



**Kaunas University of Technology**

School of Economics and Business

# **Change Management Strategies of Young Managers at Different Stages of Organizational Development**

Master's Final Degree Project

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**Inga Kalesnikovė**

Project author

**Assoc. prof. dr. Asta Daunorienė**

Supervisor

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**Kaunas, 2026**



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Enterprise Management (6211LX030)

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**Inga Kalesnikovė**

Project author

**Assoc. prof. dr.**

**Asta Daunorienė**

Supervisor

**Prof.**

**Živilė Stankevičiūtė**

Reviewer

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School of Economics and Business

Inga Kalesnikovė

## **Change Management Strategies of Young Managers at Different Stages of Organizational Development**

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## Santrauka

Šiuolaikinės organizacijos veikia nuolatinių pokyčių aplinkoje, kuriai būdingi globalizacijos procesai, skaitmeninė transformacija, rinkos nepastovumas ir kintantys darbuotojų lūkesčiai. Tokiomis sąlygomis efektyvus pokyčių valdymas tampa vienu iš esminių veiksnių, lemiančių organizacijų tvarumą ir ilgalaikį konkurencingumą. Kartu pastebima tendencija, kad organizacijos vis dažniau į vadovaujančias pareigas skiria jaunus vadovus, iš kurių tikimasi iniciatyvumo, lankstumo ir gebėjimo valdyti sudėtingus organizacinius pokyčius. Vis dėlto jauni vadovai dažnai susiduria su papildomais iššūkiais, susijusiais su ribota vadovavimo patirtimi, formalia valdžia ir autoritetu organizacijoje, o tai gali turėti įtakos jų pasirenkamoms pokyčių valdymo strategijoms.

Organizacijos raidos etapas ir brandos lygis formuoja specifinį kontekstą, kuriame vyksta pokyčių valdymas. Skirtinguose organizacijos raidos etapuose organizacijos pasižymi nevienodu struktūros formalizacijos lygiu, sprendimų priėmimo centralizacija, organizacine kultūra ir pasirengimu pokyčiams. Dėl šių skirtumų pokyčių valdymo sprendimai, kurie yra tinkami viename raidos etape, kitame etape gali būti mažiau veiksmingi. Nors mokslinėje literatūroje plačiai nagrinėjami pokyčių valdymo modeliai ir organizacijų gyvavimo ciklo teorijos, empirinių tyrimų, kurie šias perspektyvas integruotų ir analizuotų jaunų vadovų taikomas strategijas skirtinguose organizacijos raidos etapuose, vis dar trūksta.

**Tyrimo objektas** - jaunų vadovų taikomos organizacinių pokyčių valdymo strategijos.

**Tyrimo tikslas** - nustatyti dėsningumus, susijusius su jaunų vadovų pasirenkamomis pokyčių valdymo strategijomis skirtinguose organizacijos raidos etapuose.

**Pagrindiniai tyrimo rezultatai.** Tyrimo rezultatai rodo, kad jaunų vadovų taikomos pokyčių valdymo strategijos skiriasi priklausomai nuo organizacijos raidos etapo. Ankstyvesniuose organizacijos vystymosi etapuose jauni vadovai dažniau taiko lanksčius, adaptyvius ir emergentinius sprendimus, orientuotus į aktyvią komunikaciją, darbuotojų įtraukimą ir neformalias lyderystės praktikas. Brandesnėse organizacijose labiau išryškėja struktūruotos ir planuotos pokyčių valdymo strategijos, paremtos formalesniais procesais, aiškiau apibrėžtais vaidmenimis ir nusistovėjusiomis organizacinėmis sistemomis.

