that hierarchical structures inherently hinder adaptability, a closer examination reveals that the impact



of hierarchy on adaptive leadership is more nuanced. This section explores the impact of hierarchical structures on adaptive leadership behaviors and practices, focusing on the psychological aspects of leadership and the alignment between individual leadership traits and organizational structures.

Leadership traits and behaviors are deeply rooted in human social evolution, and their alignment with organizational structures can significantly influence adaptive practices. Research suggests that certain leadership traits, such as a preference for stability and predictability, may be incongruent with the demands of adaptability (Judge et al., 2002). Leaders who exhibit a high need for control or who are resistant to change may struggle to embrace adaptive behaviors within hierarchical structures. Therefore, the impact of hierarchical structures on adaptive leadership is contingent upon individual leaders' psychological dispositions and traits.

One key factor influencing the impact of hierarchical structures on adaptive leadership is the potential misalignment between leadership styles and organizational structure. Different leaders may possess varying leadership styles, such as autocratic, democratic, or laissez-faire, which can either enable or hinder adaptability. For instance, an autocratic leadership style that centralizes decision-making and limits employee autonomy may impede adaptive behaviors within hierarchical structures (Avolio et al., 2009). In contrast, a more participative and empowering leadership style that distributes decision-making authority can foster a culture of adaptability and innovation.

Another crucial aspect to consider is the individual leader's ability to employ adaptive tactics within the given organizational structure. While the organizational structure sets the context, it does not inherently limit adaptability. The leader's adaptive capabilities, including their willingness to challenge established norms, experiment with new approaches, and embrace change, play a pivotal role in driving adaptive behaviors (Carmeli et al., 2009). Leaders with a growth mindset and a learning orientation are more likely to navigate the tension between hierarchy and adaptability effectively.

Recognizing the impact of individual leadership traits and styles on adaptive behaviors, organizations can invest in leadership development and training programs. These initiatives can enhance leaders' self-awareness, encourage the development of adaptive competencies, and provide strategies for aligning their leadership style with the demands of the organizational structure. Organizations can bridge the gap between hierarchical structures and adaptive leadership behaviors by equipping leaders with the necessary skills and knowledge.

In conclusion, the impact of hierarchical structures on adaptive leadership behaviors and practices is multifaceted. While some argue that hierarchy inherently inhibits adaptability, the reality is more complex. The alignment between leadership traits and organizational structures, along with the individual leader's ability to employ adaptive tactics, plays a significant role in determining the impact of hierarchy on adaptive leadership. Recognizing these factors, organizations can focus on leadership development and training programs to enhance leaders' adaptive capabilities and foster a culture of adaptability within hierarchical structures.

#### 4.3 Strategies for Leaders to Navigate and Reconcile the Tension Between Hierarchy and Adaptability

In the contemporary organizational theory and practice landscape, traditional hierarchical structures have come under scrutiny due to their limitations in facilitating agility, innovation, and adaptability. In response to these challenges, an alternative paradigm has emerged: heterarchy. Heterarchy refers to a non-hierarchical organizational structure characterized by fluid and dynamic relationships among individuals and teams, allowing for distributed decision-making, collaborative networks, and a more organic flow of information and authority. Unlike the rigid top-down hierarchy, heterarchy emphasizes shared power, autonomy, and mutual influence among members, fostering creativity, engagement, and responsiveness. As this dissertation explores the concept of adaptive leadership through organizational hierarchy, heterarchy must also be studied to some extent, as multiple organizations have attempted to initiate such a system to develop more adaptive capabilities to contend with ever-evolving circumstances and promote resilience. The following

authors represent an overview of the theories that directly or indirectly apply to the structural concept.

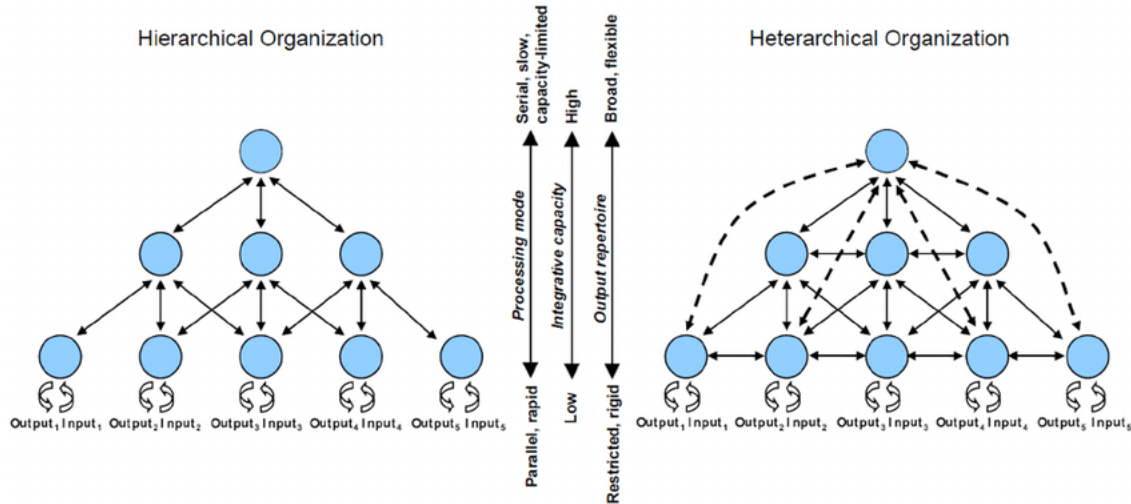


Figure 1: Hierarchy and heterarchy model comparisons.

Ahuja and Lampert's (2001) investigated the mechanisms through which established firms generate breakthrough inventions. The authors conduct a longitudinal analysis of large corporations and highlight the significance of entrepreneurial activity in driving innovation. Their findings identified the importance of internal networks, external partnerships, and absorptive capacity in fostering breakthrough inventions within established firms.

Eisenbeiss, Knippenberg, Boerner, and Hirst (2020) explored leader-empowering behavior and its impact on adaptive performance in low-quality work contexts. Through their empirical investigation, the authors demonstrate that leader-empowering behavior positively influences employee adaptive performance, particularly in challenging work environments. Furthermore, their research illustrated the role of leadership in enhancing employee outcomes and provided insights into the dynamics of empowering behaviors in adverse organizational contexts.

Foss and Lindenberg (2013) attempted to present a goal-framing perspective on the micro-foundations of strategy and value creation. They proposed a theoretical framework integrating goal framing, cognitive psychology, and economic theories to explain how individuals' goals influence their strategic behaviors and decision-making processes. Their paper offered a novel view for understanding the underlying drivers of value creation within an organization, a commonly associated theme of organizational efforts to create heterarchy systems.

Hatchuel (2006) delves into design theory and expandable rationality, building upon the work of Herbert Simon, and argues for the importance of design theory in understanding organizational decision-making and rationality. Hatchuel emphasizes the need to expand rationality beyond bounded rationality and proposes design theory as a framework that integrates creativity, innovation, and rationality in organizational contexts.

Uzzi and Spiro's (2005) explored the relationship between collaboration and creativity. Through analyzing networks and information flows, the authors demonstrated how collaboration within small-world networks can foster creativity and innovation. In addition, they highlighted the role of social capital, structural holes, and brokerage positions in facilitating knowledge exchange and creative problem-solving in organizations.

Zaleznik's (1977) earlier, and arguably breakthrough, work focused on the distinction between managers and leaders. The research challenges the traditional view that managers and leaders are synonymous roles and argues that they involve distinct mindsets and behaviors. Zaleznik explored the psychological and behavioral differences between managers and leaders, emphasizing the need for organizations to develop distinct managerial and leadership capacities to address complex challenges and foster organizational success effectively.

Eisenbeiss, Knippenberg, Boerner, and Hirst (2020) provided an empirical investigation demonstrating that leader-empowering behavior positively influences employee adaptive performance, particularly in challenging work environments. Their research emphasized the role

of leadership in enhancing employee outcomes and provided insights into the dynamics of empowering behaviors in adverse organizational contexts.

Monge and Contractor (2003) examined various theoretical perspectives on communication networks, including social network theory, information processing theory, and structuration theory. Their research focused on how communication networks shape information flow, knowledge sharing, and organizational coordination. Their work contributes to our understanding of the role of communication networks in facilitating organizational processes and outcomes.

Powell (1990), also in an earlier work, arguably challenged the traditional dichotomy of market and hierarchical forms of organization and presented network forms as an alternative organizational arrangement. Powell discussed the characteristics of network forms, such as interdependence, lateral relationships, and the role of trust, in facilitating coordination and collaboration among organizations. His research expanded our understanding of organizational forms beyond the conventional market and hierarchy framework.

Rosenblatt (2011) examined heterarchy and its implications for organizing diversity and argued for adopting heterarchical structures that distribute authority and decision-making across multiple nodes. Rosenblatt discusses the benefits of heterarchy, such as increased flexibility, adaptability, and inclusivity, in managing diverse and complex organizational environments. His work provided a novel perspective on organizational design and highlighted the potential of heterarchy as an alternative organizing principle.

Uhl-Bien (2006) introduces relational leadership theory and emphasizes the significance of social processes, such as shared meanings, social exchange, and networks, in leadership and organizational dynamics. Uhl-Bien proposed a relational framework that views leadership as a collective phenomenon shaped by social interactions. Her theory expands our understanding of leadership beyond individual attributes and behaviors, highlighting the relational and social aspects of leadership.

