

Sustaining Organizational Effectiveness: A Holistic Leadership & Organizational Development Framework

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Abstract

In a changing landscape defined by market shifts and rapid technological innovation, traditional mechanical approaches to organizational development are increasingly inadequate. This conceptual article explores the theoretical shifts required of modern executives as they navigate unprecedented complexity to maintain a sustainable competitive advantage. To address the structural limitations of episodic intervention models, this article proposes a holistic framework for leadership and organizational effectiveness. Drawing on contemporary systems theory and sensemaking literature, the conceptual analysis captures a critical leadership transition from reactive problem-solving to proactive ecosystem design. The proposed framework posits that sustaining operational effectiveness demands a comprehensive strategy anchored in multidimensional diagnosis, collective sensemaking, inclusive implementation, and adaptive resilience infrastructure. Leaders must facilitate shared frameworks that empower employees to navigate ambiguity rather than issuing rigid, top-down directives. Synthesizing macro-level organizational development theory with emerging research on distributed leadership, this multidimensional framework provides a practical roadmap for cultivating adaptive capacity across all operational levels. Organizations that adopt this approach are ultimately better positioned to prioritize long-term health and to transform external shocks into catalysts for continuous innovation.

Keywords

Organizational Development, Holistic Leadership, Organizational Effectiveness, Change Management

1. Introduction

The contemporary organizational landscape is defined by continuous, overlap-

ping disruptions that challenge the foundational assumptions of traditional management theory (Marques, 2025). Driven by rapid technological advancements, shifting workforce demographics, and global economic uncertainties, the environment in which modern organizations operate renders linear models of change management obsolete (Hanelt et al., 2021). Scholars increasingly note that organizations operate in volatile, complex, and ambiguous ecosystems, requiring a departure from rigid operational paradigms toward adaptive systems thinking (Abukalusa & Oosthuizen, 2025; Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018).

Historically, organizational development relied heavily on episodic interventions, treating operational challenges as isolated mechanical failures to be repaired sequentially (Singh & Ramdeo, 2020). Within this traditional paradigm, the organizational leader acts primarily as a transactional repair agent deploying targeted, short-term solutions to stabilize the system before attempting to return to a static status quo (Anderson, 2023). Such approaches fundamentally misunderstand the dynamic nature of modern markets, falsely assuming that organizational stability is the natural state of business operations rather than a temporary anomaly (Lüscher & Lewis, 2008; Marques, 2025). As enterprises grow increasingly interconnected, treating them as machines with easily interchangeable parts actively degrades long-term operational effectiveness (Cocozza, 2023). Whenever leaders treat organizational challenges as isolated technical problems rather than symptoms of interconnected, human-centric systems, they fail to address the cultural and structural root causes of stagnation (Jerab & Mabrouk, 2023; Schedlitzki et al., 2023). This reductionist approach frequently results in widespread change fatigue, elevated psychosocial risks, and a workforce fundamentally ill-equipped to handle continuous adaptation (Backhaus et al., 2024; Groulx et al., 2024).

To sustain organizational effectiveness, a profound paradigm shift is required at the highest levels of executive leadership (Schedlitzki et al., 2023). Leaders must transition from episodic problem solvers to structural architects, intentionally designing adaptive ecosystems capable of continuous evolution (Abukalusa & Oosthuizen, 2025; Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018). This architectural mindset prioritizes organizational health over temporary symptomatic relief and actively aligns formal structures with the dynamic realities of the contemporary workforce (Anderson, 2023; Singh & Ramdeo, 2020). Quantitative metrics alone often fail to capture the complex cognitive and social processes required to fundamentally redesign organizational cultures and structures (Cocozza, 2023). Understanding these cognitive shifts requires examining how employees and leaders engage in sensemaking to navigate ambiguity and integrate new knowledge during periods of disruption (Khan et al., 2024; Lüscher & Lewis, 2008).