Taip pat nustatyta, kad ribota formali valdžia ir sprendimų priėmimo autonomija skatina jaunus vadovus dažniau remtis įtraukia komunikacija, tarpasmeniniais ryšiais ir dalyvaujamoju sprendimų priėmimu, siekiant užtikrinti darbuotojų palaikymą pokyčių procesų metu. Tyrimo rezultatai patvirtina, kad nėra vienos universalios pokyčių valdymo strategijos, tinkamos visiems organizacinėms kontekstams, todėl pokyčių valdymo sprendimai turi būti derinami tiek su

organizacijos brandos lygiu, tiek su jaunų vadovų kompetencijomis ir veikimo galimybėmis. Gauti rezultatai prisideda prie gilesnio jaunų vadovų vaidmens pokyčių valdyme supratimo ir suteikia praktinių įžvalgų organizacijoms, siekiančioms kryptingai stiprinti jaunų vadovų gebėjimus valdyti organizacinius pokyčius.

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### Summary

Organizations today operate in an environment of constant change characterized by globalization processes, digital transformation, market volatility, and evolving employee expectations. Under such conditions, effective change management becomes one of the key factors determining organizational sustainability and long-term competitiveness. At the same time, a growing tendency can be observed for organizations to appoint young managers to leadership positions, expecting them to demonstrate initiative, flexibility, and the ability to manage complex organizational changes. However, young managers often face additional challenges related to limited managerial experience, formal authority, and credibility within the organization, which may influence the change management strategies they choose.

The stage of organizational development and the level of organizational maturity create a specific context in which change management takes place. Organizations operating at different stages of development differ in their degree of structural formalization, centralization of decision-making, organizational culture, and readiness for change. As a result, change management solutions that are effective at one stage of organizational development may be less effective at another. Although the scientific literature extensively examines change management models and organizational life-cycle theories, there is still a lack of empirical studies that integrate these perspectives and analyze the change management strategies applied by young managers at different stages of organizational development.

**The object of the study** - organizational change management strategies applied by young managers.

**The aim of the study** - to identify patterns in the selection of change management strategies used by young managers at different stages of organizational development.

**Main results of the study.** The research results indicate that the change management strategies applied by young managers vary depending on the stage of organizational development. In earlier stages of organizational development, young managers tend to apply more flexible, adaptive, and emergent approaches, focusing on active communication, employee involvement, and informal leadership practices. In more mature organizations, structured and planned change management strategies become more prominent, supported by more formalized processes, clearly defined roles, and established organizational systems.

The findings also show that limited formal authority and decision-making autonomy encourage young managers to rely more strongly on inclusive communication, interpersonal relationships, and

participatory decision-making in order to secure employee support during change processes. The results confirm that there is no single universal change management strategy suitable for all organizational contexts; therefore, change management approaches need to be aligned with both the level of organizational maturity and the competencies and operating capacity of young managers. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of young managers in change management and provide practical insights for organizations seeking to systematically strengthen young managers' capabilities in managing organizational change.

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## **List of abbreviations**

### **Abbreviations:**

ADKAR – Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, Reinforcement.

KPI – key performance indicators.

## **Introduction**

### **Relevance**

Organizations constantly go through changes, which can be strategic, structural or process-related and their success largely depends on a leader's ability to choose the right change management strategy (Phillips & Klein, 2023). Young managers often do not have a lot of experience and face extra challenges, such as building authority, managing resistance and adapting communication for different generations of employees. Research shows that young managers often have heavier workloads and less confidence in their leadership skills (Irehill, Lundmark & Tafvelin, 2023), that is why factors such as age and leadership experience significantly influence managers' actions and decisions (Larsson & Björklund, 2021). There is still not much research on how young managers specifically choose change management strategies at different stages of an organization's development.

The idea of this project is to explore the role of young managers in change management processes, taking into consideration their leadership experience, age and the development stage of an organization. As generations change and reshape organizations, companies increasingly appoint managers with less experience but with a more proactive approach, flexibility and openness to new ideas. These generational dynamics result in a situation in which organizational changes are frequently initiated by young managers who are still developing their leadership style and change management practices. In the organization, which is analysed in this research, changes are often initiated by managers from a younger generation, creating a relevant context for this research.