Uhl-Bien, Arena, and Berson (2007) investigated leadership in organizational complexity and challenges posed by complex organizational environments and proposed a framework for leadership that incorporates sensemaking, sense-giving, and sense-breaking processes. They argued that leaders must navigate complexity by facilitating adaptive responses, fostering learning, and promoting organizational agility. Their research provided a pivotal contribution to our understanding of leadership in complex contexts and provided insights into the skills and behaviors required for effective leadership in such environments.

The research on heterarchies demonstrates the benefits and issues around the concept and its implications on adaptive leadership. From the view of benefits, the decentralization of the heterarchy can offer the following benefits, as viewed from different perspectives:

**Distributed Decision-Making:** If we consider Rosenblatt (2011), we can argue that heterarchies distribute decision-making authority throughout the organization, empowering individuals at various levels to make autonomous decisions. Suppose we combine this with theories put forth by Uhl-Bien (2006). In that case, this decentralized decision-making process allows quicker responses to emerging challenges and encourages adaptive leaders at all levels to take ownership and initiate change initiatives. Furthermore, heterarchies enhance the organization's adaptive capacity by involving a broader range of perspectives and expertise.

**Collaboration and Information Flow:** Uhl-Bien, et al. (2007) further proposed that heterarchies promote collaboration and facilitate the flow of information across organizational boundaries. In contrast to hierarchical structures, where information may be filtered or delayed, heterarchies foster open communication, knowledge sharing, and cross-functional collaboration (Monge & Contractor, 2003). This proposes that a free exchange of information and ideas allows adaptive leaders to access diverse insights, challenge assumptions, and identify innovative solutions to adaptive challenges.

**Agility and Flexibility:** Heterarchies are inherently more agile and flexible than hierarchical structures (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). They enable adaptive leaders to respond quickly to changing

circumstances, experiment with new approaches, and adapt strategies as needed (Eisenbeiss et al., 2020). The absence of rigid reporting lines and excessive bureaucracy in heterarchies promotes a culture of flexibility, empowering leaders and employees to embrace change and seize opportunities for innovation.

**Empowerment and Engagement:** Heterarchies foster a sense of empowerment and engagement among individuals within the organization (Eisenbeiss et al., 2020). The shared authority and collaborative decision-making processes create a climate where employees feel valued, motivated, and accountable for their contributions (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). This sense of ownership and engagement encourages individuals to proactively identify adaptive challenges, take risks, and contribute their unique perspectives, enhancing the adaptive leadership dynamics within the organization.

However, it is essential to note that the effectiveness of heterarchies in improving adaptive leadership dynamics may depend on various factors, including organizational culture, the nature of tasks, and the competencies of leaders and employees. In addition, successfully implementing heterarchies requires clear communication, trust-building, and developing collaborative skills (Rosenblatt, 2011).

In contrast to the potential positive outcomes of heterarchies as a possible improvement over hierarchical structures in fostering adaptive leadership dynamics, there are counterarguments highlighting challenges and associated limitations:

**Lack of Clear Decision-Making Authority:** In heterarchies, the decentralized decision-making structure can lead to ambiguity and confusion regarding decision-making authority (Zaleznik, 1977). The absence of clear lines of authority and accountability may result in decision-making delays and difficulty aligning actions towards adaptive goals. This can hinder the effectiveness of adaptive leadership as leaders may struggle to drive change initiatives and allocate resources effectively.

**Coordination and Communication Challenges:** Heterarchies, by their nature, involve multiple interconnected nodes or teams, making coordination and communication more complex (Eisenbeiss et al., 2020). The need for extensive collaboration and information sharing can lead to increased coordination costs, information overload, and difficulties maintaining consistency and alignment across the organization (Uzzi & Spiro, 2005). These challenges may impede the timely implementation of adaptive changes and limit the organization's ability to respond swiftly to dynamic environments.

**Potential for Power Struggles and Conflict:** The distributed authority in heterarchies may result in power struggles and conflicts among individuals or teams (Hatchuel, 2006). Without clear hierarchical structures, differing interests and perspectives may create tensions and hinder collaboration and collective decision-making. Such conflicts can divert attention and resources away from adaptive initiatives and erode the effectiveness of adaptive leadership efforts (Eisenbeiss et al., 2020).

**Lack of Organizational Alignment:** Heterarchies can face challenges in achieving organizational alignment due to the diversity of goals, priorities, and interests among different nodes or teams (Ahuja & Lampert, 2001). Without a clear organizational structure and alignment mechanisms, there is a risk of fragmentation and inconsistent actions across the organization. This lack of alignment may inhibit the organization's ability to adapt to changing conditions and pursue shared adaptive goals effectively.

**Resource Allocation and Competition:** In heterarchies, resource allocation decisions can become more complex and potentially contentious (Foss & Lindenberg, 2013). The absence of centralized control may lead to resource competition among different nodes or teams, hindering the allocation of resources towards adaptive initiatives. This resource competition can undermine the collaborative spirit necessary for adaptive leadership and impede the organization's adaptive capacity.



Ultimately, while heterarchies have been proposed as an alternative to hierarchical structures to enhance adaptive leadership dynamics, research does not suggest they present a straightforward solution to establishing an organization hierarchy that supports adaptive leadership. While there are advantages to the system, the system also creates limitations. Moreover, the system is merely a structural change and fails to adequately address the psychological aspects of individuals in critical positions within the structure. Thus, while heterarchies can offer a systemic way to encourage adaptive methodologies from leaders, it fails to present an adequate mechanism to address the constraints individuals can still execute within the system, thus undermining adaptive leadership.

## **5. STRATEGIES FOR ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP**

### **5.1 Identification and Analysis of Effective Strategies for Adaptive Leadership**

In today's rapidly changing and complex business landscape, adaptive leadership has emerged as a crucial competency for leaders to navigate uncertainty, drive innovation, and achieve organizational success. Adaptive leadership refers to recognizing and responding to evolving challenges, effectively mobilizing resources, and fostering resilience within oneself and others. While previous research has shed light on various aspects of adaptive leadership, it is necessary to delve deeper into the individual capabilities that underpin its effectiveness. This dissertation aims to explore the intricate relationship between individual capabilities and adaptive leadership, with a particular focus on how these capabilities interact with the nature of the organizational hierarchy. By examining the unique dynamics at play, this research seeks to uncover the extent to which adaptive leadership is driven by the inherent capabilities of leaders themselves, transcending the influence of organizational structures. Through this investigation, valuable insights can be gained into the development of adaptive leadership and its implications for organizational performance and sustainability.

The literature review of adaptive research has identified a common theme – attempting to determine the key elements, if not personality traits, best suited for adaptive leadership. What is most apparent in this effort is that the research and literature clearly illustrate that there is neither a standard definition of the best aspect of adaptive leadership nor a timeless aspect. Research has shown that the traits most identified with adaptive leadership are additionally relative to the nature of the leadership circumstances and not a universal list of traits that succeed or are applicable in every instance. That is, research has shown that leadership traits that may enable an individual to succeed in one organization may equally cause failure in another.

Adaptive leadership itself stems from three fundamental aspects of leadership. The first is an overall balance between the leader, stakeholders, and conditions. The second is the nature of the

leader's unique style, as defined by dominant or prestige styles. And the final aspect is the individual traits that research has called out best enable adaptive leadership, including but not limited to emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995), self-awareness (Day, 2000), learning agility (DeRue et al., 2011), flexibility (Bass & Riggio, 2006), and resilience (Luthans et al., 2007). While the unique nature of a given organizational hierarchy can affect the nature by which these aspects operate, the hierarchy itself is not a direct hindrance to adaptive leadership.

Jones (Goffee & Jones, 2005) highlights a fundamental axiom of leadership: leaders are influenced by their environment. This concept serves as a crucial starting point for understanding the impact of the environment on adaptive leaders. Additionally, Alexander (2005) challenges the notion that a good leader can excel in any situation. He argues that successful leadership is a result of various factors, including the leader's traits and style, the dynamics of the situation, and the organizational and external environmental conditions. It is through the combination of these elements that effective leadership emerges.

Understanding the interplay between leaders, their environments, and the specific stakeholders involved is essential in comprehending adaptive leadership. Organizations often make the mistake of assuming that replicating successful leaders' past performance will guarantee similar outcomes in new contexts. However, this oversimplification overlooks the complex relationship between leaders and their environments.

To delve deeper into this issue, this chapter will later examine case studies to examine instances of leaders who successfully employed adaptive methodologies in their environment to counter challenges or create new dynamics, to allow for the analysis of the influence of the environment on leadership effectiveness. These case studies can show how specific organizational and external factors, alongside the leader's traits and style, influence leadership outcomes.

The concepts of prestige and dominance in leadership styles are rooted in the development of social hierarchies (Maner & Case, 2016). Dominance leadership is characterized by a preference for using coercion, intimidation, aggression, and manipulation of rewards and punishments to

maintain authority. It employs an opportunistic approach to climb the hierarchy. On the other hand, prestige leadership relies on building relationships based on admiration, respect, and social modeling. It fosters enduring bonds among group members.

When examining these leadership styles in the context of adaptive leadership, evolutionary psychology suggests that the human mind has evolved to utilize either dominance or prestige based on situational needs when facing adaptive challenges. Research indicates that threats, challenges, and obstacles trigger a preference for dominant leadership. This preference stems from the perception that traits associated with dominance are best suited for defensive actions, as human social evolution has shaped our mindset to rely on dominance in such situations. In contrast, prestige leadership models are preferred in “normal” environments, where stability prevails. The traits associated with prestige leadership better facilitate enduring, stable dynamics within a group or organization.

However, when considering the need for adaptive leadership, research suggests that the prestige model is better aligned with advancing an organization’s needs. This is primarily because when an organization encounters a technical threat or the need to adapt, the dominant leadership style may struggle to effectively mobilize collective networks tailored to the situation. In contrast, the prestige style is better equipped to leverage the diverse skills and resources available across the organization or its partners, enabling the design and implementation of necessary adaptations.