Consequently, the purpose of this conceptual article is to synthesize macro-level theory regarding how leaders conceptualize and enact organizational development to propose a holistic framework for sustained effectiveness (Schedlitzki et al., 2023). The present conceptual review addresses two primary focal inquiries designed to illuminate these structural dynamics. First, how must modern leader-

ship paradigms evolve to conceptualize and make sense of holistic organizational change (Schedlitzki et al., 2023)? Second, what holistic leadership behaviors are theoretically perceived as most foundational for sustaining organizational effectiveness in a volatile landscape (Marques, 2025)? Addressing these conceptual inquiries provides scholars and practitioners with a comprehensive, evidence-based roadmap for navigating contemporary organizational development (Anderson, 2023; Singh & Ramdeo, 2020).

2. Background and Review of Literature

2.1. The Evolution of Organizational Development

Organizational Development has undergone a significant theoretical and practical evolution over the past half-century. Early conceptualizations were heavily rooted in structural and functionalist paradigms, prioritizing efficiency, strict hierarchy, and top-down change implementation characteristic of the industrial era (Singh & Ramdeo, 2020). These rigid models provided necessary standardization for manufacturing-centric economies, but they frequently ignored the symbolic, cultural, and ethical realities of the modern knowledge workforce (Cocozza, 2023). Mechanistic approaches relied heavily on episodic and highly structured intervention stages, falsely assuming that organizations could be frozen, changed, and subsequently refrozen into a permanent state of stability (Anderson, 2023). Scholars now recognize that such linear frameworks are fundamentally mismatched with the continuous disruptions and technological accelerations of contemporary markets (Hanelt et al., 2021; Marques, 2025).

Consequently, modern organizational theory argues for a more comprehensive, open-systems approach that views organizations as interconnected networks rather than closed mechanical structures (Abukalusa & Oosthuizen, 2025). This perspective acknowledges that enterprises operate in volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous external environments requiring continuous internal adaptation (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018). Effective organizational change must remain structured and systematic, yet adaptable enough to address macro-level perspectives across unique geographical and cultural contexts (Singh & Ramdeo, 2020). Practitioners attempting to implement change through isolated departmental initiatives frequently encounter resistance because they fail to account for the overlapping nature of modern corporate functions (Schedlitzki et al., 2023). Treating organizations as dynamic networks forces leaders to consider how an intervention in one specific functional area will inevitably ripple across the entire enterprise (Abukalusa & Oosthuizen, 2025).

The evolution of the field, therefore, mandates a permanent move toward multidimensionality, recognizing that organizations are pluralistic models driven by deeply embedded human values rather than simple economic inputs (Cocozza, 2023). Contemporary development practitioners must abandon static change frameworks in favor of emergent methodologies that align structural design directly with dynamic human behavior (Anderson, 2023). Successful interventions

now require a deep understanding of the ethical and cultural dimensions that drive employee engagement and commitment (Cocoza, 2023). Aligning formal operational architecture with the informal cultural realities of the workforce ultimately ensures that development initiatives produce sustainable, long-term effectiveness rather than temporary compliance (Marques, 2025).

2.2. Sensemaking and Leadership in Flux

As the fundamental nature of work changes, the theoretical conceptualization of leadership must correspondingly adapt to address heightened environmental complexity (Marques, 2025). Traditional hierarchical leadership models relied upon centralized authority and strict linear directives, positioning executives as the sole architects of corporate strategy (Singh & Ramdeo, 2020). These centralized frameworks are actively being replaced because they create severe information bottlenecks and limit the agility needed to navigate modern market volatility (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018). Leadership is increasingly viewed in contemporary literature as a constructed process in which leaders and followers collaboratively navigate ambiguity to establish shared organizational realities (Schedlitzki et al., 2023). This evolution shifts the executive mandate away from simply issuing tactical orders toward the complex task of facilitating collective cognitive alignment across employee groups (Abukalusa & Oosthuizen, 2025).

