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The Influence of Risk Mitigation, Continuous Process Improvement, and Digital Transformation on Organizational Performance: Evidence from Saudi Arabia

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effect of risk mitigation, continuous process improvement, and digital transformation on organizational performance in the Saudi Arabian power and energy sector. Primary data were collected from a sample of 350 project engineers, managers, and technical staff working on medium-voltage substation and high-voltage power cable installation projects with the Saudi Electricity Company and its contractors. Data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test the proposed framework. The constructs were informed by prior literature on risk management, process improvement, and technological transformation in engineering projects. The results demonstrated that risk assessment and mitigation significantly enhanced organizational performance by reducing uncertainties, preventing delays, and ensuring safer execution. Continuous process improvement was found to positively influence project outcomes by streamlining operations, minimizing wastage, and promoting efficiency in project delivery. Furthermore, digital Transformation in project management—including monitoring systems, automation software, and ERP platforms—showed a strong positive impact on organizational performance by improving coordination, real-time reporting, and compliance with HSE standards. Collectively, the three independent variables explained a substantial proportion of variance in organizational performance, highlighting their critical role in engineering project execution.

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1.0 Introduction

The rapid global pace of technological innovation coupled with the pressure of international competition, the need to align local operations with international best practices in project management have also made it more difficult to manage engineering projects in Saudi Arabia. The first construct, which is meaningful in this study, is the concept of risk mitigation, which merely implies a systematic process of identifying, reasoning, and attributing the possible occurrence of events, which can negatively affect the outcome of the project. Risks in the context of power and energy projects can include the disruption of supply chains, equipment failure, safety risks, changes in regulation and environmental factors. Risk management as a discipline has become more proactive than a reactive approach, incorporating quantitative and qualitative analysis, predictive modelling, and contingency planning. Ideally, the systems theory and the contingency theory are very essential in conceptualizing risk mitigation in that, it postulates that the greater the countermeasures the uncertainties within adaptive and resilience systems, the greater the project outcomes will be (Park & Seo, 2024). In practice, risk mitigation is not simply a method to guarantee that cost overruns and delays are less likely to occur but also a method to provide assurance to those interested by demonstrating that safety and reliability have been taken into account. The fact is that, in the Saudi Electricity Company and in case of its contractors, especially, the environment, in which the work is organized, preconditions the fact that the uncontrolled risks can have disastrous results, and the discussion of the risk mitigation will be one of the most significant factors of successful work on the project.

The second construct being studied is that of continuous process improvement that can be defined as the logical endeavour of the implementation of incremental and sustained improvements in project processes, quality standards, and operational efficiency. With its foundation in the concepts of Total Quality Management (TQM), Lean Construction, and Kaizen, continuous improvement focuses on the elimination of waste, optimization of processes, and shaping a culture of learning and change at the organisational level. The optimization of the procurement procedures and the standardization of the safety standards and application of the lessons learned in the previous projects to the current projects may be part of the continuous improvement activities in the Saudi energy industry (Al-Otaibi et al., 2025). Empirical evidence shows that organisations that incorporate continuous improvement in their organisational culture are better placed to achieve high project outcomes because they can respond to new changes in project needs, minimize failures, and bring about ongoing performance adjustments. Along with this continuous improvement is not only a technical process, but also a management philosophy that can help to engage workers, be creative and accountable (Fonseca et al., 2021).

The third construct is the focus of this paper, the digital Transformation, and that is why digital systems, automations, and other advanced tools were applied throughout the project management processes. Applications of technology into the power and energy industry typically involve the implementation of monitoring systems, project management software, Building Information Modelling (BIM), Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and ERP systems that facilitate real-time decision making and coordination among project teams. This construct has a

theoretical basis in the socio-technical systems theory that states that effective organisations adjust technological tools in accordance with human and organisational processes to achieve the best performance (Walker & Lloyd-Walker, 2019). Digital Transformation has emerged as one of the drivers of efficiencies, transparency, and international standards in Saudi Arabia, where the vision 2030 encourages the adoption of digital transformation in all industries. A classic instance of this is the automated monitoring of substation operations to improve not only the safety of projects, but also their adherence to the Health, Safety and Environment (HSE) standards, minimization of liability and operating losses (Alzaabi, 2024).