In summary, while both dominance and prestige leadership styles have their place, the research indicates that in the context of adaptive leadership, the prestige model is better suited for promoting an organization’s adaptive capabilities. By drawing upon the collective knowledge and expertise available, prestige leadership can effectively navigate the challenges and complexities of adaptation, ensuring the organization’s success in evolving environments.

Significant research has examined traits associated with adaptive leadership. Over the years, scholars have explored the traits associated with adaptive leadership to better understand the qualities and characteristics that enable leaders to navigate complex and rapidly changing

environments effectively. The exploration of adaptive leadership traits has evolved, reflecting changes in leadership theories and the increasing recognition of the need for leaders to be adaptable in dynamic contexts.

In the early stages of research, trait leadership theories predominated, focusing on identifying specific individual characteristics that contribute to effective leadership. For instance, early trait theorists, such as Stogdill (1948), emphasized the importance of intelligence, self-confidence, determination, and sociability as key traits associated with leadership effectiveness. However, these early studies did not explicitly address the adaptability dimension of leadership.

As leadership theories evolved, researchers began to recognize the significance of adaptability in effective leadership. The concept of adaptive leadership gained prominence in the 1990s and early 2000s, propelled by the realization that leaders needed to navigate increasingly complex and uncertain environments. Scholars sought to identify the specific traits that distinguished adaptive leaders from their counterparts.

One prominent trait associated with adaptive leadership is cognitive flexibility or mental agility. Cognitive flexibility refers to thinking critically, embracing multiple perspectives, and adjusting one's thinking to new and changing circumstances. Researchers argue that adaptive leaders possess cognitive flexibility that enables them to navigate ambiguity, make sense of complex problems, and generate innovative solutions (DeRue et al., 2011).

Another crucial trait is openness to experience. Adaptive leaders are characterized by their willingness to explore new ideas, embrace diverse perspectives, and continuously learn and grow. This openness allows them to adapt their leadership style, approaches, and strategies to fit the evolving needs of their followers and the dynamic nature of the environment (Carmeli & Schaubroeck, 2008).

Furthermore, resilience is a trait that plays a pivotal role in adaptive leadership. Resilient leaders can bounce back from setbacks, persevere in the face of challenges, and maintain their

composure under pressure. Their ability to adapt and recover from adversity enables them to inspire and motivate their teams to overcome obstacles and navigate change effectively (Luthans et al., 2007).

Empathy and emotional intelligence also emerge as critical traits associated with adaptive leadership. Adaptive leaders possess a keen understanding of their followers' emotions, needs, and perspectives. This enables them to create a supportive and inclusive work environment, foster collaboration, and build strong relationships that facilitate organizational adaptation (Boyatzis, 2008).

It is important to note that the identification of adaptive leadership traits has evolved alongside the broader understanding of leadership as a dynamic and context-dependent process. The recognition that effective leadership is contingent upon the situation and the demands of the environment has led to the development of contingency theories and the consideration of interaction effects between traits and contextual factors.

While research on adaptive leadership traits has made significant strides, there is still ongoing exploration and refinement of these concepts. Future studies may delve deeper into the specific mechanisms through which these traits facilitate adaptive leadership and explore the interplay between traits and contextual factors in different organizational and cultural settings.

In conclusion, the research on adaptive leadership traits has evolved over time, reflecting the growing recognition of the need for leaders to adapt to complex and dynamic environments. Cognitive flexibility, openness to experience, resilience, empathy, and emotional intelligence have emerged as key traits associated with adaptive leadership. These traits enable leaders to navigate ambiguity, embrace change, and foster collaboration and innovation. As leadership theories continue to evolve, further research will refine our understanding of adaptive leadership traits and their impact on leadership effectiveness in diverse contexts.

## 5.2 Case Studies Showcasing Successful Implementation of Adaptive Leadership Approaches

The case studies presented in this section offer valuable insights into the successful implementation of adaptive leadership approaches within real-world organizational settings. The selected case studies focus on notable companies, including Nike, Apple, General Electric (GE), and IBM, demonstrating a strong commitment to adaptive leadership principles and effectively utilizing these strategies to address complex challenges, foster innovation, and maintain their competitive advantage. By analyzing these real-world examples, we can gain a deeper understanding of how adaptive leadership practices have been applied in diverse industry contexts and the resulting impact on organizational performance. These case studies serve as empirical evidence that showcases the practical application and effectiveness of adaptive leadership in facilitating organizational adaptation, driving innovation, and achieving sustainable success.

### Case Study 1: Nike

Nike's ability to adapt and thrive in a competitive market highlights the effectiveness of adaptive leadership. This case study delves into Nike's strategic decisions and initiatives under CEO Mark Parker's guidance, shedding light on the company's adaptive leadership practices.

Nike recognized the need for digital transformation to remain competitive in an evolving market. CEO Mark Parker led the charge by prioritizing technology as a key innovation and customer engagement driver. By leveraging digital platforms, Nike created new avenues to connect with customers and deliver personalized experiences (Wu et al., 2019). This customer-centric approach aligns with the principles of adaptive leadership, emphasizing the importance of understanding and responding to evolving customer needs (Heifetz, 1994).

Nike invested in data analytics and consumer insights to enhance its adaptive capabilities. By harnessing the power of data, Nike gained valuable insights into consumer preferences, market trends, and performance metrics. These insights enabled the company to adapt its product offerings,

design strategies, and marketing campaigns to better align with changing consumer demands (Wu et al., 2019). Nike's data-driven decision-making exemplifies the adaptive leadership principle of leveraging information and insights to drive organizational change (Tang et al., 2007).

## Case Study 2: Apple

Apple's ability to adapt and revolutionize industries exemplifies the power of adaptive leadership. This case study delves into Apple's strategic decisions and initiatives under Steve Jobs' leadership, shedding light on the company's adaptive leadership practices.

One key aspect of Apple's adaptive leadership is its relentless focus on user experience. Steve Jobs believed in creating products that seamlessly integrated technology into people's lives. By placing users at the center of product design and development, Apple delivered intuitive and user-friendly experiences (Yoffie & Kim, 2011). This user-centric approach aligns with the principles of adaptive leadership, emphasizing the importance of understanding and meeting customer needs (Heifetz, 1994).

Apple's adaptive leadership is evident in its commitment to continuous product iteration. Rather than resting on past successes, Apple continuously refined and enhanced its products based on customer feedback and emerging technologies. This iterative approach allowed Apple to stay ahead of the competition and adapt to changing market dynamics (Yoffie & Kim, 2011). Apple's focus on continuous improvement and innovation is a core tenet of adaptive leadership, emphasizing the need for ongoing learning and adaptation (Heifetz, 1994).

Another aspect of Apple's adaptive leadership is its strategic focus on ecosystem integration. By creating a seamless hardware, software, and services ecosystem, Apple enhanced the user experience and differentiated itself from competitors. Integrating devices like the iPhone, iPad, and Mac, along with services like iCloud and the App Store, enabled customers to seamlessly transition between Apple products and enjoy a cohesive user experience (Yoffie & Kim, 2011).



This ecosystem-centric approach demonstrates Apple's ability to adapt and leverage interconnected components to create customer value.

Apple's adaptive leadership strategies under Steve Jobs' guidance have had a profound impact on the company's success. The introduction of innovative products like the iPhone and iPad revolutionized entire industries, while Apple's focus on user experience and ecosystem integration created a loyal customer base. These adaptive strategies propelled Apple to become a market leader and drove significant financial growth (Yoffie & Kim, 2011).

Apple's ability to anticipate market trends, disrupt industries, and maintain a loyal customer base showcases its adaptive leadership approach. Under the visionary leadership of Steve Jobs, Apple's relentless focus on user experience, continuous product iteration, and ecosystem integration have set new standards for innovation and industry disruption. This case study highlights the significance of adaptive leadership in driving anticipatory innovation and creating transformative customer experiences.

### Case Study 3: General Electric (GE)

GE faced formidable challenges during the era of Jack Welch's leadership, including intensified competition and shifting market dynamics. This case study provides an in-depth analysis of Welch's adaptive leadership behaviors and strategies to drive GE's transformation.

Welch implemented several adaptive strategies to facilitate GE's transformation. One of the key initiatives was the introduction of the "Work-Out" program. This program aimed to empower employees by encouraging open communication, collaboration, and the removal of bureaucratic obstacles. It provided a platform for employees at all levels to contribute ideas, solve problems, and drive innovation (Slater & Narver, 1995). The "Work-Out" program aligns with the principles of adaptive leadership, emphasizing the importance of empowering individuals and engaging them in the change process (Heifetz, 1994).

Another critical element of GE's adaptive leadership under Welch was the adoption of the Six Sigma methodology. This data-driven approach focused on improving process efficiency, reducing defects, and enhancing customer satisfaction. By implementing Six Sigma across the organization, Welch emphasized a culture of continuous improvement, operational excellence, and customer-centricity (Slater & Narver, 1995). Integrating Six Sigma demonstrates Welch's commitment to adaptive leadership by embracing data and evidence-based decision-making to drive organizational change (Tang et al., 2007).

#### Case Study 4: IBM

IBM faced significant challenges in the early 2010s due to shifts in the technology industry and increasing competition. CEO Ginni Rometty's leadership was instrumental in orchestrating the company's turnaround and repositioning it as a leader in emerging technologies. This case study delves into the adaptive leadership behaviors and actions undertaken by Rometty to drive IBM's successful transformation.