Recent scholarship highlights the critical concept of sensemaking, which is defined as the process of exploring the structures and ideas that comprise organizational reality (Schedlitzki et al., 2023). In times of intense environmental flux, the primary role of the modern executive is to create a cohesive narrative that helps the organization interpret external shocks and internal disruptions (Marques, 2025). Leaders facilitate this understanding through consistent communication, reducing the cognitive burden and emotional strain placed on employees during periods of high uncertainty (Khan et al., 2024). Providing a clear, strategic narrative allows employees to contextualize their daily operational challenges within the broader objectives of the enterprise (Skea, 2021). This shared understanding prevents operational paralysis and empowers mid-level managers to navigate paradoxes and make decisions that remain aligned with the overarching corporate mission (Lüscher & Lewis, 2008).

Equally important to the construction of new meaning is the concept of sense-breaking, which involves the intentional disruption of outdated operational paradigms and historical assumptions (Schedlitzki et al., 2023). Executives must actively dismantle obsolete routines that otherwise create structural resistance to necessary systemic adaptation (Anderson, 2023). This process requires significant emotional intelligence, as leaders must invalidate ineffective historical practices without invalidating the professional identities of the employees who previously relied upon them (Marques, 2025). Failing to manage the emotional dimensions of disrupted routines frequently triggers elevated psychosocial risks and deep emotional exhaustion throughout the workforce (Groulx et al., 2024). Establishing

a new shared meaning through the careful balance of sensemaking and sense-breaking allows organizations to pivot strategically without losing their core cultural identity or compromising long-term employee engagement (Cocozza, 2023).

2.3. Organizational Resilience as an Enterprise Capability

A prominent theme in contemporary literature is the fundamental shift in how resilience is defined and operationalized within corporate structures (Marques, 2025). Previously viewed primarily as a psychological trait belonging to individual employees, resilience was often characterized in academic literature as individual perseverance or emotional fortitude in the face of adversity (Schedlitzki et al., 2023). Relying heavily on individual fortitude is now widely recognized as an unsustainable management strategy that inevitably leads to widespread employee burnout, elevated psychosocial risks, and emotional exhaustion during times of change (Backhaus et al., 2024; Groulx et al., 2024). Scholars currently recognize resilience as a distinct, enterprise-wide capability that must be structurally embedded within the organization rather than expected solely of its personnel (Abukalusa & Oosthuizen, 2025).

Marques (2025) argues that true organizational resilience emanates from systematic architectural efforts to convert external changes from existential threats into strategic opportunities. This transition requires leadership capable of bridging historical institutional knowledge with modern technological demands to construct highly adaptive infrastructures (Hanelt et al., 2021). Sustaining effectiveness relies heavily on an organization's structural readiness to absorb shocks, distribute decision-making authority, and innovate continuously at the front lines of operation (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018). Structurally resilient enterprises utilize robust feedback loops to ensure that emerging challenges are addressed rapidly by those closest to the operational friction, rather than waiting for delayed executive intervention (Abukalusa & Oosthuizen, 2025). Building this capability ensures that the organization remains highly adaptive and functionally robust regardless of external circumstances (Singh & Ramdeo, 2020).

Furthermore, this structural resilience is deeply dependent upon the deliberate cultivation of psychological safety across all hierarchical levels (Groulx et al., 2024). Scholars note that without psychological safety, systemic resilience is practically impossible, as employees will naturally conceal operational errors to avoid professional retribution or workplace strain (Marques, 2025). Organizations must develop an environment where exposing failures is viewed as a necessary step for collective learning, continuous adaptation, and rapid system correction (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018). Cross-departmental collaboration thrives only when employees feel secure enough to question outdated procedures, navigate operational paradoxes, and propose innovative solutions (Lüscher & Lewis, 2008). Integrating psychological safety into the foundational architecture ultimately transforms resilience from a theoretical ideal into a measurable operational reality (Cocozza, 2023).

