



Integration of Key Success Factors in Organizational Project Management: Barriers and Limitations Identified in the Literature

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Abstract

In organizational project management, the integration of key success factors (KSFs) is essential for achieving sustainable results that align with strategic objectives. However, many organizations struggle to incorporate these factors systematically, which affects project performance and impact. In this regard, the objective of this study is to analyze the main barriers and constraints that hinder the integration of key success factors in organizational project management, based on evidence available in the specialized literature. Methodologically, a descriptive study with an academic literature review design was conducted, following the PRISMA protocol for the identification, selection, and analysis of sources. The findings highlight the following as recurring limiting factors: lack of strategic alignment, a short-term-oriented organizational culture, resistance to change and standardization, weak leadership and project sponsorship, limitations in talent and competency management, and the absence of monitoring and evaluation systems. It is concluded that overcoming these barriers requires a comprehensive approach that integrates strategy, leadership, organizational culture, and management systems, thereby strengthening the effectiveness of projects within organizations.

Keywords: Barriers, Key success factors, Project management, Organizations.

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Introduction

Project management is considered a fundamental strategic component for achieving organizational objectives in contexts characterized by complexity, uncertainty, and increasing competitiveness. Various authors agree that projects represent the primary vehicle for implementing organizational strategy and generating sustainable value (Kerzner, 2017; PMI, 2021; Turner, 2014). In this context, the integration of key success factors (KSFs) has been widely recognized as a determining factor in ensuring results that are consistent with institutional strategy and aligned with stakeholder expectations (Shenhar et al., 2001; Müller and Jugdev, 2012). However, despite these conceptual developments, various organizations face difficulties in systematically incorporating these factors into their management practices, which limits the effectiveness and impact of the projects implemented.

The specialized literature has addressed key success factors from various perspectives, including maturity models, project management standards, and empirical studies focused on organizational performance. Previous research highlights the importance of strategic alignment, effective leadership, stakeholder management, and monitoring and evaluation systems as essential conditions for project success (Cooke-Davies, 2002; Jugdev & Müller, 2005; Too and Weaver, 2014). However, various studies point to a persistent

gap between the theoretical recognition of these factors and their practical application in organizational contexts, highlighting limitations associated with organizational culture, governance, and managerial decision-making (Piwowar-Sulej, 2021; Musawir et al., 2020).

The issue addressed in this study focuses specifically on identifying and understanding the main barriers and constraints that hinder the integration of key success factors in organizational project management. Despite the widespread dissemination of reference frameworks and best practices, such as those proposed by international organizations and academic literature, projects continue to face recurring failures related to a lack of strategic coherence, weak leadership, resistance to change, and the absence of systematic monitoring and evaluation mechanisms (Flyvbjerg, 2014; Joslin & Müller, 2015). This situation raises questions about the organizational conditions that influence the effective adoption of the FCE.

From this perspective, it is important to conduct a systematic review of the academic literature that provides a comprehensive understanding of the factors underlying these limitations. Identifying these barriers contributes not only to strengthening the theoretical framework in project management but also to the formulation of organizational strategies aimed at continuous improvement and the optimization of project performance (Too and Weaver, 2014; Müller et al., 2019).

Therefore, the objective of this study is to analyze the barriers and constraints that hinder the integration of key success factors in organizational project management, based on a systematic review of the academic literature. This analysis aims to provide a comprehensive overview that will help identify the most common constraints highlighted in the literature and establish a conceptual foundation to guide future research and organizational practices in the field of project management.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework presented here provides an understanding of the conceptual foundations underpinning project management and the importance of key success factors in organizational contexts. In this regard, the paper first addresses the main approaches to project management in the organizational context; it then develops a conceptualization of key success factors; next, it presents the key success factors recognized in the specialized literature on project management; and finally, it analyzes the importance of these factors in the performance of organizational projects, with the aim of contextualizing the subject of study from a comprehensive theoretical perspective.

Project Management in the Organizational Context

Project management is defined as the systematic application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques aimed at achieving a project's objectives, enabling organizations to transform strategic initiatives into concrete results (PMI, 2021). From this perspective, projects are temporary endeavors that generate unique products, services, or outcomes, making them fundamental tools for organizational adaptation and responding to environmental demands (Kerzner, 2017).

In the organizational context, project management has evolved from a predominantly operational approach to a discipline closely linked to strategy. Various authors argue that projects represent the primary mechanism through which organizations implement their strategic plans and generate sustainable value (Turner, 2014; Meredith and Mantel, 2011). This view highlights the role of projects as the link between strategic planning and organizational action.

The growing complexity of organizational environments has driven the adoption of more integrated approaches to project management. Research such as that by Shenhar et al. (2001) and Müller et al. (2019) emphasizes that project success must be analyzed by considering technical, strategic, and organizational dimensions, recognizing the interdependence between projects and the organizational system in which they are carried out.

Conceptualization of Key Success Factors (KSFs)

The concept of key success factors originated in the studies of Rockart (1979), who defined them as those limited areas of activity whose satisfactory performance is essential to the achievement of organizational objectives. This notion was gradually adopted by the field of management as an approach to identifying the critical elements that require priority attention from management.

In project management, key success factors have been analyzed based on the distinction between project success and project management success. Cooke-Davies (2002) argues that the former relates to the achievement of specific objectives, while the latter is associated with an organization's ability to manage projects consistently and effectively. Complementarily, Shenhar et al. (2001) propose a multidimensional conception of success that goes beyond traditional performance criteria.

Contemporary approaches view key success factors as dynamic and interrelated constructs, whose effectiveness depends on their integration into the organizational system. Jugdev and Müller (2005) and Müller and Jugdev (2012) emphasize that key success factors should not be understood as isolated lists, but rather as elements that interact with organizational strategy, structure, and processes.