Rometty employed several adaptive leadership strategies to guide IBM's turnaround. First, she initiated a strategic shift in the company's focus, recognizing the growing demand for cloud computing and cognitive solutions. By repositioning IBM as a provider of these innovative technologies, Rometty aligned the company with market trends and customer needs (Wadhwa, 2019). Research by Doz and Kosonen (2010) emphasizes the importance of strategic shifts in adaptive leadership to address changing industry landscapes.

Second, Rometty fostered collaboration both internally and externally. She encouraged cross-functional teamwork and knowledge sharing within the organization, enabling IBM to leverage its diverse expertise and capabilities to deliver comprehensive solutions. Additionally, Rometty forged strategic partnerships with other industry players, fostering collaboration and co-innovation (Wadhwa, 2019). Collaboration is recognized as a critical aspect of adaptive leadership, as it enables organizations to tap into external resources and collective intelligence (Uhl-Bien, 2014).

Third, Rometty prioritized investments in emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence. She recognized AI's transformative potential and directed resources towards developing AI capabilities and integrating cognitive solutions into IBM's portfolio (Wadhwa, 2019). This forward-thinking approach aligns with research by Reijers et al. (2018), which highlights the importance of technology investments in adaptive leadership to seize new opportunities and stay ahead in evolving industries.

### Case Study 5: Amazon

Amazon's response to the 2020 COVID-19 supply chain disruptions can be attributed to several key adaptive leadership traits:

1. The company demonstrated a high level of flexibility and adaptability, as evidenced by its ability to quickly adjust its operations to meet changing customer demands and adapt to evolving supply chain dynamics. Research by Cao et al. (2020) suggests that adaptability is crucial in managing supply chain disruptions during crises.
2. Amazon's leaders exhibited strong problem-solving skills, proactively identifying bottlenecks and implementing innovative solutions to overcome supply chain challenges. According to Yadav et al. (2020), effective problem-solving abilities are essential for managing supply chain disruptions caused by external shocks.
3. The company displayed a customer-centric approach, focusing on understanding customer needs and adjusting its supply chain processes accordingly to maintain high service levels.

A study by Khan et al. (2021) emphasizes the importance of customer-centricity in mitigating supply chain disruptions and ensuring customer satisfaction.

Amazon implemented various adaptive leadership actions and strategies to address the supply chain disruptions caused by COVID-19. The company rapidly scaled up its logistics and delivery capabilities to meet the surge in online orders, leveraging its extensive network of

fulfillment centers, distribution hubs, and last-mile delivery partners. Research by Lu et al. (2020) highlights the significance of scaling up logistics operations to manage sudden increases in demand during supply chain disruptions. Amazon also prioritized the safety and well-being of its workforce by implementing enhanced health and safety protocols, including social distancing measures, personal protective equipment, and frequent sanitization practices. A study by Sarkis et al. (2021) emphasized the importance of implementing health and safety measures to protect employees during supply chain disruptions.

These case studies highlight how companies like Nike, Apple, General Electric, IBM, and Amazon have implemented adaptive leadership approaches to navigate challenges, drive innovation, and stay competitive in their respective industries. By analyzing these real-world examples, organizations can learn from successful strategies and adapt their own leadership practices to meet the demands of a rapidly changing business environment.

### 5.3 Examination of Leadership Behaviors and Competencies Necessary for Adaptive Leadership

As organizations face unprecedented levels of complexity and uncertainty, the ability to adapt and thrive becomes paramount. This section builds upon the previous discussions on the importance of adaptive leadership and delves deeper into examining leadership behaviors and competencies necessary to lead effectively in adaptive contexts. By understanding and cultivating these behaviors and competencies, organizations can develop a pipeline of leaders equipped to navigate complexity, drive innovation, and successfully lead adaptation efforts. In the following sections, we explore the key behaviors and competencies that underpin adaptive leadership, shedding light on their significance and implications for leadership development and organizational success.

#### Behaviors and Competencies for Adaptive Leadership:

##### Embracing Change and Uncertainty:

Adaptive leaders must have a high tolerance for change and uncertainty. They embrace ambiguity and view it as an opportunity for growth and learning. By fostering a culture that encourages experimentation and risk-taking, adaptive leaders create an environment where individuals feel empowered to adapt and innovate (Heifetz & Laurie, 2001).

#### Learning Agility:

Learning agility is a critical competency for adaptive leaders. It involves the ability to quickly learn from new experiences, apply knowledge to different situations, and adjust strategies accordingly. Adaptive leaders actively seek out diverse perspectives, engage in continuous learning, and encourage their teams to do the same (DeRue et al., 2011).

#### Systems Thinking:

Adaptive leaders possess strong systems-thinking skills. They understand the interconnectedness of various elements within the organization and the broader external environment. By adopting a holistic perspective, adaptive leaders can identify patterns, anticipate changes, and make informed decisions that consider the long-term impact on the system (Senge, 1990).

#### Empowering and Inspiring Others:

Adaptive leaders recognize that successful adaptation requires collective effort. They empower and inspire their teams, fostering a sense of ownership and commitment. Adaptive leaders create a supportive environment where individuals feel motivated to contribute their unique skills and ideas to drive innovation and adaptation (Yukl, 2010).

#### Collaboration and Influencing:

Collaboration and influencing skills are essential for adaptive leaders. They build strong networks, both internally and externally, and actively engage stakeholders to gain support for adaptive initiatives. Adaptive leaders are skilled influencers, capable of persuading others and mobilizing resources to drive change and overcome resistance (Bass, 1990).

Effective adaptive leadership requires a combination of behaviors and competencies that enable leaders to navigate complexity, drive innovation, and successfully lead adaptation efforts. By embracing change and uncertainty, fostering learning agility, applying systems thinking, empowering others, and leveraging collaboration and influencing skills, leaders can effectively adapt to the evolving business landscape. Developing and cultivating these behaviors and competencies within leaders is crucial for organizations to thrive in an increasingly dynamic and uncertain environment.

#### 5.4 Best Practices for Developing Adaptive Leaders within Organizations

Developing adaptive leaders is a critical aspect of fostering organizational agility and resilience in today's dynamic business environment. Effective leadership development programs should equip individuals with the necessary skills, competencies, and mindsets to navigate complexity, drive innovation, and adapt to change. Drawing on the research of Morgeson, DeRue, and Karam (2010), Sarta, Durand, and Vergne (2017), Harrison (2017), Paolillo (2018), and additional scholarly insights, the following best practices outline key strategies for developing adaptive leaders:

**Promote Self-Awareness and Emotional Intelligence:** Adaptive leaders must possess a deep understanding of their own strengths, weaknesses, values, and emotions to effectively navigate complex challenges (Morgeson et al., 2010). Leadership development programs should incorporate self-assessment tools, such as 360-degree feedback assessments and emotional intelligence assessments, to enhance self-awareness and cultivate emotional intelligence skills (Harrison, 2017). By gaining insight into their own behaviors and emotions, leaders can better adapt their approaches to different situations and effectively manage themselves and their relationships with others.

**Foster Learning Agility and Continuous Development:** Learning agility, the ability to learn from experience and apply that learning to new situations, is a critical competency for adaptive leaders (Sarta et al., 2017). Leadership development programs should emphasize experiential

learning opportunities, such as job rotations, stretch assignments, and cross-functional projects, to expose leaders to diverse challenges and foster their ability to adapt (Harrison, 2017). Additionally, organizations should provide resources for continuous development, such as mentoring programs, coaching, and access to relevant learning platforms and networks (Paolillo, 2018). Organizations can enhance leaders' adaptive capabilities by creating a continuous learning and development culture.

**Cultivate Systems Thinking and Complexity Management:** Adaptive leaders must possess the ability to understand and navigate complex systems and manage the interdependencies within organizations (Morgeson et al., 2010). Leadership development programs should incorporate training in systems thinking, helping leaders understand the interconnectedness of various organizational elements and the implications of their decisions on the broader system (Harrison, 2017). Moreover, leaders should be equipped with tools and frameworks to manage complexity effectively, such as scenario planning, network analysis, and strategic foresight (Sarta et al., 2017). This enables leaders to anticipate and respond to emerging challenges and leverage opportunities in complex environments.

**Foster Collaboration and Interdisciplinary Perspective:** Adaptive leadership requires collaboration and the ability to work effectively across disciplines and functions (Morgeson et al., 2010). Leadership development programs should provide opportunities for leaders to collaborate with diverse teams, encouraging cross-functional projects and initiatives (Harrison, 2017). Additionally, organizations should promote a culture of interdisciplinary learning and collaboration by creating platforms for knowledge sharing, fostering connections between different areas of expertise, and valuing diverse perspectives (Sarta et al., 2017). By building collaborative skills and promoting a holistic perspective, leaders can effectively address complex challenges and leverage the collective intelligence of the organization.

**Encourage Risk-Taking and Innovation:** Adaptive leaders must be comfortable with ambiguity, embrace calculated risks, and foster a culture of innovation (Morgeson et al., 2010). Leadership development programs should nurture a mindset that encourages experimentation,

learning from failures, and the pursuit of innovative solutions (Harrison, 2017). Organizations should establish mechanisms for idea generation, such as innovation labs or idea incubators, and provide resources and support for implementing innovative ideas (Paolillo, 2018). By creating an environment that values and rewards risk-taking and innovation, organizations can unleash the adaptive potential of their leaders.

In conclusion, developing adaptive leaders requires a comprehensive approach that encompasses self-awareness, learning agility, systems thinking, collaboration, and a culture of innovation. By incorporating the best practices outlined above, organizations can foster the growth of adaptive leaders who are equipped to navigate complexity, drive organizational agility, and lead their teams to success.