2.4. Summary

The extensive review of contemporary organizational development literature reveals a clear trajectory away from rigid, mechanistic frameworks toward adaptive, human-centric systems (Anderson, 2023; Coccozza, 2023). Navigating the complexities of modern volatile markets requires organizations to abandon episodic intervention strategies and instead cultivate continuous, multidimensional responsiveness (Hanelt et al., 2021; Singh & Ramdeo, 2020). This evolution necessitates a profound shift in leadership behavior, moving away from centralized authority toward the active facilitation of collective sensemaking and intentional sensebreaking (Schedlitzki et al., 2023; Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018).

Furthermore, long-term effectiveness demands that resilience be extracted from the individual and permanently embedded into the structural architecture of the enterprise (Marques, 2025). Organizations must structurally cultivate pervasive psychological safety to mitigate the psychosocial risks and emotional exhaustion inherent in continuous adaptation (Backhaus et al., 2024; Groulx et al., 2024). Synthesizing these critical advancements in multidimensional diagnosis, collaborative meaning-making, and structural resilience directly informs the necessity and design of a holistic leadership and organizational effectiveness framework (Abukalusa & Oosthuizen, 2025).

While existing models successfully emphasize the need for adaptive systems (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018) or detail the mechanics of episodic change (Anderson, 2023), they often treat cognitive sensemaking and structural resilience as parallel rather than integrated capabilities. This framework extends the contemporary organizational development literature by synthesizing disparate theoretical streams into a single, chronologically ordered architecture. Structurally linking multidimensional diagnosis with the deliberate management of meaning, and embedding resilience as an enterprise capability rather than an individual psychological trait (Marques, 2025), this twelve-pillar model provides a more comprehensive, pragmatic roadmap for modern executives.

3. Conceptual Approach and Synthesis

To construct the holistic framework, an integrative synthesis of contemporary organizational development literature was conducted. Rather than isolating specific variables, this conceptual approach sought to identify the intersecting thematic requirements for sustaining organizational health in challenging environments. Themes from disparate streams of research, specifically adaptive systems thinking (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018), managerial sensemaking (Schedlitzki et al., 2023), and structural resilience (Marques, 2025), were conceptually clustered based on their operational function.

To ensure the framework provided a pragmatic roadmap rather than a static theoretical model, these clustered concepts were mapped onto a chronologically dependent continuum of organizational development. This analytic process resulted in four distinct operational phases: diagnosis, implementation, cognitive

alignment, and structural future-proofing. Within these four phases, the overarching literature themes were further distilled into a comprehensive twelve-pillar architecture, detailing the specific leadership behaviors and structural shifts required at each stage of the development lifecycle.

4. Holistic Leadership and Organizational Effectiveness Framework

Drawing upon this synthesis of macro-level organizational development literature and contemporary theoretical perspectives on modern executive challenges, the proposed framework emerges as a comprehensive twelve-pillar architecture (Schedlitzki et al., 2023; Singh & Ramdeo, 2020). This strategic framework systematically guides leaders through four distinct operational phases encompassing foundational multidimensional diagnosis, structured change implementation, cognitive meaning-making, and long-term resilience-building (Abukalusa & Oosthuizen, 2025; Marques, 2025). Transitioning through these developmental phases provides a continuous opportunity for internal assessment and requires a sustained executive commitment to viewing the organization as a living, interconnected ecosystem rather than a collection of isolated mechanical parts (Cocoza, 2023; Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018).

Phase I: The Diagnostic & Cultural Foundation

Before any structural or cultural intervention can succeed, leaders must thoroughly understand the organization's holistic reality (Singh & Ramdeo, 2020). This initial phase intentionally moves away from superficial symptom treatment toward a deep, structural understanding of the enterprise. Leaders who skip this foundational step frequently implement localized solutions that inadvertently exacerbate underlying dysfunctions and severely alienate the workforce (Anderson, 2023). Establishing a comprehensive diagnostic baseline ensures that subsequent interventions address core systemic issues rather than temporary operational anomalies (Schedlitzki et al., 2023).