Organizational performance is the dependent variable in the study and has been defined in project management literature as the extent to which projects meet their objectives given the constraints of time, cost, scope, and quality. But modern expressions of organizational performance also incorporate aspects of safety, stakeholder satisfaction, environmental sustainability, and long-term strategic consistency. The benefits that the Saudi energy industry could anticipate to gain with a project are not reducible to the satisfaction of the deadline, budgeting, and delivering the stable energy supply, adherence to the national policies, and contribution to the energy security and sustainability over the long term. The theoretical background of the organizational performance can be linked with both the iron triangle of project management (time, cost, quality) and the stakeholder theory, according to which the needs of all stakeholders participating in the project must be fulfilled (Sumbal, 2014). Such a complex conceptualization recognises that success depends not only on internal performance indicators but also on the perceptions of external stakeholders.

The connections between these constructs are hypothetically based on the project management and organisational theories. Risk mitigation improves organizational performance by minimizing the likelihood of occurrence and the severity of undesired events, thus establishing consistent parameters under which projects can be undertaken. Undoubtedly, this relationship is better enhanced through perpetual process improvement that breeds organisational learning, eradicates inefficiencies and results in robust project systems, more capable of withstanding disruption. The integration of technologies, in its turn, brings some additional advantages to risk reduction and process improvement as it implies the tools that would enable one to monitor the state of affairs in real-time, predict as well as provide the efficient flow of information among the stakeholders (Kaluarachchi, 2022). All these constructs work synergistically to determine the effects of projects where technology acts as an activator to increase the impact of risks and process-related strategies. The structural equation modelling (SEM) method used in the present research is specifically chosen to describe such a complex of interrelationships and verify whether they are statistically significant (Rosak-Szyrocka & Tiwari, 2023).

Although much attention has been paid to these constructs separately, there are still a number of gaps in the scholarly literature. Most of the current work on risk mitigation, continuous improvement and integration of technology has been undertaken in the West or within East Asian borders with manufacturing, construction or information technology sector usually in focus. Very little research has been done to explicitly investigate the interplay between these constructs in the

energy industry and even less has situated their use in the Middle Eastern economies, including Saudi Arabia (Belaïd & Al-Sarihi, 2024). Furthermore, although researchers have recognised the role of digital technologies and process improvement, little empirical research has been undertaken on the joint role of the two on variation in organizational performance in energy infrastructure projects. This is especially acute in Saudi Arabia, where the socio-economic, regulatory, and cultural environment can have a specific influence on the performance and implementation of project management practises (AlNemer, 2024).

The research problem that this study seeks to address, consequently, is that there is no empirical evidence on the joint influence of risk mitigation, continuous process improvement, and digital Transformation on organizational performance in the Saudi Arabian power and energy industry. Although individual research has been conducted on each of these variables, the joint effect of these constructs in the framework of a single study has not been strictly tested in the particular context of this industry. The reason is that without such researches, the practitioners and policy makers have no option but to undertake wise decisions regarding the strategies of project management that would be geared towards the national priorities in energy. This is a critical issue in both the theoretical and practical research because the Saudi energy industry has already spent a significant amount of money in energy provision and the quality of energy provision is actually one of the determinants of economic growth.

The project may be significant in the sense that it can be incorporated into the science and practice in project management. The study adds value to the existing body of knowledge on the success of projects by taking three essential, but underrepresented constructs and incorporating them into one construct that gives a more comprehensive view of the determinants of success in large-scale projects in the infrastructure domain. Further evidence of validity of the findings is that structural equation modelling was used to measure the relationship between the constructs and test the theoretical strength of the framework.

2.0 Literature Review

The resources-based view of the firm supports the principles by stating that organisational capabilities otherwise referred to as resource-based view of the firm focus on the creation of organisational capabilities otherwise referred to as risk management expertise and improvement process cultures as sources of sustained competitive advantage. Digital Transformation, in its turn, is based on a socio-technical systems theory that holds that successful organisational performance is defined by the harmonization of human and technological systems. Collectively, these theoretical lenses offer a multidimensional perspective of how project-focused organisations can succeed by focusing on uncertainty, process efficiency and technological innovation simultaneously (Chiponde, 2023).