Key Success Factors in Project Management

The literature has proposed various classifications of key success factors in project management. Classic studies such as those by Pinto and Slevin (1987) and Belassi and Tukel (1996) identify factors associated with the organizational environment, project characteristics, and the stakeholders involved, highlighting the multifactorial nature of project success.

Other approaches have emphasized key success factors linked to management processes and practices, highlighting the role of methodologies, standards, and reference models as guiding elements for project implementation. In this regard, frameworks such as those proposed by the PMI (2021) and the methodological adaptation models analyzed by Joslin and Müller (2015) underscore the importance of having structured management systems.

Similarly, recent research has broadened our understanding of key success factors by incorporating dimensions related to outcomes, performance, and the creation of organizational value. Shenhar et al. (2001) and Flyvbjerg (2014) argue that project success should be evaluated by considering its contribution to strategic performance and its long-term impact on organizations.

The Importance of Key Success Factors in Project Performance

The significance of key success factors in project management is evident in their direct relationship with organizational performance. Too and Weaver (2014) argue that the proper integration of these factors promotes alignment between projects and institutional strategy, thereby strengthening organizations' ability to achieve their objectives.

From a sustainability perspective, key success factors play a fundamental role in generating long-term value. Authors such as Shenhar et al. (2001) and Turner (2014) point out that successful projects not only meet immediate goals but also contribute to organizational learning and the development of strategic capabilities.

Finally, the literature acknowledges that the importance of key success factors is heightened in organizational contexts characterized by complexity and uncertainty. Flyvbjerg (2014) and Joslin and Müller (2015) emphasize that key success factors serve as conceptual frameworks that guide decision-making and enhance the effectiveness of project management in dynamic environments.

Materials and Methods

This research adopts a qualitative approach with a descriptive scope, based on an integrative academic literature review design. This methodological approach allowed for a systematic analysis of theoretical and empirical contributions related to the integration of key success factors in organizational project management, with the aim of identifying conceptual trends, predominant approaches, and recurring

elements addressed in the specialized literature. The choice of this design responds to the need to critically interpret the theoretical constructs and analytical frameworks used in previous studies on project management and key success factors.

The review strategy was based on a systematic search of academic literature in high-impact databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, as well as open-access academic repositories such as Redalyc and Dialnet. To retrieve the information, keyword combinations were designed using Boolean operators (AND, OR), integrating terms such as “project management,” “critical success factors,” “project success,” “organizational projects,” and “project performance,” in both Spanish and English, in order to broaden the search scope and ensure the comprehensiveness of the process.

The selection of the document corpus was based on previously defined inclusion criteria. We considered scientific articles published in full text between 2019 and 2023 that explicitly addressed key success factors in organizational project management from theoretical, empirical, or review perspectives. We excluded non-peer-reviewed documents, duplicate studies, gray literature, and works focused exclusively on technical aspects of the project without an organizational or management approach.

The process of searching for, selecting, and refining the information was carried out in accordance with the PRISMA guidelines, adapted to the context of the study. This procedure allowed for a transparent and reproducible structuring of the phases of identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion of the documentary sources. Initially, a broad set of references was identified in the selected databases; subsequently, by applying the established criteria and reviewing titles, abstracts, and full-text articles, the final body of literature to be analyzed was consolidated. The use of the PRISMA protocol ensured the traceability of the methodological process and consistency in the selection of the set of studies analyzed.

Finally, the research process was carried out in three phases. In the first phase, relevant academic sources were identified and collected; in the second phase, a qualitative analysis of the document corpus was conducted, aimed at identifying thematic patterns and recurring conceptual approaches regarding the barriers and limitations to the integration of key success factors in project management; and in the final phase, the findings were systematized, serving as the basis for the analysis and discussion of the main barriers and limitations to the integration of these factors in organizational contexts.

Results

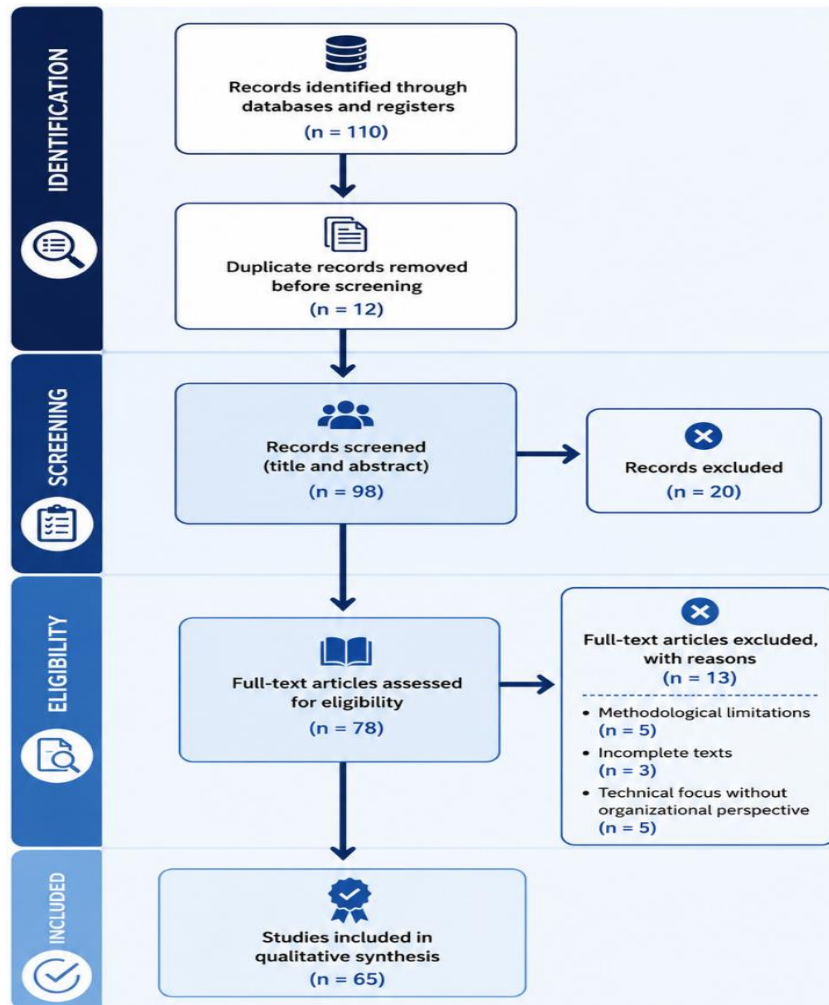
The findings align with the research objectives and are structured into two analytically distinct phases. The first phase involves the collection and systematization of the bibliographic corpus, through which selection, inclusion, and exclusion criteria were established for the documentary sources consulted. The second phase focuses on the critical analysis of this corpus, through which the conceptual categories, theoretical convergences, and interpretive tensions underlying the analyzed literature on the barriers and limitations to integrating key success factors in organizational project management were identified.