Multidimensional Diagnosis. Qualitative observations consistently demonstrate that change interventions fail when they merely address a single operational silo (Singh & Ramdeo, 2020). Leaders must engage in rigorous multidimensional diagnosis, analyzing the complex plurality of organizing models functioning concurrently at the individual, team, and enterprise levels (Anderson, 2023; Cocoza, 2023). This analytical process involves examining how localized incentive structures might unintentionally subvert collaborative behaviors, or how departmental performance indicators actively conflict with overarching enterprise strategy (Hanelt et al., 2021). Furthermore, contemporary systems theory dictates that isolating variables within an organization ignores the cascading effects that structural changes produce across overlapping, highly integrated departments (Abukalusa & Oosthuizen, 2025).

Ethical & Symbolic Value Mapping. Organizations operate perpetually on unwritten rules and deeply embedded cultural norms that dictate internal behavior

(Cocozza, 2023). Contemporary scholarship highlights that an organization's true strategic assets are inextricably tied to its ethical, symbolic, and value dimensions rather than its formal mission statements (Marques, 2025). Leaders must qualitatively map these nuanced dimensions, meticulously identifying what the culture actually rewards in practice versus what it formally claims to value (Anderson, 2023). Change initiatives simply cannot be sustained if they fundamentally violate the workforce's underlying symbolic identity or breach the established psychological contract between employees and executive management (Singh & Ramdeo, 2020).

Holistic Governance Adaptation. Rigid, functionalist governance models inherently stifle operational agility and delay critical responses to rapid market shifts (Hanelt et al., 2021). To survive contemporary organizational complexity, leaders must actively design governance structures that remain deeply inclusive and highly responsive to external environmental feedback (Cocozza, 2023). This vital pillar involves intentionally distributing decision rights and ensuring that the organization's formal rules of operation align perfectly with its acute need for continuous innovation (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018). Modern governance frameworks must empower employees to navigate ambiguity and make localized decisions without requiring arduous, multi-tiered executive approvals (Lüscher & Lewis, 2008).

Phase II: The Change Process & Implementation

With a comprehensive foundational understanding firmly established, leaders must systematically execute the required change initiatives (Anderson, 2023). This execution phase ensures that the transition process remains highly inclusive, ethically grounded, and objectively measurable (Singh & Ramdeo, 2020). Abandoning a structured methodology during implementation often leads to severe change fatigue, elevated psychosocial risks, and widespread employee cynicism regarding executive competence (Backhaus et al., 2024).

Structured Intervention Design. Despite the modern imperative for organizational agility, executing change cannot degenerate into chaotic experimentation (Abukalusa & Oosthuizen, 2025). Leaders must utilize established organizational development theory to systematically design structured interventions that directly address diagnosed systemic failures (Singh & Ramdeo, 2020). This rigorous process involves carefully selecting the most appropriate lever for change, whether that manifests as a techno-structural redesign, a human-process intervention, or a comprehensive strategic pivot, based directly on the multidimensional data gathered during the diagnostic phase (Anderson, 2023). Selecting an incorrect or poorly aligned intervention strategy wastes critical organizational resources and frequently damages long-term leadership credibility (Schedlitzki et al., 2023).

Inclusive Implementation Dynamics. A recurring theme across qualitative change analysis is the intense operational friction caused by top-down, authoritarian mandates (Cocozza, 2023). Change initiatives must be collaboratively developed with employees rather than imposed upon them from the executive suite

(Lüscher & Lewis, 2008). Inclusive implementation practices structurally cultivate necessary psychological safety, significantly reduce natural resistance, and effectively leverage employees' contextual expertise to refine the change process in real time (Groulx et al., 2024). Furthermore, fostering this inclusivity directly mitigates the emotional exhaustion that typically accompanies poorly managed, highly centralized organizational transitions (Backhaus et al., 2024).