## **6. ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS AND LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS**

### 6.1 Investigation of Organizational Factors That Enable or Hinder Adaptive Leadership

Several authors have explored the relationship between hierarchies and leadership. One of the main findings was that hierarchies can limit leadership effectiveness. For example, according to Avolio and Bass (1991), hierarchies can stifle creativity, reduce innovation, and limit leaders' ability to motivate employees. This is because hierarchies create a rigid structure that can make it difficult for leaders to adapt to changing circumstances or develop new problem-solving approaches.

Moreover, hierarchies can create a culture of obedience rather than empowerment, leading to a need for more initiative among employees. This is particularly true in organizations with a rigid and inflexible hierarchy, where employees are expected to follow orders without questions (Frohman, 1988). This environment can stifle innovation and limit the development of new ideas.

Another finding was that hierarchies can create a power imbalance between leaders and followers. This can make it difficult for leaders to establish trust and respect for their employees, leading to a lack of commitment and engagement (Chen & Silverthorne, 2008). Additionally, hierarchical structures can make it difficult for leaders to communicate effectively with their subordinates, leading to misunderstandings and the need for clarity.

#### Impact of Hierarchies on Organizational Culture

Hierarchy can also have a significant impact on organizational culture. Several authors have argued that hierarchical structures can promote a culture of conformity and obedience rather than innovation and creativity (Frohman, 1988; Avolio & Bass, 1991). This can be particularly

problematic in rapidly changing environments, where organizations need to adapt quickly to new challenges and opportunities.

Moreover, hierarchies can create a culture of mistrust and suspicion among employees, particularly when they are used to enforcing strict rules and regulations (Chen & Silverthorne, 2008). This can make it difficult for employees to work together effectively and reduce their cooperation and collaboration within the organization.

On the other hand, some authors argue that hierarchies can promote a strong sense of organizational identity and loyalty (Kumar & Beyerlein, 1991). Hierarchies provide employees with a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities within the organization, which fosters a sense of belonging and pride in their work.

#### Impact of Hierarchies on Employee Motivation

The impact of hierarchies on employee motivation is a topic of significant interest among researchers. One of the main findings is that hierarchical structures can create a sense of powerlessness among employees, leading to reduced motivation (Chen & Silverthorne, 2008). This is particularly true in organizations where decision-making is centralized, and employees have little say about how things are done.

Moreover, hierarchical structures can limit opportunities for employees to advance and grow, leading to a lack of motivation and engagement (Kumar & Beyerlein, 1991). This can be particularly problematic in organizations with high turnover, as employees may feel that there needs to be more room for growth and development within the organization.

Another approach to understanding the effects of hierarchies in business organizations is through the lens of power dynamics. According to Pfeffer and Salancik (2003), power is a fundamental aspect of organizational life, and hierarchies play a significant role in shaping power dynamics. They argue that the hierarchical structure of organizations gives power to those at the

top who control resources and decision-making processes. This concentration of power can lead to various outcomes, including increased job satisfaction and employee commitment among those in positions of authority. However, it can also result in adverse effects such as employee turnover, conflict, and mistrust among lower-level employees.

In addition, another research has shown that hierarchies can contribute to the formation of organizational silos or groups that operate independently of other parts of the organization. According to Cameron and Quinn (2011), silos can arise when employees identify more with their individual teams or departments than the overall organization. Silos can be problematic because they can hinder collaboration and communication, leading to a lack of coordination and an inability to achieve organizational goals.

Despite these potential disadvantages, hierarchies remain prevalent in many business organizations. One reason is the perception that hierarchies are necessary to maintain order and efficiency within organizations. Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) support this idea, finding that organizations with more hierarchical structures perform better in stable environments where tasks and roles are well-defined.

However, there are better options than hierarchical structures for business organizations. Organizations with more flexible flat structures may be better suited to adapt to changing circumstances in dynamic and uncertain environments. For example, Daft and Weick (1984) suggest that flat organizational structures can lead to more significant innovation and creativity because they foster a sense of autonomy and allow for more cross-functional collaboration.

Another potential approach to mitigating the negative effects of hierarchies is empowerment. Empowerment involves giving employees more autonomy and control over their work, which can increase their job satisfaction, motivation, and engagement. For example, Conger and Kanungo (1988) suggest that empowerment can improve job performance, increase innovation, and better customer service.

However, empowerment is not a one-size-fits-all solution, and its effectiveness depends on various factors such as organizational culture, employee readiness, and the nature of the work being performed. Additionally, empowerment can be challenging to implement in hierarchical organizations, where power and decision-making are concentrated at the top.

Overall, research suggests that hierarchies can positively and negatively affect business organizations, thus it would be imprudent to assign them as a primary cause of hindering adaptive leadership. Although hierarchies can provide order and stability in specific environments, they can also lead to power imbalances, silos and decreased innovation. Alternative organizational structures, such as flat structures and empowerment initiatives, may offer solutions to these challenges; however, their effectiveness depends on various factors.

Finally, the results of this study contribute to our understanding of the psychological aspects of power structures in hierarchical organizations and their impact on adaptive leadership. The findings inform the development of interventions to promote adaptive leadership in hierarchical organizations, such as training programs for managers and employees on effective communication and decision-making. Additionally, this study may have implications for organizational design and structure, including the potential for flatter organizational structures and more decentralized decision-making processes to promote adaptive leadership.

## 6.2 Analysis of the Impact of Culture, Structure, and Systems on Adaptive Leadership

The impact of culture, structure, and systems on adaptive leadership within organizations is a complex and multifaceted area of research. By analyzing various sources, including those listed, we can gain a comprehensive understanding of how these factors influence adaptive leadership and organizational outcomes.

In the context of organizational structure, the concept of reinventing organizations has gained attention, emphasizing new ways of organizing work based on a higher level of human

consciousness (Laloux, 2014). Holacracy, a specific organizational structure, has been proposed as a new paradigm for organizing work (Laloux, 2018).

The effects of power on social behavior and decision-making have been examined, indicating that power can increase social distance and influence approach and generosity in social dilemmas (Lammers, Galinsky, Gordijn, & Otten, 2008; Lammers, Galinsky, Gordijn, & Otten, 2012; Larrick & Blunt, 1997).

Power dynamics, a crucial element in understanding leadership within organizations, significantly influence adaptive leadership practices (Kim, Pinkley, & Fragale, 2005). Research suggests that power can shape negotiation outcomes and decision-making processes, highlighting the importance of understanding and managing power dynamics within organizations. Power dynamics affect the distribution of influence and can impact the ability of leaders to navigate change effectively. By recognizing and addressing power dynamics, adaptive leaders can ensure fair decision-making processes and create an environment that fosters collaboration and innovation.

Social networks and relationships also play a vital role in adaptive leadership. Krackhardt's (1992) study emphasizes the strength of strong ties and their impact on adaptive leadership within organizations. Strong ties facilitate information exchange, collaboration, and support, enabling leaders to access diverse perspectives and resources necessary for effective decision-making. By cultivating robust social networks, organizations can create an environment that supports adaptive leaders in navigating complex challenges and driving organizational change.

Cultural factors significantly shape adaptive leadership practices within organizations. Laloux's work on reinventing organizations (2014) highlights the importance of culture in leadership approaches. Traditional hierarchical structures may hinder adaptive leadership by stifling creativity, innovation, and employee autonomy. Laloux suggests that adopting a culture of empowerment, trust, and shared values can foster adaptive leadership and encourage

experimentation and learning. Organizations should promote a culture that values openness, inclusivity, and continuous learning to enable adaptive leaders to thrive.

The concept of psychological safety emerges as a critical aspect of culture that impacts adaptive leadership (Kuhl et al., 2005). Psychological safety refers to an environment where individuals feel safe to express ideas, take risks, and learn from failures. Research suggests that creating a culture of psychological safety enables adaptive leaders to encourage innovation, experimentation, and open dialogue. Organizations can foster psychological safety by promoting open communication channels, recognizing and valuing diverse perspectives, and encouraging a learning-oriented mindset.

Structural elements, such as the adoption of alternative organizational structures like holacracy, can also influence adaptive leadership (Laloux, 2018). Holacracy is a decentralized organizational structure that empowers individuals and teams to make autonomous decisions, fostering adaptive leadership at various levels. By removing rigid hierarchies and enabling distributed authority, holacracy creates a system that supports agile decision-making and responsiveness to change.

In conclusion, the analysis of the impact of culture, structure, and systems on adaptive leadership highlights the intricate interplay between these factors. Power dynamics, social networks, cultural values, and organizational structures all contribute to shaping the effectiveness of adaptive leaders within organizations. By understanding and leveraging these dynamics strategically, organizations can create an environment that promotes adaptive leadership, fosters a culture of psychological safety and innovation, and drives positive organizational outcomes.

### 6.3 Exploration of Leadership Behaviors that Support Adaptive Outcomes

In the broader context of leadership theories and the study of adaptive behaviors, this section focuses on the examination of leadership behaviors that support adaptive outcomes. As

organizations face increasingly dynamic and uncertain environments, adaptive leadership becomes paramount for their success. This section delves into the specific actions and strategies that leaders can employ to foster adaptability within their teams and organizations. By exploring the impact of leadership behaviors on adaptive outcomes, this discussion contributes to the ongoing discourse on effective leadership in the face of change and uncertainty.

### Creating a Vision for Change

A strong vision serves as more than just a statement of intent; it acts as a guiding beacon that illuminates the path forward. When leaders articulate a compelling vision, they effectively communicate the necessity for adaptation and help individuals understand the underlying rationale. By providing a shared sense of purpose and meaning, a strong vision aligns the efforts of team members and channels their energy towards achieving the desired adaptive outcomes (Kotter, 1995).