Phase One Results: Literature Search

The selection procedures were structured in accordance with the four stages of the PRISMA 2020 protocol, ensuring the traceability and transparency of the literature retrieval process. The first stage involved identifying a broad set of records in the selected databases, during which we checked for duplicates among the sources. In the second stage, titles and abstracts were reviewed by applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, discarding those documents that did not directly correspond to the subject of study. The third eligibility stage involved reading the preselected articles in full to verify their thematic validity, methodological relevance, and contribution to the analysis of barriers in organizational project management. Finally, the fourth inclusion stage consolidated the final document corpus that served as the basis for the analysis (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

PRISMA flowchart of the literature review selection process



Note: The figure illustrates the four phases of the process of identifying, screening, assessing eligibility, and including the articles selected for the review.

of the total number of records initially identified in the databases consulted, an initial set was excluded because they were duplicates across sources. During the review of titles and abstracts, documents that did not explicitly address organizational project management or key success factors were eliminated. Subsequently, a full reading of the remaining articles allowed for the exclusion of works with methodological deficiencies, incomplete texts, or studies focused exclusively on technical aspects without an organizational or management dimension. The process concluded with a total of 65 studies included in the analytical corpus, which were systematized within an analytical framework that organized the information based on variables such as year of publication, geographic context, methodology used, identified barriers, and the most relevant conceptual dimensions in the discussion.

- Phase Two Results: Analysis of Bibliographic Sources

The analysis of the selected document corpus enabled the construction of a bibliometric network that organizes and visually represents the conceptual categories identified throughout the review process. This tool facilitated an understanding of the relationships among the topics most frequently found in the analyzed literature and guided the identification of the most common barriers and limitations to the integration of key success factors in organizational project management. Figure 2 shows the bibliometric network constructed from the final document corpus, in which the thematic nodes with the highest density and their connections to the emerging categories of analysis are represented.

and Caldeira (2023) highlight the need to integrate value management and tools such as the Balanced Scorecard to translate strategy into measurable indicators, while Bai, Li, Du, and Xu (2021) propose strategically oriented portfolio selection methodologies aimed at avoiding initiatives disconnected from institutional priorities. Likewise, Pérez, Gimeno, and Celma (2021) identify that the lack of alignment between technology projects and corporate goals affects governance and reduces value creation. Along the same lines, Brito and Medeiros Júnior (2021) note that project management offices (PMOs) act as bridge structures between strategy and execution; however, when these lack organizational influence, strategic implementation becomes progressively fragmented. These findings suggest that strategic alignment does not depend solely on formulating institutional objectives, but on creating structures that ensure their effective translation into projects and day-to-day decisions.

From a broader perspective, recent research emphasizes that barriers to alignment often stem from cultural issues, poor communication, and a lack of organizational capabilities. Suvvari (2022) identifies that organizational silos, limited interaction between departments, and the lack of periodic portfolio reviews significantly hinder strategic alignment; he even reports that organizations with mature portfolio management processes exhibit higher levels of alignment between projects and corporate objectives. Similarly, Adepoju et al., (2023) argue that bridging the gap between strategic intent and execution requires organizational roadmaps grounded in metrics, stakeholder engagement, and continuous performance evaluation. Similarly, Boateng, Agyekum-Mensah, and Yeboah-Asiamah Asante (2023) argue that synergistic alignment requires top-down communication, robust measurement systems, and constant review of objectives to respond to internal and external changes. Taken together, this evidence shows that a lack of strategic alignment arises not only from methodological shortcomings but also from structural limitations related to organizational culture, interdepartmental coordination, and institutional oversight.

Furthermore, the literature shows that strategic alignment is also influenced by intangible factors related to leadership, culture, and human capabilities. In this regard, Jami Pour et al. (2019) identify managerial support, governance, cross-functional communication, and a knowledge-friendly culture as the main drivers of strategic alignment; their absence increases the likelihood of failure in organizational initiatives. These findings align with the evidence presented by Musawir et al. (2020) and Martinsuo and Hoverfält (2022), who argue that alignment requires ongoing processes of interaction between strategy, portfolios, and governance structures. Thus, a lack of strategic alignment must be understood as a systemic constraint that goes beyond the formulation of objectives and compromises the comprehensive incorporation of key success factors, weakening the organizational capacity to turn projects into real mechanisms of institutional transformation.