Holistic Evaluation & Ethics. The specific metrics utilized to define success will ultimately shape ongoing organizational behavior (Singh & Ramdeo, 2020). Evaluating the success of a change initiative solely on short-term financial returns often masks long-term cultural degradation and enterprise-wide employee burn-out (Marques, 2025). This critical pillar requires leaders to establish comprehensive evaluation metrics grounded deeply in core organizational development values and ethical governance standards (Cocozza, 2023). Practitioners should systematically measure improvements in cross-functional collaboration, employee well-being, and adaptive organizational capacity alongside traditional performance indicators (Hanelt et al., 2021).

Phase III: The Leadership & Sensemaking Shift

Execution protocols must be paired continuously with cognitive and cultural alignment to ensure lasting systemic impact (Cocozza, 2023). This cognitive phase fundamentally redefines leadership as the active management of meaning during periods of intense environmental uncertainty (Schedlitzki et al., 2023). Without shared understanding, structural changes inevitably trigger widespread organizational strain, elevated psychosocial risks, and severe operational paralysis (Backhaus et al., 2024; Lüscher & Lewis, 2008).

Collective Sensemaking. In highly volatile environments, operational ambiguity reaches deeply disruptive levels that threaten overall enterprise stability (Abukalusa & Oosthuizen, 2025). Leaders must actively serve as facilitators of collective sensemaking, helping the entire organization construct a shared, cohesive narrative of why the external environment is changing and how the enterprise will strategically respond (Skea, 2021). This intentional communication creates vital strategic alignment and significantly reduces the cognitive anxiety normally associated with continuous structural flux (Khan et al., 2024). When leaders fail to provide this narrative clarity, employees naturally experience increased emotional exhaustion and navigate toward defensive behaviors that further destabilize the workplace culture (Groulx et al., 2024; Marques, 2025).

Strategic Sensebreaking. Sustained organizational progress frequently requires the intentional destruction of the comfortable operational status quo (Anderson, 2023). Schedlitzki et al. (2023) highlight the critical academic concept of sensebreaking, which involves intentionally disrupting and critiquing outdated mental models, historical operational routines, and legacy systems. Leaders must safely dismantle obsolete ways of thinking to create the necessary psychological and operational space for new, highly effective adaptive strategies to take root (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018). This delicate process requires significant emotional intelligence

to ensure that dismantling historical practices does not alienate the veteran employees who originally built them, thereby preserving baseline psychological safety (Groulx et al., 2024; Marques, 2025).

Transversal Leadership Synergy. Siloed leadership behavior inevitably breeds competing priorities and destructive departmental tribalism during periods of transition (Cocozza, 2023). This framework strongly advocates for dismantling essentializing boundaries between different leadership styles and operational departments to navigate complexity effectively (Schedlitzki et al., 2023). Transversal synergy requires establishing a unified leadership front in which diverse approaches are collaboratively synthesized to address complex, multifaceted organizational challenges (Abukalusa & Oosthuizen, 2025). When executive teams visibly model this boundary-spanning collaboration, the rest of the organization naturally adopts similar cross-functional cooperation and knowledge-sharing behaviors (Khan et al., 2024; Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018).

Phase IV: Resilience & Future-Proofing

The final operational phase ensures that the organization is not merely surviving current disruptions but actively building permanent capacity to thrive amid unforeseen future challenges (Marques, 2025). Sustained effectiveness requires transitioning from reactive survival tactics to proactive systemic fortification (Abukalusa & Oosthuizen, 2025). Organizations that master this phase treat continuous change as a strategic advantage rather than an operational threat, effectively embedding adaptability directly into their structural DNA (Hanelt et al., 2021).

Adaptive Resilience Infrastructure. Resilience must be thoroughly operationalized within the corporate structure rather than merely encouraged as a personal psychological trait (Marques, 2025). This specific pillar focuses on converting disruptions from existential challenges into distinct competitive opportunities through the intentional construction of structural resilience (Abukalusa & Oosthuizen, 2025). This architectural effort includes proactively cross-training employees, establishing robust feedback loops, and creating effective horizontal communication channels (Singh & Ramdeo, 2020). Such infrastructural investments allow the organization to absorb external shocks and pivot rapidly without waiting for delayed executive mandates to filter down the hierarchy (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018).