Furthermore, a compelling vision stimulates individuals to contribute their unique perspectives, ideas, and efforts to the adaptive process. When individuals are inspired by a vision that resonates with their values and aspirations, they are more likely to engage in proactive problem-solving, innovation, and collaboration (Avolio et al., 2009). The vision serves as a rallying point, uniting individuals around a common goal and fostering a sense of collective ownership over the adaptive journey.

In addition to creating a compelling vision, leaders who promote adaptive outcomes also demonstrate strong communication skills. Effective communication plays a crucial role in facilitating understanding, aligning expectations, and building trust (Bass et al., 2003). Leaders who communicate openly and transparently about the need for adaptation, the rationale behind specific changes, and the progress made towards adaptive goals foster an environment conducive to change. Through clear and consistent messaging, leaders ensure that everyone within the organization is well-informed and on board with the adaptive initiatives.

## Encouraging Innovation and Risk-Taking

Adaptive leaders go beyond merely advocating for change; they actively foster a culture of innovation and risk-taking within their organizations. They understand that to adapt effectively, individuals need to feel empowered to challenge the status quo and experiment with new ideas. These leaders create an environment that encourages curiosity, creativity, and learning from failure, recognizing that innovation often emerges from a willingness to take calculated risks (Amabile, 1998).

By fostering a culture of innovation, adaptive leaders create a psychological safety net where individuals feel comfortable expressing their ideas and exploring unconventional approaches. They promote an open-mindedness that embraces diverse perspectives and encourages the exploration of alternative solutions. In such an environment, individuals are more likely to engage in proactive problem-solving, experiment with new methods, and contribute their innovative insights.

Furthermore, adaptive leaders understand the importance of recognizing and rewarding individuals who propose novel solutions and approaches. They provide the necessary resources and support to nurture innovative ideas, whether it be through dedicated research and development teams, innovation labs, or cross-functional collaboration. These leaders also acknowledge that failure is an inherent part of the innovation process and create a culture where failure is seen as an opportunity for learning and growth. By reframing failure as a stepping stone to success, adaptive leaders inspire individuals to persevere and continuously strive for innovative solutions.

## Promoting Learning and Continuous Improvement

Leaders who prioritize adaptive outcomes recognize the importance of learning and continuous improvement as key drivers of organizational agility. They establish structures and processes that promote knowledge sharing, collaboration, and reflection on experiences, allowing



teams to leverage collective wisdom and adapt based on new insights and changing circumstances (Senge, 1990).

These leaders foster a culture that encourages a learning mindset throughout the organization. They create an environment where individuals feel safe to share their knowledge, ideas, and perspectives, fostering open communication and collaboration. By valuing diverse viewpoints and promoting cross-functional collaboration, leaders enable teams to leverage a wider range of expertise and perspectives, leading to more effective problem-solving and innovative solutions.

Furthermore, leaders who support adaptive outcomes understand the importance of embracing feedback and treating mistakes as opportunities for growth and learning. They create psychological safety within the organization, where individuals feel comfortable taking risks, experimenting with new approaches, and openly discussing failures. By reframing mistakes as learning opportunities, leaders encourage individuals and teams to reflect on their experiences, extract valuable insights, and apply that knowledge to future endeavors.

### Empowering and Developing Others

Adaptive leadership goes beyond individual capabilities and extends to empowering and developing others within the organization to enhance their capacity for adaptation. Leaders who prioritize adaptive outcomes understand the importance of delegation and distributing decision-making authority throughout the organization (Conger & Kanungo, 1998). By delegating decision-making power, these leaders foster a sense of ownership and responsibility among individuals at all levels, enabling them to make informed choices that contribute to organizational adaptation.

In addition to delegation, leaders who support adaptive outcomes provide coaching, mentoring, and developmental opportunities to enhance the skills and capabilities of their team members. They recognize that developing a diverse set of skills and fostering a growth mindset is crucial for individuals to contribute effectively to organizational adaptation. Through coaching,

leaders provide guidance, support, and feedback to help individuals navigate the challenges and complexities of adaptive change. They mentor individuals, sharing their own experiences and insights, and providing guidance on how to navigate uncertainty and embrace innovation.

Furthermore, leaders who prioritize adaptive outcomes create a culture that values continuous learning and development. They invest in training programs, workshops, and other developmental opportunities that enable individuals to acquire new skills and knowledge relevant to the evolving needs of the organization. By providing these opportunities, leaders not only enhance the adaptive capabilities of individuals but also foster a sense of engagement, motivation, and commitment among team members.

By empowering and developing others, leaders not only build the capacity for adaptation within the organization but also cultivate a culture of collective ownership and shared responsibility. This approach creates a sense of alignment and common purpose, enabling individuals to work collaboratively and leverage their diverse perspectives and skills to address adaptive challenges.

### Facilitating Collaboration and Communication

Collaboration and effective communication are essential for adaptive outcomes. Leaders who promote collaboration create structures and processes that encourage cross-functional teamwork and the exchange of diverse perspectives (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993). They foster a culture of open communication, where ideas and information flow freely, enabling timely decision-making and agility in response to changing circumstances. These leaders also actively listen to their team members, value their input, and seek to understand different viewpoints.

Furthermore, leaders who promote adaptive outcomes actively listen to their team members. They recognize that effective communication involves not only conveying information but also genuinely hearing and understanding the perspectives of others (Mumford & Campion, 2002). These leaders value the input and feedback of their team members, creating an environment

where everyone's voices are heard and respected. They seek to understand different viewpoints, encouraging diverse thinking and fostering an inclusive culture that embraces multiple perspectives.

By prioritizing collaboration and effective communication, leaders enable teams to work together cohesively and leverage the collective intelligence of the organization. This approach allows for the exchange of ideas, knowledge, and expertise, leading to more informed decision-making and adaptability in response to changing circumstances. Moreover, it fosters a sense of trust, engagement, and ownership among team members, creating a supportive environment where individuals feel empowered to contribute their best ideas and efforts towards achieving adaptive outcomes.

#### Navigating Ambiguity and Uncertainty

Adaptive leaders demonstrate resilience and the ability to navigate ambiguity and uncertainty. They remain calm and composed in the face of challenges, instilling confidence in their teams (HBR, 2020). They are adept at gathering and analyzing information, identifying trends, and making informed decisions amidst uncertainty. These leaders understand that adaptive outcomes require agility and flexibility, and they can pivot their strategies when needed.

Furthermore, adaptive leaders excel at making decisions amidst uncertainty. They possess a combination of analytical thinking, intuition, and a willingness to take calculated risks (Yukl, 2002). They understand that adaptive outcomes necessitate agility and flexibility, and they are willing to adjust their plans and strategies when circumstances demand it. These leaders recognize that in dynamic environments, rigid adherence to a predefined path can hinder progress. Instead, they remain open to new possibilities, are receptive to feedback and alternative viewpoints, and are willing to pivot their approach as needed to achieve the desired outcomes.

Adaptive leaders also demonstrate the ability to inspire and motivate their teams during times of ambiguity and change. They communicate with clarity, transparency, and empathy,

ensuring that their teams understand the rationale behind adaptive actions and the vision for the future. These leaders foster a sense of trust and psychological safety, encouraging open dialogue and creating an environment where team members feel comfortable expressing their concerns, ideas, and suggestions. By building a supportive and collaborative culture, adaptive leaders empower their teams to embrace ambiguity and uncertainty, fostering a collective commitment to navigating challenges and achieving adaptive outcomes.

## Conclusion

Leadership behaviors that support adaptive outcomes are essential for organizations to thrive in today's fast-paced and uncertain environment. By creating a compelling vision, encouraging innovation, promoting learning, empowering others, facilitating collaboration, and navigating ambiguity, leaders can cultivate adaptability within their teams and organizations. These behaviors foster a culture of agility, creativity, and continuous improvement, enabling organizations to proactively respond to change, seize opportunities, and achieve sustainable success.

### 6.4 Strategies for Creating a Culture of Psychological Safety and Innovation

Creating a culture of psychological safety and innovation is paramount for organizations aiming to foster adaptive leadership and drive sustainable success in today's complex and rapidly changing business landscape. Psychological safety refers to an environment where individuals feel safe to take interpersonal risks, share their ideas, and express themselves without fear of negative consequences (Edmondson, 2019). This section explores key strategies for cultivating psychological safety and promoting innovation within organizations, drawing on the research of Edmondson (1999), Brown and Leigh (2018), and additional scholarly insights.

1. **Leadership Role Modeling:** Leaders play a crucial role in shaping the culture of an organization. They must demonstrate vulnerability, openness, and a willingness to learn from mistakes to create a psychologically safe environment (Edmondson, 1999). Leaders should actively

seek and value input from their team members, encourage diverse perspectives, and foster an atmosphere of respect and empathy. By modeling behaviors that encourage psychological safety, leaders set the tone for the entire organization.

2. **Establish Clear Communication Channels:** Effective communication channels are vital for fostering psychological safety and enabling innovation. Organizations should establish open-door policies, regular feedback mechanisms, and opportunities for anonymous input to encourage individuals to voice their opinions and ideas (Brown & Leigh, 2018). Transparent communication helps remove barriers to open dialogue, encourages collaboration, and instills a sense of trust and psychological safety among team members.

3. **Embrace Failure as a Learning Opportunity:** In a psychologically safe culture, failure is viewed as a valuable learning experience rather than a source of punishment or blame (Edmondson, 1999). Organizations should promote a growth mindset that embraces experimentation, encourages risk-taking, and reframes failures as opportunities for improvement and innovation. Leaders should celebrate and recognize individuals and teams for their efforts, irrespective of the outcome, thus fostering a culture that encourages creativity and exploration.