The results of this research expand theoretical knowledge about leadership of young managers in the context of change management and provide practical insights for more successful implementation of changes in various organizations, by proposing recommendations to young managers or organizations that currently experience generational changes.

### **Problem and Research Gap**

Even though the success of change management is often linked to managers' ability to empower and motivate employees and choose the right change management methods, the behaviour of young managers in this regard is still not sufficiently studied. Research suggests that managers' age and management experience significantly influence their leadership style and ability to handle change (Larsson & Björklund, 2021; Irehill et al., 2023), but there is still not much empirical evidence on how these factors form the change management strategies that young leaders prefer to choose. Even fewer studies explore the connection between managers' experience, age and the relation between decisions and different stages of organizational development.

New research tends to analyse different aspects of change management such as organizational culture, emotional intelligence or the impact that younger generation managers could have on organizations. For example, Ilyukhina and Stathopoulou (2019) explore change management differences in different cultural environments and Deloitte (2022) discusses how millennial generation managers change the culture or implement new practices. However, these works do not reveal how these factors relate to stages of organizational development and how exactly younger managers make strategic change-related decisions in different stages of organizational growth or transformation. In conclusion, there are not enough empirical studies done, which connect young managers, development stages of an organization and change management strategies into one model.

Therefore, **the research question** is stated as, what organizational change management strategies do young managers choose at different stages of organizational development?

### **Research Object**

Organizational change management strategies applied by young managers (up to 40 years old, with up to 10 years of management experience) (Daldrop et al., 2025; Rogleva et al., 2014; World Economic Forum, 2023).

**Research Aim** is to identify the patterns in the selection of change management strategies used by young managers at different stages of organizational development.

### **Objectives:**

1. To reveal the issues related to the choice of change management strategies by young managers at different stages of organizational development.
2. To define the theoretical aspects of organizational change management at different stages of organizational development through literature analysis.
3. To justify the methodology for an empirical case study.
4. To analyse the results and develop recommendations for young managers on managing organizational changes.

### **Methodology**

A review of the scientific literature is used, which includes scholarly books, articles and publications with the goal of creating a theoretical model that describes young managers' change management strategies at different stages of organizational development. In the empirical part, a case study is conducted, exploring organizations where changes are initiated by the younger generation of managers.

## 1. The Problem Analysis

The aim of this section is to emphasize the importance of change management challenges and methods at different stages of organizational development, focusing on changes being implemented by managers of the younger generation.

### 1.1. The Problem of Change Management in Organizations

In today's business world, shaped by technological progress, globalization, and changing customer expectations, change management has become one of the key factors for organizations to survive and stay competitive (Sheikh Hamdo, 2021). Change has become a normal part of all organizations, and it is happening on both strategic and operational levels (By, 2005). Technological evolution, increasing competition in the market and constantly changing business environment create pressure for organizations to adapt (Korsakienė, 2006).

Even though the literature offers a lot of change management theories and approaches on practices of change management, a lot of change initiatives still face failure. Studies show that organizational change initiatives often have from 1/3 to 80% of failure rate (Appelbaum et al., 2012). Such a high rate of failures clearly points to major systemic problems which solving require not only new tools but also a fundamental understanding of how change impacts organizations.

The organizational change covers systemic problems because it does not just affect individual parts of an organization - it goes through the whole organizational structure, culture, and processes (Prosci, 2023). Organizational change is not a linear process but an open and permanent adaptation to a constantly changing environment (By, 2005). Change can be strategic (restructuring organizations or systems), technological (digitalisation, integrating AI), or people-related (shifts in leadership styles, changes in employee skills) (Kherrazi & Roquilly, 2025). The processes of the change have multiple layers and include a variety of participants and different levels of an organization (Poole & Ven, 2004).

Change is not an isolated event, and it could be affected by:

- Internal factors, such as the culture of organization, structure, management decisions and skills of employees (Appelbaum et al., 2012).
- External factors, such as technology, market, legal regulations and social tendencies (Korsakienė, 2006).