Finally, the review suggests that strategic alignment is a structural prerequisite for the effective integration of key success factors in project management. When projects are carried out as independent initiatives, without connection to organizational priorities or strategic monitoring mechanisms, deficiencies emerge in governance, communication, evaluation, and the generation of benefits. Consequently, strengthening alignment requires management models that integrate leadership, portfolios, performance measurement, organizational culture, and stakeholder engagement, enabling projects to evolve from an operational framework toward a strategic function focused on the sustainable achievement of institutional objectives.

- **Short-term-oriented organizational culture**

A review of the literature from 2019 to 2023 reveals a recurring trend related to the prevalence of organizational cultures focused on the immediate achievement of results, a condition that limits the incorporation of key success factors associated with sustainability, strategic alignment, knowledge management, and stakeholder engagement. Consistently, studies show that numerous organizations continue to evaluate project success using traditional indicators such as budget compliance, timelines, and operational efficiency, sidelining variables that generate long-term value. In this regard, the pressure for immediate profitability favors decisions focused on short-term financial gains, reducing the organizational willingness to integrate sustainable approaches into project management (Haessler, 2020; Alexandrova, 2021). Likewise, recent research argues that this short-term logic creates conflicts between sustainability

and economic performance, as the benefits derived from sustainable practices tend to manifest gradually rather than immediately.

The studies reviewed agree that organizational culture is a cross-cutting determinant of sustainable success, as it directly influences strategic priorities and the way projects are selected, executed, and evaluated. From this perspective, organizations focused exclusively on operational excellence or immediate compliance tend to weaken capabilities related to agility, organizational learning, and adaptation to the environment elements necessary to sustain future results (Carvalho et al., 2019). Along similar lines, Vrhota et al., (2020) note that the sustainability of projects in contexts associated with Industry 4.0 depends on a culture capable of balancing operational flexibility with a long-term strategic vision. Complementarily, Martínez-Peláez et al. (2023) conclude that sustainability-oriented organizational transformation requires changing corporate culture before incorporating technologies, since decisions focused solely on immediate results hinder the integration of strategic capabilities and limit future success.

Time and again, the specialized literature reveals that a short-term focus reduces the incorporation of key factors related to stakeholder management, effective communication, and the creation of sustainable value. In this regard, Gunduz and Yahya (2020) demonstrate that organizations with a strong emphasis on budget and schedule often neglect practices related to sustainability and the involvement of strategic stakeholders. Similar findings are reported by Zaleski and Mazur (2021), who show that IT service projects with cultures focused on immediate deliverables exhibit lower integration of factors associated with cooperation, communication, and sustainability. Concurrently, Qian, Lu, and Yu (2022) demonstrate that pressures for immediate financial results lead to the neglect of essential organizational investments such as workplace safety and well-being, reinforcing the idea that short-termism limits decisions that generate lasting value.

The evidence reviewed also shows that prioritizing immediate objectives negatively affects the institutional capacity to build long-term value within strategic portfolios and projects. Alexandrova (2021) argues that measuring success solely in terms of cost, time, and quality overlooks dimensions related to strategic alignment and future sustainability. Following this same logic, Boge et al., (2021) argue that projects developed under predominantly short-term criteria reduce value creation for users and organizations over extended time horizons. Additionally, Pot (2020) explains that current investment decisions often conflict with future sustainability goals due to the prevalence of budget constraints, risk aversion, and the need to meet immediate objectives, which ultimately weakens long-term governance processes.

Taken as a whole, the ten studies reviewed suggest that a short-term-oriented organizational culture constitutes a structural barrier to the integration of key success factors in organizational project management. The recurrence of findings associated with immediate financial pressure, operational compliance, budget prioritization, and traditional performance measurement indicates that many organizations continue to prioritize visible short-term results over strategic capabilities linked to sustainability, innovation, learning, and stakeholder management (Haessler, 2020; Carvalho et al., 2019; Gunduz and Yahya, 2020; Martínez-Peláez et al., 2023). Consequently, the reviewed literature suggests that strengthening a long-term organizational vision not only promotes sustainability but also increases the likelihood of incorporating critical factors that support the comprehensive and lasting success of projects.

- **Resistance to change and standardization**

The reviewed studies show that resistance to change constitutes one of the main barriers to the effective incorporation of key success factors (KSFs) in organizational project management. The literature consulted indicates that the implementation of new management approaches often involves changes in processes, structures, roles, and decision-making mechanisms, generating uncertainty among members of the organization. According to Hubbart (2023), aversion to change stems primarily from fear of the unknown, loss of control, and a preference for familiar environments factors that limit individuals' willingness to adopt new organizational practices. In line with this, Şerban et al. (2020) argue that resistance intensifies when transformations are perceived as threats to job stability or established routines, while Şendrea (2023) notes that an inadequate understanding of the purpose and scope of change fosters defensive

attitudes that restrict innovation and hinder the incorporation of management models aimed at organizational improvement.

The available evidence suggests that resistance to change cannot be explained solely from an individual perspective, but also stems from structural and cultural conditions within organizations. Various authors agree that bureaucratic structures, rigid procedures, and the persistence of traditional management patterns create an environment that is not conducive to the adoption of new methodologies. According to Ashok et al. (2021), organizational inertia stemming from highly formalized systems limits the institutional capacity to incorporate innovative practices related to knowledge management and organizational learning. Similarly, Kaganer et al. (2023) argue that psychological, sociocognitive, and political inertia acts as a mechanism for preserving existing dynamics, hindering organizational transformation and reducing the capacity to respond to new strategic challenges.