Holistic Cultures of Innovation. Productive innovation cannot be successfully delegated to an isolated research and development department; it must operate as a culturally embedded, organization-wide capability (Hanelt et al., 2021). Recognizing the plurality of organizing models allows companies to successfully develop internal cultures of innovation that are inherently inclusive and mission-focused (Cocozza, 2023). Sustained organizational effectiveness relies entirely on giving every department the structural agency, time, and tools necessary to contribute to continuous operational improvement (Anderson, 2023). When psychological safety intersects with distributed agency, employees become the primary engine

for organizational adaptation and remain significantly less susceptible to transition-related emotional exhaustion (Groulx et al., 2024).

Transformative Leadership Legacy. The ultimate and most vital measure of the framework remains what structurally endures when the current executive leadership eventually transitions (Anderson, 2023). Marques (2025) suggests that sustaining long-term effectiveness involves successfully leveraging deep collaboration, adapting historical organizational traditions to solve modern challenges, and utilizing high emotional intelligence to build a lasting structural legacy. Effective leaders successfully build organizations that remain self-regulating, continuously learning, and permanently equipped to face external uncertainty long after their tenure concludes (Singh & Ramdeo, 2020). This necessary transition from individual heroism to embedded institutional capability defines the absolute pinnacle of successful organizational development (Schedlitzki et al., 2023; Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018).

5. Discussion & Implications for Organizational Leaders

The transition from a mechanical view of organizations to this multidimensional framework carries profound operational implications, directly addressing the study's core conceptual inquiries (Anderson, 2023).

5.1. Conceptualizing Holistic Change

Regarding the first focal inquiry, how modern leadership paradigms must evolve to conceptualize holistic change, the synthesized evidence in Phase I (Diagnostic & Cultural Foundation) and Phase III (Leadership & Sensemaking Shift) indicates that executives must experience disruption not as a series of isolated challenges, but as interconnected ecosystem shifts (Abukalusa & Oosthuizen, 2025). To achieve this, leaders must shed the historical persona of the fixer. Instead, executives must embrace the role of structural architects, focusing on relational dynamics across departmental boundaries to ensure the infrastructure supports continuous cognitive alignment (Hanelt et al., 2021). **Table 1** outlines the four phases of this architectural framework, detailing the core focus and strategic impact required to sustain effectiveness throughout the enterprise.

5.2. Foundational Leadership Behaviors

Addressing the second conceptual inquiry, the framework highlights specific holistic leadership behaviors theoretically perceived as foundational for sustaining effectiveness. As synthesized in Phase II (Change Process) and Phase IV (Resilience & Future-Proofing), the literature supports that these behaviors include serving as the primary facilitators of organizational meaning during intense ambiguity (Skea, 2021). Through active sensemaking and intentional sensebreaking, leaders effectively align individual professional values with broader ethical dimensions (Schedlitzki et al., 2023). Furthermore, executives must prioritize the deliberate cultivation of robust psychological safety and transversal synergy to build a highly

capable, adaptive pipeline of internal talent (Lüscher & Lewis, 2008; Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018).

Table 1. Holistic leadership and organizational effectiveness framework.

Phase	Core Focus & Description	Strategic Impact
I. The Diagnostic & Cultural Foundation	Analyzing the enterprise holistically to identify the ethical, symbolic, and structural root causes of operational friction prior to intervention.	Ensures leadership interventions resolve systemic dysfunctions rather than temporarily treating surface-level symptoms.
II. The Change Process & Implementation	Executing structured change initiatives that integrate psychological safety and ethical evaluation metrics.	Reduces transitional resistance, maintains employee trust, and ensures new protocols are actively adopted rather than merely mandated.
III. The Leadership & Sensemaking Shift	Facilitating shared cognitive alignment through intentionally dismantling obsolete models and co-creating clear strategic narratives.	Eliminates operational ambiguity, empowers decision-making, and maintains strategic focus during periods of uncertainty.
IV. Resilience & Future-Proofing	Embedding continuous learning, distributed authority, and feedback loops directly into the architectural workflow.	Transforms external disruptions into competitive advantages, supporting operational survival.