This complexity means that it is not the right way to manage change through superficial, planned, or controlled methods or through only top management decisions. A successful change requires not only technical decisions but also changes in a behaviour of people (Kherrazi & Roquilly, 2025). Some main factors, which may determine the results of change, were identified in various research:

- Management and leadership. Studies confirm that transformational leadership has a positive impact on change implementation (Khaw et al., 2022), but 26 % of first-time managers feel that they are not ready to lead the change (Gentry et al., 2014).
- Employee engagement. 60 % of organizations do not involve their employees in the change process sufficiently. Often, poor communication, intercultural and social differences or insufficient preparation are identified as the cause (Hussain, 2023).

- Communication. Effective communication reduces uncertainty and increases confidence (Korsakienė, 2006), but in practice, one-third of all managers do not communicate about changes enough (Phillips & Klein, 2023).
- Organizational culture. A strong culture can be both an obstacle and a driving force for change because it strongly affects resistance or acceptance (Phillips & Klein, 2023). Many change management methods do not provide enough attention to the importance of organizational culture (By, 2005).

Burnes (2004) states that change is an inevitable part of every organization, but its complexity is not always fully evaluated in traditional methods. There are two approaches to change management, and they are different in their assumptions:

- Planned approach states that organizations are operating under stable conditions and that they can control the course of the change (By, 2005).
- Emergent approach emphasises unpredictability and constant adaptation to changing environment (By, 2005).

The mismatch between those approaches creates problems in a practical world, when organizations want to identify which model is most suitable for a concrete situation. Studies show that using only one model does not fully describe the change management process (Errida & Lotfi, 2021).

Even though there are many different change management approaches, which are operationalized through specific models - from the classic Lewin's three-step model (unfreeze – change - refreeze), to Kotter's eight-step model, and all the way to modern ones like ADKAR or McKinsey's 7S (Hussain, 2023) - the real-world results often do not meet the expectations (Errida & Lotfi, 2021). So, it is still unclear why, despite so many different models, organizations still fail when trying to implement the changes.

By (2005) has a critical opinion of existing change management models, stating that they are often highly controversial and lack empirical evidence. This opinion is supported by other authors, who agree, that organizational changes do not have one clear, practical and widely accepted method, which could explain what changes are indeed needed and how to manage them (By, 2005).

The biggest issue of the systemic problem is not the change itself, but the difficulty and often lost control of managing it. Change management is not a straightforward process with a clear beginning and an end (By, 2005). It is a dynamic process where a lot of factors intertwine - organizational culture, politics, power structures, employee resistance and the external environment (Errida & Lotfi, 2021). Most classic models, while solid in theory, often do not include this complexity because they assume that changes can be planned and controlled like projects (By, 2005). In the real business world, changes are chaotic, unpredictable and often lead to unexpected consequences. That is why even the best models can fail if they are not adapted to the specific and practical organizational context (Hussain et al., 2018).

Modern organizations exist in a constantly changing environment, where various changes occur every day, to which they must adapt. The change itself and its success are determined by both internal and external factors, as well as the general context of the organization and the structure and efficiency of its internal management. The most challenging is the divide between different theory-based change

management models and their application in practice. Therefore, it is very important to emphasise that the situation of each organization is unique and unpredictable. Additionally, proper change management should consider the specific situation of the company, its surrounding environment and the adaptation and integration of different models into a single whole based on the specific case.

## **1.2. The Organizational Development and The Complexity of Changes**

Organizations are not static structures because they evolve over time, change their structures and face different challenges. They are also always going through growth and development processes. As organizations develop, they usually go through different phases, and each of these phases requires different practices, resources and leadership styles. This means that the type of change that an organization must introduce over time is very closely related to the stage of that organization's development, and that universal decisions may be ineffective (Ospina Avendano, 2021).