On the other hand, the studies reviewed agree that resistance to change represents a recurring obstacle in the implementation of methodologies aimed at continuous improvement and strengthening organizational performance. According to Maware and Adetunji (2022), Lean transformation processes are often hindered by the difficulty of changing entrenched organizational cultures, as well as by opposition from employees and managers to new ways of working. This view is shared by Moradi and Sormunen (2023), who identify resistance to change and a limited understanding of methodological principles as some of the most common barriers to the implementation of Lean Construction. Taken together, these findings suggest that the availability of tools or methodologies does not guarantee their effective adoption if organizations do not foster a cultural environment conducive to transformation and learning.

The literature review also shows that the challenges associated with standardization take on particular significance in contexts where the adoption of agile methodologies and innovation-based management approaches is encouraged. In this regard, Suárez-Gómez and Hoyos-Vallejo (2023) found that organizational culture and resistance to change constitute the main obstacles to the implementation of scalable agile frameworks in project portfolio management. Complementarily, Pedrosa et al. (2023) identified that resistance from employees and managers, the absence of adequate organizational structures, and deficiencies in communication processes significantly limit the adoption of Lean methodologies in the construction industry. The reviewed studies show that, although organizations recognize the benefits associated with standardizing practices and processes, significant difficulties persist in transforming behaviors and institutional dynamics that have become entrenched over time.

In contrast to approaches that view organizational change as an exclusively technical process, the current trend in the literature points to the need to strengthen the human and strategic components of transformation. As Phillips and Klein (2023) assert, change management must be addressed through structured strategies that promote communication, participation, and engagement among the various stakeholders involved. This perspective is supported by the arguments of Hubbart (2023), Șerban et al. (2020), and Șendrea (2023), who agree that reducing resistance depends, to a large extent, on the organization's ability to build trust, promote opportunities for participation, and facilitate understanding of the benefits associated with the proposed transformations. Consequently, the adoption of FCE requires interventions that go beyond procedural aspects and take into account the cultural, social, and behavioral dimensions that influence the acceptance of change.

In general terms, a review of the literature leads to the conclusion that resistance to change and standardization constitutes one of the most significant barriers to the effective integration of key success factors in organizational project management. Analysis of the theoretical corpus reveals that this limitation is associated with both individual factors related to uncertainty and attachment to familiar practices and organizational factors linked to institutional culture, bureaucracy, and structural inertia. Furthermore, the evidence examined demonstrates that difficulties in adopting methodologies, best practices, and management models are not solely due to the absence of technical tools, but also to organizations' limited capacity to promote sustainable cultural transformation processes. Consequently, the effective incorporation of key success factors requires comprehensive change management strategies that

strengthen leadership, communication, participation, and organizational learning, fostering more flexible environments conducive to innovation and continuous improvement.

- **Weak leadership and project sponsorship**

The reviewed studies show that leadership is one of the most critical factors for the effective integration of key success factors in organizational project management. The literature consulted indicates that leaders not only influence the coordination of activities and resources but also the ability of organizations to adopt practices aimed at improving performance and achieving strategic objectives. According to Zaman et al. (2022), supportive leadership strengthens the relationship between critical success factors and sustainable project outcomes, while Fareed et al. (2023) argue that transformational leadership fosters team commitment and significantly improves organizational performance. In line with these findings, Abbas and Ali (2021) conclude that transformational leadership styles have a more favorable influence on project success than approaches based exclusively on transactional mechanisms of supervision and control.

The available evidence suggests that the absence of effective leadership limits teams' ability to understand, adopt, and embed practices related to key success factors. According to Doan et al. (2020), leaders play a fundamental role in strengthening organizational commitment and creating conditions that foster collective performance. Similarly, Zada et al. (2023) note that the clarity of objectives promoted by leadership significantly contributes to the effectiveness of project management, especially when there is institutional support for decision-making. The studies analyzed agree that weak leadership reduces strategic alignment, hinders coordination among stakeholders, and limits the ability to respond to challenges that arise during project implementation.

Various authors agree that leadership alone is insufficient if it is not accompanied by visible commitment from senior management. The literature reviewed shows that support from senior management acts as a facilitating factor for the implementation of governance practices, risk management, performance monitoring, and efficient resource allocation. According to Fareed and Su (2022), support from senior management strengthens the relationship between governance and project performance, contributing to the consolidation of success-oriented organizational mechanisms. This view is shared by Fareed et al. (2023), who demonstrate that managerial support enhances the positive effects of transformational leadership on project outcomes. Likewise, Waseem et al. (2022) argue that organizational support promoted by management fosters team cohesion and improves the institutional capacity to achieve intended objectives.

On the other hand, the reviewed evidence highlights that project sponsorship is an essential component for ensuring alignment between the organization's strategic objectives and the expected project outcomes. In this regard, Breese et al. (2020) argue that the sponsor plays a fundamental role in realizing benefits, ensuring accountability, and providing strategic oversight of organizational initiatives. In line with the above, Musonda and Okoro (2022) note that the active participation of decision-makers promotes the effective implementation of management approaches and strengthens organizations' capacity to manage transformation processes. The available evidence suggests that the absence of committed sponsors limits strategic oversight of projects and reduces the likelihood of consolidating key success factors within organizational management.

Unlike approaches based on participatory and supportive leadership, some studies warn of the negative consequences of inappropriate or overly authoritarian leadership styles. According to Zaman et al. (2021), authoritarian behaviors can encourage team members to remain silent and restrict communication processes, negatively affecting the multidimensional success of projects. Similarly, Vrchota et al. (2020) identify that deficiencies in leadership and strategic direction limit an organization's ability to address the challenges associated with technological transformation and sustainability. In line with these findings, Zwikael and Meredith (2021) argue that leaders' performance is an inseparable element of the comprehensive assessment of project success, due to its influence on outcomes, value creation, and the achievement of organizational objectives.