4. **Provide Resources for Learning and Development:** To promote a culture of psychological safety and innovation, organizations should invest in providing resources and opportunities for continuous learning and development (Brown & Leigh, 2018). Training programs, workshops, and coaching sessions equip employees with the necessary skills, knowledge, and tools to navigate uncertainty, think creatively, and adapt to changing circumstances. By prioritizing employee growth and development, organizations demonstrate their commitment to fostering psychological safety, cultivating innovation, and enhancing adaptive behaviors.

5. **Foster Collaborative and Inclusive Decision-Making:** Encouraging collaborative decision-making processes that involve diverse perspectives fosters psychological safety and drives innovation. Organizations should establish inclusive practices, such as cross-functional teams, brainstorming sessions, and diversity initiatives, to ensure that a wide range of voices and

viewpoints are considered (Edmondson, 1999). By valuing and incorporating diverse ideas, organizations tap into the collective intelligence of their workforce, leading to more innovative and effective solutions.

6. Create Space for Reflection and Idea Sharing: Providing dedicated time and space for reflection and idea sharing can foster a culture of psychological safety and innovation. Organizations can implement practices such as regular team meetings, innovation forums, and knowledge-sharing platforms to facilitate open discussions, idea generation, and collaboration (Brown & Leigh, 2018). These spaces allow individuals to express their thoughts, challenge assumptions, and contribute to the collective learning and innovative capacity of the organization.

7. Recognize and Reward Innovation Efforts: Recognizing and rewarding innovative efforts reinforces the importance of psychological safety and encourages a culture of innovation. Organizations should establish recognition programs, innovation awards, and incentives that celebrate creativity, risk-taking, and successful outcomes (Edmondson, 1999). By acknowledging and appreciating innovative contributions, organizations send a powerful message that encourages employees to take initiative, share ideas, and pursue innovative solutions.

In summary, creating a culture of psychological safety and innovation requires leadership commitment, clear communication channels, a growth mindset toward failure, resources for learning and development, collaborative decision-making, spaces for reflection and idea sharing, and recognition of innovative efforts. By implementing these strategies, organizations can cultivate an environment that empowers adaptive leaders, fosters creativity and innovation, and drives long-term success in the face of complexity and change.

## **7. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

### **7.1 Synthesis and Interpretation of Findings**

The synthesis and interpretation of the findings revealed a significant insight regarding the impact of individual capabilities versus the nature of the organizational hierarchy on adaptive leadership. The analysis suggests that adaptive leadership is primarily influenced by the capabilities and characteristics of the individual leader, with the nature of the organizational hierarchy playing a secondary role in determining their adaptive capabilities. This finding has important implications for understanding the dynamics of leadership within organizational contexts.

First, it is evident that some leaders possess inherent qualities and capabilities that enable them to adapt and thrive within different organizational hierarchies. These individuals demonstrate a high degree of cognitive flexibility, emotional intelligence, and a willingness to embrace change. They are adept at navigating the complexities of their organizational environment, leveraging their skills to influence and inspire others, and effectively responding to the evolving demands and challenges they encounter.

On the other hand, it is observed that certain leadership personalities may succumb to the dynamics of the organizational hierarchy, leading to a diminished sense of adaptability. These individuals may be constrained by their own perspectives and biases, resistance to change, or a preference for maintaining the status quo. In such cases, the hierarchical structure of the organization may limit their ability to exercise adaptive leadership behaviors, as they become more focused on conforming to the established norms and power dynamics within the hierarchy.

These findings align with previous research by Avolio and Bass (1991), who argue that adaptive leadership is rooted in the individual leader's capacity to learn, grow, and adapt to changing circumstances. The authors emphasize that leaders who possess a growth mindset, a

willingness to challenge conventional wisdom, and an ability to embrace ambiguity are more likely to exhibit adaptive leadership behaviors.

Furthermore, the research conducted by Kuhl, Schnelle, and Tillmann (2005) supports the notion that adaptive leadership is influenced by the individual's personality traits, cognitive abilities, and interpersonal skills. They propose that leaders who possess a high degree of self-awareness, empathy, and the ability to manage complexity are better equipped to adapt their leadership style to fit the demands of the organizational hierarchy they are operating within.

While the individual capabilities of leaders emerge as the primary driver of adaptive leadership, it is important to note that the nature of the organizational hierarchy still plays a role, albeit a lesser one. The hierarchical structure and power dynamics within an organization can create both enabling and inhibiting conditions for adaptive leadership. For instance, a more bureaucratic and rigid hierarchy may impose constraints on the leader's autonomy and decision-making authority, limiting their ability to exhibit adaptive behaviors. Conversely, a flatter and more decentralized hierarchy may provide greater opportunities for leaders to exercise adaptive leadership, as it encourages collaboration, innovation, and empowerment.

In summary, the synthesis and interpretation of the findings suggest that adaptive leadership is primarily influenced by the capabilities and characteristics of the individual leader, while the nature of the organizational hierarchy plays a secondary role. Some leaders can adapt and excel within various hierarchical contexts, leveraging their inherent qualities and skills, while others may struggle to exhibit adaptive leadership behaviors due to personal limitations or the constraining nature of the hierarchy. These findings emphasize the importance of focusing on the development and cultivation of individual leadership capabilities to foster adaptive leadership within organizations.

## 7.2 Discussion of Theoretical and Practical Implications of this Research



The findings of this research have theoretical and practical implications for the field of leadership and organizational behavior. By examining the behaviors and competencies that support adaptive outcomes, this study furthers our understanding of how leaders can effectively navigate organizational hierarchies to promote dynamic leadership in uncertain environments. Theoretical frameworks such as adaptive leadership theory, transformational leadership theory, and complexity leadership theory provide valuable lenses through which to interpret and contextualize the findings as applied to leadership efforts within an organizational hierarchy.

#### Theoretical Implications:

Firstly, this study supports the notion that adaptive leadership is a critical component for organizations to thrive in complex and ever-changing landscapes. The identification of key leadership behaviors and competencies that drive adaptive outcomes enhances our understanding of the specific mechanisms through which leaders can facilitate organizational adaptation. The theoretical implications of this research extend to the examination of leadership theories, highlighting the need to incorporate adaptive elements into existing frameworks and to develop new theories that capture the dynamic nature of leadership in the face of uncertainty.

Furthermore, the findings shed light on the interplay between leadership behaviors and individual characteristics in facilitating or hindering adaptive outcomes and indicates these elements have a greater role in adaptive outcome than an organizational hierarchy. The exploration of personality traits, leadership styles, and psychological factors provides a deeper understanding of the complexities involved in aligning individual characteristics with the demands of adaptability. These insights contribute to the refinement and expansion of leadership theories, emphasizing the importance of considering individual differences in leadership research and practice. Moreover, these analyses can further support efforts for organizations to understand how their particular structures relate to the unique leadership traits and psychology of their members.

#### Practical Implications:

The practical implications of this research are particularly relevant for leaders and organizations seeking to enhance their adaptive capabilities. The identification of specific leadership behaviors and competencies that support adaptive outcomes offers practical guidance for leaders aiming to navigate ambiguity and promote adaptability within their teams and organizations.

For leaders, the findings emphasize the significance of creating a compelling vision for change. Articulating a clear and inspiring vision can motivate individuals to embrace adaptation and contribute their ideas and efforts toward achieving desired outcomes. Additionally, fostering a culture of innovation, risk-taking, and continuous learning is crucial for promoting adaptability. Leaders can create an environment that encourages curiosity, creativity, and experimentation, where individuals feel empowered to challenge the status quo and propose novel solutions.

Organizations can benefit from the practical implications of this research by focusing on creating structures and processes that facilitate knowledge sharing, collaboration, and reflection in a manner best suited for its objectives, and by developing talent acquisition and development programs that identify leaders best suited for its functional and cultural environment. By promoting a learning mindset, organizations can enable teams to adapt and evolve based on new insights and changing circumstances. Moreover, cultivating a culture of open communication, where ideas and information flow freely, enhances decision-making agility and responsiveness to changing environments.

In conclusion, the theoretical and practical implications of this research provide valuable insights for both scholars and practitioners in the field of leadership and organizational behavior. The findings highlight the importance of adaptive leadership behaviors and competencies in facilitating organizational adaptation and success in dynamic environments. By incorporating these insights into leadership development programs and organizational practices, leaders and organizations can enhance their adaptive capabilities and thrive amidst uncertainty.

### 7.3 Limitations and Areas for Future Research

While this study contributes valuable insights into the relationship between adaptive leadership and organizational outcomes, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the research was conducted without regard to a specific industry and organizational context, which may result in the generalization of the findings if applied randomly to industries or settings. Future studies should explore the applicability of adaptive leadership in specific organizational contexts to validate and extend the current findings.

Second, the data collection relied primarily on self-report measures as obtained through prior, peer-reviewed research or through assessments derived from qualified researchers in the field, which may be subject to common method biases and social desirability biases. Incorporating multiple data sources, notably to include direct research experimentation on performance metrics or observational data, could enhance the validity of the results and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between adaptive leadership and organizational outcomes.

Third, the study focused primarily on the perspectives of leaders and their impact on organizational outcomes and was limited to a full review of hierarchical effects on those leaders' actions. While real-world business cases suggest validity to this dissertation's conclusions, it would be valuable for future research to incorporate the direct perceptions and experiences of followers or subordinates to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms through which adaptive leadership influences outcomes. Additionally, exploring potential moderating factors, such as organizational culture or team dynamics, could further enhance our understanding of the boundary conditions and contingent effects of adaptive leadership.

