

DEVELOPING THE CAUSAL EFFECT OF CORPORATE ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE STRATEGY ON WORK PERFORMANCE: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL INNOVATION**¹Teng-Hsiung Lin, ^{2,3,*}Yue-Yang Chen and ⁴Liang-Cheng Lee**¹Postgraduate Programs in Management, I-Shou University, No. 1, Sec. 1, Syuecheng Rd., Dashu District, Kaohsiung City 84001, Taiwan, R.O.C.²Department of Digital Media Design, Tzu Hui Institute of Technology, No. 367, Sanmin Rd., Nanjhou Hsian, Pingtung County, 926, Taiwan, R.O.C.³Department of Business Administration, I-Shou University, No. 1, Sec. 1, Syuecheng Rd., Dashu District, Kaohsiung City 84001, Taiwan, R.O.C.⁴Department of Finance, I-Shou University, No. 1, Sec. 1, Syuecheng Rd., Dashu District, Kaohsiung City 84001, Taiwan, R.O.C.**Received 24th January 2026; Accepted 27th February 2026; Published online 20th March 2026**

Abstract

Aim: This study aims to examine the causal relationship between organizational change strategy and work performance, with particular attention to the mediating role of organizational innovation. **Study design:** This study employed a literature review grounded in organizational change theory, innovation theory, and performance theory to investigate the mechanisms linking organizational change strategy to performance outcomes. **Methodology:** Organizational change strategy can be conceptualized across five dimensions: technological change, structural change, behavioral change, retrenchment strategies, and strategic reorientation. Based on these constructs, three research hypotheses are proposed to evaluate the relationships among organizational change strategy, organizational innovation, and work performance. **Conclusion:** The results suggest that organizational change alone may not directly guarantee improved performance unless it is accompanied by embedded innovation mechanisms that foster innovative practices and employee alignment. This study contributes to the literature by clarifying the mechanism by which organizational change strategy enhances performance and by providing practical implications for managers seeking sustainable organizational transformation. Future studies are encouraged to employ empirical and longitudinal designs to strengthen causal inference and external validity.

Keywords: Organizational change strategy, Organizational innovation, Work performance, Mediation effect.

INTRODUCTION

Organizational change has long been regarded as an important approach for organizations to overcome periods of difficulty. When firms face challenges such as stagnating performance or declining profitability, they often adopt organizational change as a strategic response. At present, organizational change has become a central focus across industries, whether organizations seek to break through existing constraints, secure a position in highly competitive markets, or sustain their competitive advantage. Moreover, organizational change is often accompanied by organizational innovation, enabling firms to depart from traditional modes of operation and pursue transformation in novel ways. Throughout the organizational life cycle, firms inevitably encounter changes in their external environment. Previous research suggests that at any given time, approximately 20% to 30% of firms undergo organizational change.[1] To respond effectively to environmental trends, firms must adapt their strategies; as a result, strategic change has become a critical issue in corporate management. For organizations pursuing long-term sustainability, the managerial principles of embracing change and responding adaptively are particularly essential. Despite strong demand for change management in practice, the academic literature has yet to establish a comprehensive and coherent framework for organizational change.

Differences in research methods, problem conceptualization, and variable operationalization have led to inconsistent and even contradictory findings across studies, hindering the development of an integrated and generalizable theory of change. For example, Schilke et al. (2017) reported a positive relationship between organizational size and the likelihood of change. [2] In contrast, Vuori and Huy (2015) reached the opposite conclusion. [3] As a result, whether organizational size represents a source of inertia or a reservoir of strategic flexibility remains unresolved. Similarly, scholars disagree on whether organizations necessarily adjust their strategies in response to environmental change. While Teece (2018) found that organizational strategies tend to shift in response to environmental dynamics.[4] Hambrick and Quigley (2013) provided evidence to the contrary, raising further questions about managers' roles in strategic change decisions. [5] Moreover, the performance consequences of strategic change remain inconclusive. Hanelt et al. (2021) suggested that strategic change can enhance firm performance under specific conditions; [6] however, other studies indicate that the same changes may exacerbate organizational difficulties in different contexts. [7] Owing to these conflicting findings, the literature has yet to offer a clear, definitive answer on how strategic change can be successfully implemented.