Overall, the literature review leads to the conclusion that effective leadership and strategic sponsorship are essential elements for incorporating key success factors into organizational project management. Analysis of the theoretical corpus reveals that leaders contribute to defining objectives, coordinating efforts, managing resources, and fostering environments conducive to innovation and organizational learning. Furthermore, the evidence examined demonstrates that support from senior management and the active involvement of sponsors strengthen governance mechanisms, facilitate decision-making, and promote the achievement of sustainable benefits. Consequently, weak leadership, a lack of managerial commitment, and the absence of sponsorship emerge as significant barriers that hinder the integration of key success factors and reduce the likelihood of achieving successful outcomes in organizational projects.

- **Limitations in talent and competency management**

The reviewed studies show that human talent competencies are a determining factor for the effective incorporation of key success factors in organizational project management. The literature consulted indicates that the growing complexity of business environments demands professionals with technical, strategic, and leadership skills that enable them to adequately manage the resources, risks, and processes associated with project development. According to Wei et al. (2023), the technological competencies of project managers have become a fundamental requirement for addressing the challenges arising from digital transformation and the incorporation of smart technologies. In line with this, Chasanah et al. (2023) argue that human factors and managerial capabilities are essential components for the success of international development projects, while Wisawapaisarn and Yodmongkol (2022) emphasize that the proper management of specialized processes requires specific technical competencies to ensure quality, traceability, and the achievement of organizational objectives.

The available evidence suggests that limitations in human talent management significantly restrict organizations' ability to implement practices associated with key success factors. Various authors agree that the availability of competent personnel is a necessary condition for promoting organizational learning, strengthening collaboration, and improving institutional performance. According to Grant et al. (2020), difficulties in coordinating talent management strategies among different organizational actors limit the consolidation of collective capabilities and reduce the effectiveness of organizational development processes. Similarly, Vu et al. (2019) note that performance management systems depend largely on organizations' ability to develop, assess, and strengthen their employees' competencies. Likewise, Apte et al. (2022) argue that knowledge management and adaptation to changing scenarios require employees who are prepared to learn, share experiences, and transfer knowledge within the organization.

On the other hand, the literature reviewed shows that continuing education is one of the main mechanisms for reducing the skills gaps that affect project management. The studies analyzed agree that the rapid evolution of technological and organizational environments requires ongoing professional development. According to Thomas et al. (2022), the creation and transfer of knowledge depend on the active participation of multiple stakeholders and on capacity building that enables effective information management. In line with this perspective, Mora et al. (2021) argue that knowledge management systems require structured methodologies and trained professionals to transform information into knowledge useful for decision-making. In turn, Oliveira et al. (2023) highlight that the psychological empowerment of workers fosters adaptation to change, the development of new skills, and the ability to respond to the demands of the future of work. Taken together, these findings suggest that the absence of continuous training strategies limits the adoption of tools, methodologies, and best practices linked to key success factors.

The literature review also shows that limitations in talent management are not solely related to skills development, but also to the organization's ability to retain and transfer acquired knowledge. In this regard, staff turnover emerges as a significant barrier to the sustainability of projects and the consolidation of organizational learning. According to Wang and Sun (2020), organizational performance dynamics influence employee retention and can affect the stability of internal capabilities. Complementarily, Ko and Choi (2023) identify that collective staff turnover reduces organizations' innovative capacity when there

are no effective mechanisms for knowledge exchange and preservation. These findings suggest that the loss of experienced talent creates knowledge gaps that affect the continuity of processes and hinder the consistent application of key success factors in project management.

Furthermore, the reviewed studies show that the relationship between human talent and organizational performance is influenced by contextual factors that can either enhance or limit the utilization of available competencies. Unlike perspectives that attribute results exclusively to individual capabilities, Revilla et al. (2019) argue that the organizational context significantly influences the effects that managerial turnover has on institutional performance. This position complements the arguments of Wang and Sun (2020) and Ko and Choi (2023), demonstrating that effective talent management requires organizational environments capable of retaining knowledge, promoting continuous learning, and facilitating the transfer of experiences across different levels of the organization. Consequently, the lack of comprehensive strategies for managing human talent can become an obstacle to the consolidation of critical capabilities associated with project success.

Broadly speaking, the literature review leads to the conclusion that limitations in talent and competency management constitute a significant barrier to the effective integration of key success factors in organizational project management. Analysis of the theoretical corpus reveals that gaps in technical and strategic capabilities, insufficient ongoing training, deficiencies in knowledge management processes, and high staff turnover reduce organizations' ability to adopt management methodologies, tools, and best practices. Furthermore, the evidence examined demonstrates that the sustainability of projects depends not only on the availability of competent professionals but also on the existence of organizational mechanisms that foster learning, knowledge transfer, and talent retention. Consequently, strengthening human capital competencies and consolidating comprehensive talent management strategies emerge as an indispensable condition for ensuring the effective application of key success factors and improving organizational performance.

- **Lack of monitoring and evaluation systems**

The studies analyzed show that the absence of monitoring and evaluation systems constitutes one of the main constraints to the effective integration of key success factors (KSFs) into organizational project management. The literature reviewed indicates that, when organizations lack formal monitoring mechanisms, KSFs cease to be manageable elements and become merely conceptual references with no real impact on decision-making. In this regard, Chen et al. (2022) note that an insufficient understanding of critical success factors hinders the control and monitoring of project performance, while Zhou et al. (2022) argue that the evaluation of CSFs requires structured models capable of linking enabling factors to the results obtained. Complementarily, Wang et al. (2021) argue that the lack of reasonable performance evaluation systems constitutes a recurring cause of project failure, as it prevents the timely identification of deviations and opportunities for improvement.