#### Areas of Future Research:

Building upon the findings of this study, several avenues for future research emerge. First, given the dynamic nature of today's business environment, investigating the role of adaptive leadership in fostering organizational agility and resilience is crucial. Future studies could explore

how adaptive leaders facilitate organizational adaptation, change management, and innovation in the face of disruptive events or rapid market shifts.

Second, investigating the long-term effects of adaptive leadership on organizational performance and sustainability would be valuable. Understanding the enduring impact of adaptive leadership on key organizational outcomes, such as employee engagement, retention, and financial performance, could provide insights into the long-term benefits of fostering adaptive leadership within organizations.

Third, exploring the potential interaction effects between adaptive leadership and other organizational factors, such as organizational structure, culture, or human resource practices, could deepen our understanding of the complex dynamics at play. For instance, investigating how adaptive leadership can be effectively integrated with other leadership approaches or organizational interventions to maximize its impact on outcomes would be a fruitful area for future research.

Lastly, examining the development and training of adaptive leaders could contribute to practice and policy implications. Investigating effective methods for identifying, selecting, and developing adaptive leaders, as well as evaluating the outcomes of leadership development programs, would provide guidance for organizations aiming to cultivate adaptive leadership capabilities.

By addressing these limitations and suggesting areas for future research, this study lays the groundwork for further exploration of adaptive leadership's impact on organizational outcomes. Continued investigation in these areas will contribute to the refinement of theory, the development of evidence-based practices, and the advancement of leadership scholarship.

## 8. CONCLUSION

### 8.1 Recapitulation of Key Findings

An examination of the existing body of research on adaptive leadership reveals that scholarly investigations have predominantly concentrated on leadership traits and their implications for a leader's capacity to employ adaptive techniques and practices within their role. This prevailing approach has underscored the limited influence exerted by organizational hierarchies on this particular aspect.

By way of illustration, a specific source elucidates that leaders can employ adaptive leadership approaches in a manner that transcends the constraints of the hierarchy. This phenomenon can be attributed to several key factors. Firstly, adaptive leadership traits often transcend hierarchical structures and are more closely associated with individual attributes rather than systemic characteristics. It is important to note, however, that this observation does not negate the potential impact of hierarchical structures on adaptive capabilities. Rather, our findings indicate that their role is circumscribed. In essence, a hierarchy in and of itself does not preclude the existence of adaptive approaches. Rather, it establishes distinct rules and frameworks within which adaptive leadership must operate. Consequently, the traditional hierarchical model, when juxtaposed with a flatter organizational structure, has minimal influence on a leader's ability to apply adaptive leadership.

Thus, our analysis leads us to conclude that the pivotal factor determining an organization's attainment of adaptive leadership lies in the individual, rather than the structural composition of the organization. Scholarly inquiry has demonstrated that whether one examines leadership traits or conceptual frameworks, the underlying studies consistently reveal that the success of leaders with a particular skill set hinges on the environment in which they are situated. While one might infer that the hierarchical structure holds the key, our earlier assessment contradicts this notion.

Instead, it is the individual's capacity to function within the hierarchy that ultimately determines their ability to achieve a high level of adaptiveness.

Efforts to develop a unified theory of successful leadership have proven challenging and elusive (Mintzberg, 1994; Morgeson, DeRue, & Karam, 2010). While scholars have explored various leadership theories and models, the complexity and contextual nature of leadership make it difficult to establish a single unified framework (Harrison & Roberto, 2011; Mintzberg, 1979). In fact, if we look at the research history of the effort, it is clear that definitions of leadership and associated skills are redefined about every decade. This review is driven mostly by a shift in focus on how current successful organizations operate than any actual breakthrough in leadership research. In short, we relook at leadership based on the high-performing companies of the era, more than because prior models have flaws needing review. Research spanning almost 40 years has shown that leadership effectiveness is contingent upon the specific context and the interaction between leaders, followers, and the organizational environment (Mead & Maner, 2012; Miles & Cameron, 1982). This implies that leaders who are successful in one context or organization may struggle when faced with different challenges or transferred to another sector or company.

A prime example of this dynamic is found in Robert Nardelli's selection as Home Depot CEO in 2000. Mentored by Jack Welch during his tenure at General Electric, and arguably a possible successor, his selection by Home Depot was expected by most to be a new era for the home improvement store chain. But Nardelli was not only fired in 2006 for failing to deliver results, but more notably, Home Depot was recovering from his attempts to lead the organization. Notably, it was more than a group of executives and shareholders that wanted him removed; the company, one could argue, rejected Nardelli's methods. However, if we look at what Nardelli attempted, we see that he implemented the same processes that were used by General Electric to achieve the phenomenal success under Welch. Despite the magic those adaptive methods created in General Electric, the same practices left a wake of disruption in Home Depot. Business scholars have coalesced around a common explanation for this: everything that Nardelli learned in General Electric, that worked so well in that business eco-system, was not compatible for Home Depot. But it was more than the methods, in that Nardelli was incapable of changing his approach by

recognizing the dynamics of Home Depot or showing a willingness to change when he did. In fact, he dug in the more he faced resistance. There was nothing about Home Depot's hierarchy that hindered adaptive leadership – it was the leader who could not operate within it.

## 8.2 Practical Recommendations for Organizations and Leaders

Implementing adaptive leadership within organizations requires a deliberate and systematic approach to cultivate a culture of adaptability, empower leaders, and foster organizational learning. The following practical recommendations serve as a guide for organizations and leaders seeking to embrace adaptive leadership and drive positive outcomes:

1. **Cultivate a Learning Culture:** Organizations should foster a culture that values continuous learning and experimentation. This involves creating a safe and supportive environment where employees are encouraged to take risks, learn from failures, and explore new ideas. Leaders can promote a learning culture by providing resources for professional development, encouraging knowledge sharing, and recognizing and rewarding innovative thinking.

2. **Develop Adaptive Leaders:** Organizations should invest in the development of leaders who possess the necessary skills and competencies to navigate complex and rapidly changing environments. Adaptive leaders should be equipped with a deep understanding of the organization's mission and strategy, strong problem-solving abilities, effective communication skills, and the capacity to embrace ambiguity and uncertainty. Leadership development programs should emphasize adaptive thinking, emotional intelligence, and the ability to inspire and motivate teams.

3. **Foster Collaboration and Cross-functional Teams:** Organizations should encourage collaboration and create opportunities for cross-functional teams to work together on complex challenges. Cross-functional teams bring together individuals from diverse backgrounds and areas of expertise, fostering creative thinking and enabling a comprehensive understanding of complex issues. Leaders should promote collaboration by breaking down silos, establishing clear goals, providing resources, and facilitating open communication and knowledge sharing.

4. Embrace Agile and Flexible Structures: Organizations should embrace agile and flexible structures that can quickly adapt to changing circumstances. This involves decentralizing decision-making authority, empowering employees at all levels to make informed choices, and promoting a mindset of flexibility and agility. Leaders should flatten hierarchies, encourage autonomy, and empower employees to take ownership of their work and contribute to organizational adaptability.

5. Encourage Innovation and Experimentation: Organizations should create space for innovation and experimentation, allowing employees to explore new ideas, approaches, and technologies. Leaders should foster an environment that supports creativity, encourages risk-taking, and rewards innovative thinking. Organizations can establish innovation labs, allocate resources for experimentation, and provide platforms for sharing and scaling successful innovations.

6. Emphasize Continuous Communication and Feedback: Effective communication is crucial in adaptive leadership. Leaders should ensure that information flows freely across the organization, enabling employees to stay informed and aligned with the organization's goals and adaptive strategies. Regular feedback and dialogue should be encouraged to promote learning, address challenges, and make timely adjustments. Leaders should actively seek input from employees, value diverse perspectives, and create channels for open and transparent communication.

By implementing these practical recommendations, organizations can create an environment that fosters adaptive leadership, drives innovation, and enables successful navigation of complex and changing landscapes. Adaptive leaders, supported by a culture of learning and collaboration, can lead their organizations to thrive in an ever-evolving business landscape.

### 8.3 Final Remarks



The research on adaptive leadership in organizational hierarchy reveals a crucial finding that cannot be overlooked: the effectiveness of adaptive techniques and practices within an organization largely depends on its leaders' capabilities. While it is true that certain organizational models may be more conducive to implementing adaptive practices, the research does not identify any specific organizational structure that inherently hinders adaptive leadership. Instead, consistent academic efforts and case studies demonstrate that different organizations, regardless of their hierarchical structures, could adapt and exhibit resilience due to the skills and capabilities of their leaders rather than their hierarchical constructs. If anything, adaptive leadership successes or failures are all but uniquely based on the individual leader's ability, not their environment.

Practically speaking, this highlights the importance for organizations to focus on understanding their cultural structures, areas of emphasis, tolerances, beliefs, and objectives. This is not about an organization's business objectives but how it meets them. These organizations must employ strategic human capital management strategies to attract, retain, and promote leaders best suited to navigate and excel within their specific organizational dynamic. However, organizations must also recognize that as the dynamics of the environment change, they need to realistically assess the capabilities of their leadership talent and be unapologetically willing to adjust accordingly. Simply retaining existing leaders, regardless of prior success, in the face of internal or external changes cannot be assumed to yield adaptive results. Furthermore, organizations should acknowledge that adaptive leaders will assess their fit within the organization and, if unsatisfied, may seek out environments that are better aligned with their leadership style.

In conclusion, organizational hierarchies should be designed to identify and cultivate adaptive leaders, arguably the cornerstone of organizational resilience and growth. Failing to properly assess the nature of leadership within an organization will either allow misaligned or unqualified personnel to sow the seeds of potential failure, facilitate the departure of qualified leadership talent, or both. Neither outcome is ideal for the overall success and longevity of an organization.

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