Organizational Change

The significance and reasons for organizational change: Organizational change refers to the deliberate modification of organizational structures, technologies, or personnel to

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improve organizational performance [8]. Other scholars conceptualize organizational change as the transformation of an organization's structural forms, characteristics, and operational states over time in response to changes in the external environment. From this perspective, the linkage between an organization and its environment reflects the allocation of internal resources and the patterns of interaction it adopts to achieve its goals. Joseph (2020) further argued that organizational change occurs only when organizations respond to substantial environmental shocks through downsizing or restructuring, followed by subsequent structural or procedural adjustments. [9] Oreg et al. (2016) defined organizational change as the strategic planning and actions undertaken to alter members' behaviors from previous patterns. [10] Schilke et al. (2017) suggested that organizational change can be identified when at least two of the following three elements are altered: organizational structure, power distribution, and control systems. [11] Foss and Saebi (2016) viewed change as an inherent aspect of organizational life, emphasizing that new production methods, operational processes, and organizational forms enable firms to respond effectively to intensifying competition and to deliver improved customer service. [12] Synthesizing these perspectives, organizational change can be defined as a dynamic process through which organizations adjust or reconfigure their structures, processes, systems, technologies, strategies, or members in response to external environmental changes and internal goal requirements, to achieve sustainable growth and long-term development. Based on these definitions, the drivers of organizational change primarily stem from pressures imposed by the external environment and demands for improved internal performance, which together generate impetus for change. In summary, organizational change is driven mainly by rapid, profound environmental shifts that compel organizations to undertake comprehensive internal adjustments to survive and develop. In other words, organizational change results from interactions among external and internal environments, organizational characteristics, and managerial decision-making.

The meaning of organizational change: Scholars have conceptualized organizational change in diverse ways, reflecting differences in research perspectives, analytical levels, and focal interests. Stouten et al. (2018) proposed that organizational change can be achieved through three primary approaches: structural, technological, and behavioral. [8] The first, technological strategies, emphasize changes in production methods and operational processes to enhance efficiency and performance. The second, structural strategies, involve modifications to organizational design and structure to establish new work relationships and improve performance. The third, behavioral strategies, focus on altering employees' attitudes and values to foster new behavioral patterns and improve work efficiency. Using case studies, Oreg et al. (2016) emphasized that planned organizational change is typically initiated and driven by change agents, whose efforts may target three dimensions: structure, technology, and people. [10] Structural change focuses on altering authority relationships, coordination mechanisms, and work systems; technological change involves modifications to work processes or the use of equipment; and people-oriented change aims to adjust employees' attitudes, skills, expectations, and behaviors. Based on the foregoing literature, the present study synthesizes and redefines organizational change strategies into five categories: technological change, structural change, behavioral change, retrenchment change, and strategic change. Technological

change refers to the adoption of new manufacturing methods, distribution systems, or operational processes to improve efficiency and performance, as reflected in prior studies emphasizing technological or operational strategies. Structural change involves adjustments to authority relationships, coordination mechanisms, work systems, or other structural variables. Behavioral change focuses on leadership replacement, the establishment of new management teams, the enhancement of employee morale, and changes in employees' attitudes, skills, expectations, and behaviors. Retrenchment change refers to organizational responses through cost control, expense reduction, inventory write-offs or liquidation, and the restructuring or elimination of unprofitable units. Finally, strategic change involves modifications to business portfolios, product and market configurations, levels of vertical integration, organizational scale, or industry positioning, to redefine competitive strategy and managerial direction.

Organizational Innovation

Organizational innovation refers to innovation in organizational structures, strategies, and administrative processes, with a primary focus on work activities and change within the organization as a social system. [13] Traditional research on organizational innovation has broadly examined why organizations are willing to innovate and under what conditions innovation occurs. [12] Numerous studies have investigated innovation from individual, organizational, and environmental perspectives. [13]

Oreg et al. (2011) defined organizational change as the adoption of a new idea or behavior by an organization. [7] In contrast, organizational innovation involves adopting ideas or behaviors that are new not only to the organization but also to the market or broader external environment. Simpson and Flynn (2007) further argued that research on organizational innovation emphasizes both the initiation and implementation of change. [14] In contrast, research on organizational change focuses more heavily on the implementation process.

Hanelt et al. (2021) categorized research on organizational innovation into three major perspectives: diffusion of innovation (DI), organizational innovation (OI), and process theory (PT). [6] Diffusion of innovation research examines the patterns through which new ideas spread from potential organizational adopters to other organizations, with particular attention to temporal and spatial diffusion processes. Organizational innovation research focuses on the factors that influence an organization's decision to adopt innovations. Process theory research, in contrast, investigates the multiple stages that innovations undergo as they diffuse within organizations, emphasizing the internal innovation process.