The available evidence suggests that indicators and metrics are essential tools for translating key success factors into observable and measurable variables. According to Sun et al. (2019), effective project management requires comprehensive evaluation systems based on indicators that allow for the assessment of collaboration, performance, and goal achievement from different organizational perspectives. In line with this approach, Wang et al. (2021) propose the use of key performance indicators (KPIs) distributed throughout the project lifecycle, with the aim of monitoring progress and facilitating evidence-based decision-making. Likewise, Wang (2022) highlights that performance evaluation processes allow for the identification of strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement, promoting more efficient management of resources and organizational outcomes.

The studies reviewed agree that continuous monitoring and control mechanisms are essential for assessing the impact of ECFs on project performance. According to Tahanian et al. (2021), periodic monitoring processes make it possible to evaluate key factors such as time, cost, quality, and achievement of objectives, which are commonly used as indicators of success. Similarly, Zhu et al. (2022) argue that impact-oriented monitoring and evaluation systems facilitate the connection between planning, implementation, and

results, allowing organizations to adjust their intervention strategies in a timely manner. From this perspective, continuous evaluation not only serves a control function but also strengthens organizational learning and adaptation capacity in the face of changing scenarios.

Furthermore, the reviewed literature shows that monitoring systems contribute significantly to knowledge generation and the strengthening of strategic decision-making. Guariguata and Evans (2019) argue that collaborative monitoring processes foster organizational learning and allow key success factors to be explicitly incorporated into adaptive project management. Similarly, Schulze and Brusoni (2022) demonstrate that KPIs play a decisive role in maintaining organizational focus on change initiatives and continuous improvement, preventing strategic objectives from losing relevance during implementation. These findings suggest that evaluation systems not only measure results but also guide behaviors, priorities, and decisions within organizations.

The literature review also reveals that the absence of relevant metrics and adequate control systems can have negative effects on an organization's ability to achieve sustainable results. Malmi et al. (2022), drawing on the case of Nokia Mobile Phones, show that the lack of relevant indicators and delays in updating control systems foster organizational inertia and suboptimal decisions. In line with these findings, Johansson and Liljegren (2020) argue that the usefulness of measurement systems depends not only on the availability of data but also on managerial support and institutional maturity to interpret and utilize the information generated. Consequently, the lack of monitoring systems limits visibility into key success factors and reduces the likelihood of timely corrective interventions.

The studies analyzed agree that monitoring and evaluation systems are an essential prerequisite for the effective integration of key success factors in organizational project management. An analysis of the theoretical literature reveals that indicators, KPIs, monitoring mechanisms, and evaluation tools make it possible to transform key success factors into observable, manageable, and useful elements for decision-making. Likewise, the studies examined agree that the absence of these systems hinders organizational learning, limits adaptability, reduces the effectiveness of control, and weakens the strategic orientation of projects. Taken together, the available evidence suggests that strengthening monitoring and evaluation processes promotes more systematic management of key success factors and increases the likelihood of achieving sustainable results aligned with organizational objectives.

Discussion

This systematic review reveals that the barriers to integrating key success factors into organizational project management are not isolated or independent phenomena, but rather constitute a system of mutually conditioning constraints that operate at different levels of the organizational fabric. This systemic perspective represents, in itself, one of the most significant contributions of the study, as it moves beyond the fragmented approaches that have dominated the specialized literature and that have tended to treat each barrier as a separate variable susceptible to individual intervention.

One of the most consistent findings is that a lack of strategic alignment acts as a structural condition that undermines the effectiveness of other key success factors. The approaches of Musawir et al. (2020) and Martinsuo and Hoverfält (2022) agree that alignment is not a fixed state achieved at the time of strategy formulation, but rather a dynamic process that requires ongoing interaction among stakeholders, continuous portfolio review, and active governance mechanisms. This perspective gains greater depth when contrasted with the findings of Brito and Medeiros Júnior (2021), who demonstrate that project management offices lose their coordinating function when they lack real influence over organizational decisions. This suggests that the problem lies not only in the absence of alignment tools, but in the weakness of the structures that should support them, a condition that Jami Pour et al. (2019) directly associate with deficits in leadership, cross-functional communication, and a knowledge-friendly organizational culture.

In this sense, organizational culture emerges as a cross-cutting variable that shapes organizations' ability to overcome any of the identified barriers. The short-term orientation documented by Haessler (2020) and Alexandrova (2021) not only limits the incorporation of sustainable approaches but also shifts success

criteria toward immediate operational dimensions, pushing long-term strategic variables into the background. This logic is particularly problematic because, as Carvalho et al. (2019) demonstrate, organizations that prioritize operational excellence over adaptability end up eroding precisely the capabilities they would need to sustain successful projects in dynamic environments. The study by Martínez-Peláez et al. (2023) reinforces this argument by concluding that no sustainability-oriented organizational transformation can be sustained unless it is preceded by a change in corporate culture, implying that technical interventions without a cultural foundation are doomed to produce short-lived results.

This cultural logic finds its most concrete expression in resistance to change and standardization, a barrier that the reviewed studies describe as a multidimensional phenomenon that transcends individual attitudes. Hubbart (2023) and Kaganer et al. (2023) agree that organizational inertia has psychological, structural, and political roots that reinforce one another, which explains why the mere availability of methodologies or frameworks does not guarantee their adoption. The findings of Suárez-Gómez and Hoyos-Vallejo (2023) in agile portfolio management contexts and those of Pedrosa et al. (2023) in the construction industry converge on a single point: the standardization of practices fails when it is not accompanied by deliberate change management processes that involve all levels of the organization. This evidence aligns with the arguments put forward by Phillips and Klein (2023), who propose that change management should be understood as a continuous strategic practice rather than a one-time event a challenge that organizations rarely address with the depth it requires.

