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Systems Perspectives in Organization and Management Research: An Integrative Review and Roadmap for Meaningful Use

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Abstract: *Systems perspectives offer a powerful alternative paradigm for understanding social phenomena as dynamic wholes characterized by emergent outcomes arising from interdependent interactions among diverse elements across multiple levels of analysis. Despite growing interest in systems thinking within organization and management (OM) research, much of its application remains ceremonial rather than meaningful, limiting the field's capacity to address complex, interconnected organizational challenges. This integrative review distinguishes three main types of systems perspectives—foundational, structural, and substantive—and examines how each can be leveraged to conceptualize phenomena, empirically investigate or simulate them, and develop theoretical explanations for their dynamics and outcomes. We trace the intellectual heritage of systems thinking and critically assess both its contributions and limitations, engaging substantively with critiques concerning cross-domain isomorphism, metaphorical overreach, ideological dimensions, and the obscuring of power relations. We identify conditions under which systems perspectives are most relevant, offer practical diagnostic frameworks and operational guidance for meaningful use across different epistemological traditions, and address the relationship between systems perspectives and adjacent theoretical traditions including*

institutional theory, organizational ecology, and practice theory. We acknowledge that systems research, like all research, serves particular interests and operates within specific epistemological commitments that shape what can be seen and said. By moving from ceremonial invocation to substantive engagement with systems perspectives, OM research can develop richer theoretical explanations and more effective practical interventions for the complex organizational phenomena that define our era.

Keywords: *systems theory, complexity, emergence, organization theory, multi-level analysis, interdependence, nonlinearity, epistemology*

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Performer Readiness: A Multidimensional Framework for Understanding Human Performance Degradation in High-Stakes Occupational Contexts

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Abstract: *Human performance failures in high-stakes occupational settings—healthcare, aviation, emergency response, and industrial operations—frequently prompt interventions targeting individual behavior, training, or motivation. This article proposes an alternative analytical framework centered on performer readiness: the constellation of cognitive, physiological, emotional, and motivational states that determine whether individuals can effectively deploy their existing competencies in demanding moments. Synthesizing research from occupational health psychology, human factors engineering, cognitive science, stress physiology, and organizational behavior, I develop a multidimensional model distinguishing four core readiness dimensions and examine their interactions, temporal dynamics, and assessment challenges. The framework provides conceptual tools for diagnosing performance problems more accurately, designing*

interventions that address root causes rather than surface manifestations, and reconceptualizing organizational responsibility for human performance outcomes. I present concrete case illustrations demonstrating multilevel analysis, articulate boundary conditions for framework application, and discuss ethical considerations in implementation. This integrative synthesis extends existing theoretical models by focusing on momentary state accessibility rather than stable capacities, systematically analyzing dimension interactions, and providing diagnostic guidance that generates distinctive predictions for practice.

Keywords: *human performance, occupational stress, cognitive readiness, fatigue, emotional regulation, human factors, high-reliability organizations, performer states*

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Navigating the Triad: Student Access, Affordability, and Labor Market Preparation in Competency Based Online Higher Education

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Abstract: *This research critically examines competency-based online higher education through the lens of an "accessibility triad" encompassing student access, affordability, and labor market preparation. Drawing on historical context and integrating theoretical frameworks including constructivism, andragogy, heutagogy, and critical perspectives on power in competency definition, the analysis reveals both transformative potential and significant limitations of CBE models. Evidence from successful implementations (Western Governors University, Southern New Hampshire University) and discontinued programs (Queensborough Community College) demonstrate varied outcomes across student populations, challenging monolithic claims about CBE effectiveness. The research reveals critical tensions: subscription pricing models benefit rapid*

completers while potentially disadvantaging slower-paced learners; prior learning assessment processes may reproduce existing inequities without intentional intervention; and micro credentials show differential labor market value across fields and demographic groups.

Keywords: *competency-based education, online higher education, accessibility, affordability, labor market preparation, prior learning assessment, andragogy, heutagogy, micro-credentials, educational equity*

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The Psychology of Exceptional Achievement: An Integrative Framework for Understanding the Genesis of Great Work

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Abstract: *What psychological and behavioral factors distinguish those who produce exceptional, original contributions from those who achieve competence without breakthrough impact? This article synthesizes research from cognitive psychology, motivation science, expertise studies, and the sociology of knowledge to propose an integrative framework for understanding exceptional achievement. Drawing on both empirical research and theoretical analysis, the paper identifies four sequential phases through which great work emerges—domain selection, frontier attainment, gap identification, and persistent exploration—and examines three enabling conditions that sustain the process: deep curiosity, earnest engagement, and resilient morale. The framework reconciles deliberate practice models with creativity research, addresses the role of social and institutional factors, and offers implications for education, mentorship, and self-*

directed development. The analysis suggests that exceptional achievement, while rare, follows discernible patterns that can inform both individual practice and institutional design.

Keywords: exceptional achievement, creativity, expertise, motivation, deliberate practice, curiosity, innovation

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The Strategic Calculus: A Mixed-Methods Analysis of Return-to-Office Mandates' Impact on Organizational Competitiveness

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Abstract: *This study employs a mixed-methods approach to examine how return-to-office (RTO) mandates influence organizational competitiveness across multiple dimensions. Using a sequential explanatory design, data were collected from 842 knowledge workers across 76 organizations (53% response rate), supplemented by 47 semi-structured interviews with executives and managers, and analysis of longitudinal performance metrics to assess competitive impacts. The findings reveal that the relationship between workplace policies and competitive outcomes is moderated by organizational context, with industry, size, and strategic positioning significantly influencing optimal approaches. Organizations implementing contextualized workplace strategies demonstrated superior competitive outcomes ($\beta = 0.34$, $p < .01$) compared to those applying universal approaches. Flexible work arrangements were associated with talent attraction advantages ($d = 0.38$, 95% CI [0.29, 0.47]) and reduced real estate costs (31%, $p < .01$), while structured in-office policies showed benefits for certain collaborative tasks ($d = 0.27$, 95% CI [0.19, 0.35]) and onboarding effectiveness ($d = 0.31$, 95% CI [0.22, 0.40]). A contingency*

framework for workplace strategy is proposed, suggesting that competitive advantage emerges from alignment between workplace arrangements, organizational context, and strategic priorities rather than from universal best practices. This extends contingency theory into workplace design and demonstrates how strategically aligned workplace approaches can serve as a source of competitive advantage within the resource-based view.

Keywords: return-to-office mandates, workplace strategy, organizational competitiveness, flexible work arrangements, contingency theory, resource-based view, knowledge workers, talent attraction, mixed-methods research, competitive advantage

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