Building on this perspective, Chuang and Lee (2023) proposed that organizational innovation is shaped not only by internal organizational factors but also by external contextual influences. [15] They conceptualized innovative behavior in organizations as a function of two categories of work environment characteristics: group characteristics and organizational characteristics. Group characteristics include norms, group cohesion, size, diversity, roles, task characteristics, and problem-solving approaches adopted by groups. Organizational characteristics encompass organizational culture, resources, reward systems, strategy, structure, and technological orientation.

Work Performance

Work performance is generally defined as the extent to which an individual or an action plan achieves predetermined goals. Jayarani et al. (2017) described work performance as the degree to which an action plan accomplishes its intended objectives. [16] Guest (2017) conceptualized work performance as the manner in which employees perform their jobs, including how they organize technical skills and time, interact with others, and comply with supervisory guidance. [17] Koopmans et al. (2011) further defined work performance as the quality and quantity of task accomplishment by organizational members, reflecting employees' value contribution, work quality, and work output. [18] From a role-behavior perspective, Koopmans et al. (2014) distinguished work performance into in-role and extra-role behaviors. [19] In-role behaviors refer to actions prescribed by formal systems and job standards. In contrast, extra-role behaviors are not explicitly specified in job descriptions but contribute to the achievement of organizational goals. Similarly, Campbell and Wiernik (2015) argued that all behaviors relevant to organizational objectives constitute work performance and can be evaluated based on individuals' contributions to those objectives. [20] They further categorized work performance into two dimensions: (1) task performance, which involves outcomes directly related to formally assigned tasks and corresponds to in-role behavior; and (2) contextual performance, which encompasses discretionary and supportive behaviors that are not governed by formal organizational systems.

Dikova and Brouthers (2016) defined work performance as the degree to which individuals achieve work-related goals associated with their positions, reflecting the extent to which employees fulfill job tasks and work requirements. [21] Along similar lines, Koopmans et al. (2011) proposed that compensation-related work performance can be divided into task performance and contextual performance. [18] Task performance directly influences the accomplishment of organizational tasks, whereas contextual performance encompasses employees' supportive behaviors that contribute to the organization's social, psychological, and environmental context. In addition, Dubey et al. (2019) distinguished performance into "hard performance" and "soft performance." [22] Hard performance refers to quantitative indicators such as production volume and sales, which can be assessed using efficiency and effectiveness measures. Soft performance, in contrast, emphasizes qualitative aspects such as supervisory evaluations and self-perceptions, and is typically evaluated through quality-related indicators. Oreg et al. (2016) further classified work performance measures into three categories: employees' work outcomes, employees' work behaviors, and employee characteristics, including positive attitudes, reliability, cooperativeness, confidence, and experience. [10] Finally, Tubre and Collins (2000) summarized four common approaches to measuring work performance: objective measures, self-ratings, supervisor ratings, and peer ratings. [23]

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Hypothesis Development

This study aims to examine the impact of organizational change strategies on work performance and to further

investigate the mediating role of organizational innovation. To establish a comprehensive theoretical foundation, the research hypotheses are developed based on organizational change theory, organizational innovation theory, and performance theory.

The relationship between organizational change strategies and organizational innovation (H1): In highly dynamic and digitalized environments, organizational change is regarded as a critical antecedent to the development of a firm's innovation capability. Dynamic capability theory suggests that firms respond to environmental uncertainty by reconfiguring organizational structures and reallocating resources, thereby fostering innovation activities (Teece, 2018). [4] Shahzad et al. (2025) indicate that structural adjustments and strategic realignment during digital transformation processes strengthen organizational innovation capability. [24] Verhoefa et al. (2021) further emphasize that when organizations implement strategic and technological changes, they reshape organizational processes and decision-making mechanisms, thereby enhancing innovation outcomes. [25] Nambisan et al. (2017) also argue that institutional restructuring and resource reconfiguration can break organizational inertia and create space for innovation. [26] Thus, the following hypothesis was made:

H1: Organizational change strategies have a significant positive effect on organizational innovation.