Weak leadership and the lack of effective sponsorship emerge as factors that exacerbate all of the aforementioned barriers. Abbas and Ali (2021) and Fareed et al. (2023) provide robust evidence of the superiority of transformational leadership over transactional approaches in terms of sustainable outcomes, while Zaman et al. (2021) caution that authoritarian styles create organizational silences that suppress the feedback necessary to identify deviations in a timely manner. The connection between sponsorship and governance is equally significant: Breese et al. (2020) demonstrate that the sponsor is not merely a hierarchical backer, but the actor responsible for maintaining alignment between project objectives and organizational strategy throughout the initiative's entire lifecycle. When this figure is weak or absent, the governance mechanisms described by Fareed and Su (2022) and Waseem et al. (2022) lose the institutional support that makes them effective, generating a chain of vulnerabilities that extends from decision-making to the evaluation of results.

Limitations in talent and skills management represent another critical dimension whose complexity is often underestimated in the literature. Wei et al. (2023) and Chasanah et al. (2023) document that skills gaps directly affect teams' ability to apply key success factors in real-world conditions, but the problem goes beyond individual training. Ko and Choi (2023) and Wang and Sun (2020) demonstrate that staff turnover dissipates accumulated knowledge and fragments collective capabilities, resulting in organizations that must constantly restart their learning curves. This situation is particularly severe in contexts where, as Apte et al. (2022) point out, knowledge management systems are not well-established, since the loss of experienced talent implies not only the departure of individuals but also the disappearance of practical knowledge that was never codified or transferred. The proposal by Oliveira et al. (2023) regarding psychological empowerment as a condition for adapting to change offers a complementary perspective that deserves greater attention in future research, as it links organizational well-being to the ability to sustain strategic projects.

The absence of monitoring and evaluation systems closes the loop on the identified barriers and clearly reveals why many organizations are unable to learn from their own experiences. Chen et al. (2022) and Wang et al. (2021) show that without structured metrics, key success factors become mere statements with no real impact on decisions, while Malmi et al. (2022) demonstrate, through the Nokia case, that outdated control systems not only fail to detect deviations but also fuel organizational inertia by legitimizing decisions that no longer correspond to the reality of the environment. Schulze and Brusoni's (2022) reflection on the role of performance indicators as mechanisms for organizational attention is particularly relevant, as it introduces the idea that measuring is not merely recording, but rather guiding behaviors and

priorities within the organization a function that can only be fulfilled when evaluation systems are supported by the managerial commitment highlighted by Johansson and Liljegren (2020).

Taken together, the six areas of analysis suggest that the barriers to integrating key success factors are not technical problems that can be solved by adopting new tools or methodologies. Rather, they are manifestations of systemic imbalances that simultaneously and interdependently involve culture, leadership, structure, talent, and management systems. This understanding has direct implications for organizations seeking to improve the performance of their projects: isolated interventions targeting a single dimension will yield limited results if the rest of the system remains unchanged. What the reviewed evidence suggests, however, is moving toward comprehensive management models that integrate strategic governance, a culture of learning, transformational leadership, continuous talent development, and impact-oriented evaluation systems—conditions that are not built overnight but through sustained organizational development processes that require institutional commitment, resources, and time.

Conclusions

The systematic review conducted leads to the conclusion that integrating key success factors into organizational project management faces a set of barriers that cannot be understood in isolation or addressed in a piecemeal fashion. The lack of strategic alignment, a short-term-oriented culture, resistance to change and standardization, weak leadership and sponsorship, limitations in talent management, and the absence of monitoring and evaluation systems form a systemic web in which each constraint feeds into and reinforces the others. This interdependence is, precisely, the study's main finding, as it reveals that the recurring failure of organizational projects is not due to specific shortcomings in the application of methodologies, but rather to deep structural imbalances that simultaneously permeate culture, governance, leadership, and management systems. Recognizing this systemic nature is the first essential step toward formulating truly effective organizational responses.

From a proactive perspective, the study's findings suggest that overcoming these barriers requires transformations that go beyond the technical dimension and address the organizational conditions that determine how decisions are made, how people develop, and how lessons are learned from accumulated experience. Organizations that succeed in building long-term-oriented cultures, strengthening transformational leadership at all levels, and consolidating permanent talent development mechanisms will be in a position to embrace key success factors not as formal requirements, but as genuine strategic capabilities. This transition does not occur spontaneously or as the result of a single decision; it requires sustained organizational development processes that combine institutional will, deliberately allocated resources, and a willingness to question the management logics that have historically prevailed within each organization.

The study also leads to the conclusion that monitoring and evaluation systems represent a cross-cutting enabler without which none of the other transformations can be consolidated. An organization that does not measure the actual impact of its projects, lacks indicators linked to its strategic objectives, and does not inform its decisions with systematic evidence is doomed to repeat the same patterns of failure regardless of the methodologies it adopts or the frameworks it claims to follow. In this sense, strengthening the culture of evaluation within organizations is not a secondary administrative task, but rather a fundamental condition of maturity in project management, understood as the institutional capacity to learn, adapt, and continuously improve based on one's own experience.

Finally, this research opens up lines of inquiry that warrant further exploration in future studies, particularly regarding the relative importance of each barrier based on the type, size, and sector of the organizations, as well as the intervention models that have proven most effective in transforming short-term-oriented organizational cultures in environments under high pressure to deliver immediate results. Knowledge building in this field requires mixed methodological approaches that combine the rigor of systematic reviews with the interpretive richness of case studies, allowing us to understand not only what barriers exist, but also how they operate in specific contexts and what conditions facilitate their overcoming. Moving in this direction will contribute significantly both to the theoretical strengthening of

project management and to the real improvement of organizational performance in increasingly complex and uncertain contexts.

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