Empirical studies have continuously highlighted the role of risk management as a factor that enhances the outcome of projects in any industry. Research in construction management has shown that risk assessment and mitigation procedures can avoid the costs of over-runs and schedule delays, as well as safety accidents. Studies have shown that contingency planning, hazard identification, and probabilistic modelling, are outstanding risk mitigation practices in the energy

industry, where operational hazards are eminent, and consequently, the dependability of project delivery is significantly enhanced. The dynamic nature of risk has also been confirmed in more recent empirical research, which notes that risk management can be viewed as a dynamic process in which risk is assessed through adaptive responses throughout the life cycle of the project, rather than being considered a one-time analysis during the planning phase (Huzooree & Yadav, 2025). With reference to Saudi Arabia, a preliminary study has indicated the problem of risk management with reference to supply chain dependencies, regulatory compliance, and environmental conditions with reference to energy infrastructure projects. Together, the findings support the theoretical suggestion that risk mitigation is a critical element in ensuring that projects meet their targeted goals (Chen et al., 2020).

The evidence on the positive role of continuous process improvement has also been presented in the literature on the topic. Based on the research on quality management, researchers have debated that organisations that incorporate continuous improvement in their business attain high-quality project results through the enhancement of efficiency, waste, and innovation. Construction and energy project empirical studies have demonstrated that the use of continuous improvement practises including benchmarking, value stream mapping and post-project reviews results in increased productivity and less rework (Moahmmed, 2025). More recent studies have adopted this point of view by tying the concept of continuous improvement to the organisational learning theory, in which projects that methodically encode lessons learned and apply them to subsequent practises are more well-posed to manage uncertainty and complexity. In the Saudi energy industry, there is anecdotal evidence that companies that have adopted the principles of Lean and Six Sigma have reported greater operational efficiency and increased stakeholder satisfaction, but there is not much systematically measured evidence (Hazem Abozied Said & Abdel Majeed, 2025). The long-term success of any project, according to these papers, relies heavily on the aspect of continuous process improvement, particularly in those areas where the efficiency of operations and the safety of the project is of paramount importance.

The integration of technology has become one of the most revolutionary factors that influence project management in the last few decades. Empirical literature has reported the positive effects of using digital technologies with regards to the coordination, transparency, and decision-making in projects that include the use of Building Information Modelling (BIM), project management software, and Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems. The application of Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) systems, automation systems, and online monitoring systems has proven to increase safety compliance and reduce downtime and real-time reporting in energy and infrastructure projects. Some newer studies also indicate digital transformation to be present as an instrument of facilitating predictive analytics, artificial intelligence applications, and Internet of Things (IoT) systems that enhance predictability of risk and allocation of resources (Oyekunle & Boohene, 2024). In that respect, Middle Eastern research suggests that the introduction of technology is increasing, yet issues such as how to overcome the resistance of organisations, their lack of technical expertise, and regulatory barriers still persist and hinder the comprehensive integration. However, there is overwhelming empirical evidence to

show integration of technology acts as an initiator to organizational performance through increased efficiency, cooperation, and international standards compliance (Cheng et al., 2025).

Although individually, each of these variables, such as risk mitigation, continuous process improvement, and digital Transformation, has been researched on a large scale, few studies have been conducted to investigate the synergistic effect of these variables on organizational performance. The literature on integrated project delivery models implies that risk management strategies along with collaborative practises and digital tools deliver better project results when combined. Similarly, the studies linking the concept of continuous improvement and integration of technologies indicate that online platforms have the potential to accelerate the learning process and facilitate the institutionalization of best practises (Giesenbauer & Müller-Christ, 2020). Nevertheless, most of the available studies have been carried out in Western and Asian settings, and few studies have been carried out in the Gulf region. Such a gap is substantial as cultural, regulatory, and organisational contexts affect the implementation and perception of risk, improvement, and technology strategies. (Alnaser et al., 2024).

In addition to the geographical distance, the literature indicates that there exists a theoretical distance in the understanding of the mediating and synergistic relationship of these constructs. In as much as risk mitigation is a direct input that help to reduce the uncertainties in the project, its effectiveness can be improved through a continuous improvement practise that institutionalizes the learning and corrective actions. The technology incorporation, likewise, can support the outcomes of risk and process management and offer the possibility to keep track of real time and apply automated control systems that reduce human error and enhance choices. There is a gap in the literature on how these variables together can explain the variance in organizational performance because few studies have used structural equation modelling (SEM) to empirically test these interrelationships in energy sector projects. The significance of bridging this gap lies in the fact that it does not only expand theoretical frameworks, it also provides useful guidance to practitioners who seek to optimize the allocation of resources and strategy planning.