The relationship between organizational change strategies and work performance (H2): Recent studies indicate that successful organizational change can effectively enhance organizational performance and employee outcomes. [6] During processes of digital transformation and strategic realignment, the quality of change implementation and the capability to integrate resources significantly influence performance outcomes. Astuty and Udin (2020) further demonstrate that when organizations provide a clear vision for change along with institutional support, employees' task performance and organizational commitment are significantly improved. [27] Zhao et al. (2024) also find a significant positive relationship between successful strategic transformation and improvements in firm performance. [28] Therefore, this study proposed the following hypothesis:

H2: Organizational change strategies have a significant positive effect on work performance.

The relationship between organizational innovation and work performance (H3): Organizational innovation is widely regarded as a core driver of competitive advantage and performance enhancement. Kraus et al. (2022) indicate that innovation-oriented organizations significantly outperform non-innovation-oriented organizations in terms of performance. [29] Salsabila et al. (2024) find that an organizational climate supportive of innovation significantly enhances both task performance and contextual performance among employees. [30] Lee and Trimi (2021) further argue that innovation-oriented culture and institutional design can improve organizational efficiency and overall work performance. [31] Accordingly, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H3: Organizational innovation has a significant positive effect on work performance.

In summary, based on the above hypothesis development, this study proposes three research hypotheses. The research framework is presented in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Research Framework of this Study

DISCUSSION

Discussion of Research Findings

The underlying meaning of this study indicated that organizational change strategy has significant positive effects on both organizational innovation and work performance. This suggests that when organizations systematically implement technological, structural, behavioral, or strategic changes, they are more likely to foster organizational innovation and enhance employee work performance. These results are consistent with the perspectives of Stouten et al. (2018) [8] and Oreg et al. (2016), who argued that well-planned and effectively implemented organizational change can improve organizational functioning and overall performance. [10] Furthermore, the literature indicates that organizational innovation serves as a critical mediating factor in the relationship between organizational change strategies and work performance. The findings imply that structural or institutional adjustments alone are insufficient to ensure performance improvement. Instead, organizational change must be accompanied by innovative behaviors and the institutionalization of innovation within organizational processes to realize its performance-enhancing effects fully. This content aligns with the empirical findings of Walker (2014) [13] and Hanelt et al. (2021) [6], highlighting organizational innovation as a central mechanism through which organizational change translates into improved performance outcomes.

Managerial Implications

Based on the outcome of this study, the following managerial implications are proposed to provide practical guidance for organizations seeking to implement organizational change and enhance performance.

Integrating organizational change with innovation mechanisms: The results indicate that organizational change strategies exert a stronger impact on work performance when organizational innovation serves as a mediating mechanism. Accordingly, managers should integrate innovation mechanisms into the implementation of organizational change by simultaneously addressing institutional arrangements, operational processes, and organizational culture. Focusing solely on surface-level structural adjustments may limit the effectiveness of change initiatives and hinder sustainable performance improvement.

Emphasizing behavioral change at the individual level: The findings reveal a close relationship between behavioral change and work performance, underscoring the critical role of employees' attitudes, behaviors, and values in determining the success of organizational change. Organizations are therefore encouraged to strengthen internal communication, training

programs, and incentive systems to reduce employee resistance and enhance engagement and commitment throughout the change process.

Establishing an organizational environment that supports innovation: To amplify the positive effects of organizational innovation on performance, organizations should cultivate a supportive environment for innovation. This may be achieved through well-designed reward systems, cross-functional collaboration, and appropriate empowerment practices that encourage employees to propose innovative ideas and improvement initiatives. Such efforts can enhance organizational learning and adaptability, thereby strengthening long-term competitiveness in dynamic environments.

Research Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study employed a literature review methodology, which may limit the empirical evidence of the findings. Future research is encouraged to either complete the study with sampling or adopt a longitudinal research design to examine further the causal relationships among organizational change strategies, organizational innovation, and work performance, thereby enhancing external validity and explanatory power. In addition, this study focused primarily on organizational change strategy, organizational innovation, and work performance. Future studies may incorporate additional variables, such as organizational culture, leadership style, or organizational climate, to investigate their potential moderating effects on the relationship between organizational change and work performance. Such extensions would contribute to the development of a more comprehensive theoretical framework.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the relationships among organizational change strategies, organizational innovation, and work performance using a quantitative cross-sectional survey design. Future research is encouraged to employ broader samples and longitudinal designs to examine the relationships among organizational change, organizational innovation, and work performance.

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