Additionally, the application of these foundational behaviors implies that organizational capacity building must function as a continuous, proactive endeavor rather than a reactive corporate response (Singh & Ramdeo, 2020). Executives must prioritize the deliberate cultivation of robust psychological safety, constructing environments where employees feel authorized to take calculated operational risks without fear of systemic retribution or psychosocial strain (Backhaus et al., 2024; Groulx et al., 2024). Distributing leadership authority and fostering transversal synergy ensures that the organization builds a highly capable, adaptive pipeline of internal talent equipped to navigate operational paradoxes (Lüscher & Lewis, 2008; Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018). Ultimately, establishing this distributed capability matrix remains essential to the organization’s long-term survival and sustained effectiveness amid ongoing global disruption (Marques, 2025).

6. Limitations and Future Research

While this conceptual framework provides a robust architecture for adaptive organizational development, it is not without limitations. The operationalization of the twelve pillars will naturally vary across sectors, organizational sizes, hierarchies, and national contexts. For instance, highly regulated industries or rigidly hierarchical, legacy institutions may face significantly greater initial friction during the sensebreaking phase than smaller, agile technology firms. Furthermore, cultural nuances in organizations may require localized adaptations of holistic governance structures to ensure psychological safety translates effectively. Future empirical research is required to test the framework across diverse operational environments and to develop quantitative diagnostic tools to assess the efficacy of

these four structural phases in practice.

7. Conclusion

Sustaining organizational effectiveness in the modern era cannot be achieved through piecemeal interventions or rigid, top-down directives (Anderson, 2023). The complex realities of leading in a highly technologically advanced environment demand a comprehensive, holistic perspective (Hanelt et al., 2021). The framework proposed in this article addresses this vulnerability by systematically bridging foundational organizational development theory with contemporary corporate priorities (Singh & Ramdeo, 2020). Implementing this framework as a strategic guide enables organizational leaders to continuously align their operational structures with the dynamic realities of their workforce (Abukalusa & Oosthuizen, 2025). Ultimately, this comprehensive alignment effectively mitigates the risks posed by ongoing external disruption and establishes a strong foundation for long-term adaptive capability (Marques, 2025).

This conceptual analysis synthesizes how modern executives theoretically navigate volatility, offering critical considerations for the focal inquiries through a holistic framework (Schedlitzki et al., 2023). Leaders make sense of change most effectively when they abandon mechanical paradigms, recognizing instead that systemic disruptions require multidimensional diagnosis and continuous cognitive alignment (Lüscher & Lewis, 2008). The foundational behaviors necessary to sustain this effectiveness include facilitating collective sensemaking, embedding structural inclusion, and operationalizing organization-wide resilience rather than relying on individual employee fortitude (Khan et al., 2024; Marques, 2025).

When leaders successfully transition from operating as reactive problem-solvers to functioning as proactive enterprise architects, they cultivate adaptive organizations fully equipped to innovate continuously amidst intense uncertainties (Abukalusa & Oosthuizen, 2025; Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018). While future empirical research should continue to translate these theoretical pillars into quantifiable diagnostic tools, executives can use this framework to fundamentally assess and design their operational capability approach today (Singh & Ramdeo, 2020). Embracing the holistic framework outlined in this article empowers leaders to begin designing environments that structurally prioritize continuous learning, cross-functional synergy, and pervasive psychological safety (Groulx et al., 2024). Organizations that successfully embed these principles into their foundational architecture will not merely survive market uncertainty but will actively harness it to drive sustained, enterprise-wide effectiveness (Cocozza, 2023).

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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