Using the reviewed theoretical background and empirical evidence, the hypotheses that define the relationship between the constructs are developed in this study. As the evidence of risk mitigation has shown to be consistent, that risk mitigation leads to the reduction of project uncertainties and an improvement in the performance of the project, it is assumed that risk mitigation has a very strong positive impact on organizational performance. Constant process improvement which is based on quality management and organisational learning is supposed to have a positive impact on project performance through refining operations and increasing efficiency; therefore, it is assumed that continuous process improvement has a positive impact on organizational performance. It is hypothesized that digital Transformation, as evidenced by empirical studies regarding the use of digital tools and automation systems, has a strong positive effect on the success of a project by enhancing coordination, reporting and compliance. In addition, based on the systems theory and socio-technical views, the hypothesis is that all the variables do not exist in a vacuum but mutually influence one another to achieve project outcomes. Thus, the hypothesis about the joint effect of risk mitigation, ongoing process improvement, and integration

of technologies is that the proportion of variation in organizational performance in the Saudi Arabian power and energy industry can be explained by these three factors to a significant degree.

3.0 Methodology

The objective of the study, which led to this methodological design, was the empirical investigation of the impact of risk mitigation, continuous process improvement and the digital transformation on organizational performance in Saudi Arabia. In order to respond to this objective, this study used quantitative research design that is the most suitable in determining relationships of variables and testing the hypotheses based on theoretical statements. Quantitative methods enable a researcher to capture standardized data in large numbers of respondents, which increases the generalizability and statistical strength of research results. This design was also determined by the fact that large-scale numerical data would be used to examine complex relationships among constructs, and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is among the techniques that use large-scale numerical data to accomplish this. Philosophically, the research was grounded on a positivist paradigm which focuses on objectivity, quantifiable pieces of evidence, and hypothesis testing. Positivism also supports the objectives of project management research, which aims to determine causal patterns and regularities in organizational behavior that are replicable in similar settings.

The population was engineers, project managers, and technical staff involved in medium-voltage substation and high-voltage power cable construction projects in the energy sector of Saudi Arabia. The study chose the sample size of 350 respondents as per the assumption of SEM analysis which suggests that a sample should have a minimum of 200 respondents, but a sample size of above 300 respondents is preferable to obtain dependable results. This sample was deemed adequate to attain statistical power as well as to take into consideration any potential non-responses or missing questionnaires. Stratified random sampling strategy was used to provide representativeness in various professional roles and organizational affiliation. An organized survey questionnaire was used to collect data; the questionnaire was developed on the basis of existing literature on risk management, continuous improvement, digital Transformation, and organizational performance and validated scales. The questionnaire was categorized by the different sections of each of the constructs, and several items were scaled on a five-point Likert scale between strongly disagree and strongly agree. This format made it easier to quantify the perceptions of the respondents and make comparisons among individuals and groups. The questionnaire was tested on a small sample of professionals by pilot testing before full-scale implementation to determine the clarity, reliability and validity of the items.

4.0 Findings and Results

4.1 Measurement Model

Table 4.1 Reliability Analysis

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Risk Mitigation (RM)	0.87	0.90	0.65
Continuous Process Improvement (CPI)	0.88	0.91	0.67
Digital Transformation (DT)	0.85	0.89	0.63
Organizational performance (OP)	0.90	0.93	0.71

Cronbach Alpha values are between 0.85 and 0.90 which is significantly higher than 0.70 the acceptable range indicating that the measurement items in each construct are highly consistent. Correspondingly, Composite Reliability (CR) values are between 0.89 and 0.93, which is by far better than the recommendable minimum of 0.70, which is again in favor of the strength of the constructs to measure their intended dimensions. AVE values of 0.63-0.71 are larger than the value of 0.50, reflecting adequate convergent validity and indicating that each construct can explain more than half of measured variance.

4.2 Convergent and Discriminant Validity (HTMT Ratios)

Table 4.2 Convergent and Discriminant Validity

Constructs	RM	CPI	DT	OP
Risk Mitigation (RM)	–			
Continuous Process Improvement (CPI)	0.62	–		
Digital Transformation (DT)	0.55	0.60	–	
Organizational Performance (OP)	0.58	0.65	0.68	–

The reliability and validity results indicate that the four constructs, Risk Mitigation, Continuous Process Improvement, Digital Transformation and Organizational performance, all report high levels of internal consistency and convergent validity. Combined, the results suggest that the measurement model is valid and can underpin subsequent structural equation modelling and testing hypotheses.

4.3 Collinearity Statistics (VIF Values)

Table 4.3 Collinearity Statistics

Construct	VIF Range
Risk Mitigation (RM)	1.20–2.10
Continuous Process Improvement (CPI)	1.15–2.05
Digital Transformation (DT)	1.25–2.20

Risk mitigation (1.20-2.10), Continuous Process Improvement (1.15-2.05) and Digital Transformation (1.25-2.20) all have values that are much lower than the generally accepted value of 5.0, which is indicative of no concern with multicollinearity in the model. It implies that the constructs of predictor are independent enough of one another and do not have problematic overlap in explaining variance in Organizational performance. The VIFs are low and medium-range values, indicating that the individual constructs are contributing some explanatory power to the model, and hence, contribute to the power and credibility of the structural equation analysis.

4.4 Model Fitness Indices

Table 4.4 Model Fitness Indices

Fit Index	Recommended Value	Obtained Value
SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual)	< 0.08	0.052
NFI (Normed Fit Index)	> 0.90	0.92
Chi-Square / df	< 3.00	2.10
RMSEA	< 0.08	0.06

The measurement model and structural model fit indices show that the overall fit of the data of the model is very high. The value of SRMR = 0.052 is less than the suggested cutoff level, 0.08, which confirms that the differences between observed and predicted correlations are insignificant. The value of NFI of 0.92 is larger than the cut-off points of 0.90 showing a good comparative fit in comparison with a null model. Likewise, the ratio of Chi-Square/df of 2.10 is within a reasonable range of less than 3.00 indicating a fair balance between the complexity of the model and the fit to the data. Finally, the RMSEA of 0.06 is quite low and obviously smaller than the 0.08 point that also means that the model is adequate to describe the underlying data structure.

4.5 Structural Equation Model Results

Table 4.5 Structural Equation Model Results

Hypothesis	Path	β (Beta Coefficient)	t-value	p-value	Supported?
H1	RM → OP	0.32	5.21	0.000	Yes
H2	CPI → OP	0.28	4.87	0.000	Yes
H3	TI → OP	0.35	6.02	0.000	Yes

All the hypothesized relationships are well supported by the results of the structural model. There is a positive significant relationship between Organizational performance and Risk Mitigation (b = 0.32, t = 5.21, p = 0.001), which supports the point that risk management is a proactive strategy and helps improve the performance of a project. Continuous Process Improvement has the effect on the outcome as well, but the impact is rather positive (b = 0.28, t = 4.87, p < 0.001) and shows how efficiency and practises related to learning can create positive

outcomes. The strongest predictor is Digital Transformation ($b = 0.35$, $t = 6.02$, $p < 0.001$) that explains why adopting digital tools and systems will improve the coordination, reporting and compliance. Together, the three predictors capture 76% of the variance in Organizational performance ($R2 = 0.76$), which shows that risk management, process improvement, and technological innovation unite in their ability to create a strong framework to facilitate the success of energy sector projects.

5.0 Discussion and Conclusion

The conclusions made based on the findings are very clear: risk mitigation, continuous process improvement and digital transformation are not just individually significant but are all the more inseparable to achieve organizational performance in the energy industry. The study determines that risk management reduces uncertainty, continuous improvement enhances business processes, and digital transformation enhances coordination and compliance, which lead to safer, more efficient, and more successful projects. The fact that the model explains much implies that the variables are key elements of organizational performance that contribute both theoretically and practically to the project management discipline.

On the basis of these conclusions, some recommendations can be provided. One, Saudi Arabian organizations in the energy industry must formalize risk management structures that extend beyond compliance and exercise proactive strategies to risk identification and mitigation across the project lifecycle. This can take the form of training initiatives, forecasting risk, and the development of risk units within the project teams. Second, companies ought to integrate continuous improvement within their organizational culture through adoption of methodologies like Lean, Six Sigma, and Kaizen that promote contributions to efficiency and innovation from employees at all levels. Third, additional expenditure should be assigned to electronic technologies that would improve project monitoring, reporting, and coordination, but it should be stressed that special attention should be paid to training employees to use these tools.

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