The different results of similar change initiatives across various organizations show that there is a significant influence of organizational context on change processes. Differences in the level of formalization and procedures, the amount of decision-making centralization and different reactions of people shape how changes are seen, interpreted, and applied in practice (Mosca, Gianecchini, & Campagnolo, 2021). Organizations are defined by different levels of structural formalization and distribution of power and authority. Also, the way how employees react, behave and respond to change affects the application and long-lasting effects of change initiatives (Khaw et al., 2022).

The perspectives of organizational life cycle suggest that organizations move through different stages of development and each of them is associated with different challenges that come from structure and management. These stages create a base for priorities of organizations, the tolerance of risk, and readiness for change by creating different conditions for managing organizational transformations. These kinds of perspectives are defined in organizational life cycle models, including those proposed by Adizes, which propose that organizational development is a sequence of changing challenges instead of a stable and linear path of growth (Ospina Avendano, 2021; Adizes, 2004).

As organizations move through different stages of development, the change management challenges also change. Earlier stages are typically characterized by limited structure, unclear roles, and a high reliance on the energy of founders which makes the implementation of more formal processes challenging. In comparison, more mature organizations are more likely to operate through established structures and procedures, where change initiatives are often disturbed by formalization, fear of the risk and divided interests (Adizes, 2004; Ospina Avendano, 2021). These differences suggest that organizational change cannot be successfully achieved with a one-size-fits-all approach, as the effectiveness of change initiatives is closely related to the stage of development of the organization and its structural and managerial conditions.

Additionally, it can be concluded that the situation of each organization is different. Only by considering individual challenges and the processes taking place in the organization at that time can we decide on the need for one or another change and the way to apply it, and critically assess all the circumstances, because there is simply no one universal method. This becomes really relevant when changes are managed by young managers, whose level of authority and experience may interact with conditions of organizational development. In the modern business environment, when everything is changing rapidly, a flexible approach is needed that integrates several different theories and considers

the state of the organization. This means that proper change management is not just a theoretical challenge, but a real practical requirement for any organization that wants to remain competitive.

### **1.3. The Role and Challenges of Young Managers in the Context of Change**

There is no unified definition of young managers in the scientific literature, but they are most often associated with limited management experience and the earlier stage of a professional career. Based on different authors, in this research, the young managers are defined as persons younger than 40 years old with managerial experience of less than 10 years. Such a definition allows us to identify the managers, who are still forming their style of leadership, acting under limited conditions of formal authority and experience (Rogleva, Gegovska-Zajkova & Fustik, 2014; World Economic Forum, 2023; Daldrop, Homan & Buengeler, 2025). Young managers (often described as Millennials or Generation Z) are increasingly becoming key initiators and implementers of change in organizations. However, young managers very often face a double burden because on the one hand, they need to implement challenging organizational changes, and on the other hand, they must establish themselves as leaders and gain authority in front of their superiors and subordinates (Irehill, Lundmark and Tafvelin, 2023).

Research by Irehill, Lundmark and Tafvelin (2023) show that young managers often face significantly greater challenges in comparison to their senior colleagues. Also, young managers assess job demands and resources differently because they experience greater emotional demands and less organizational support. This imbalance could lead to burnout and often reduces work motivation (Irehill, Lundmark and Tafvelin, 2023).

The challenges of young managers are even more visible in the context of managing organizational changes. Young managers often lack the experience and skills that are needed for the implementation of complex changes. They are still discovering their leadership style, while sometimes finding themselves in an unclear organizational culture or internal dynamic. Also, younger managers often face challenges, when senior employees and their subordinates may question their competence due to their age or lack of experience (Irehill, Lundmark and Tafvelin, 2023). This makes implementation of changes more difficult because the success often depends on the managers' ability to convince and motivate people inside the organization (Errida & Lotfi, 2021).

Classical models of change management, such as Kotter's or Lewin's often assume that the person who is leading the change must have a strong position, experience, and organizational support. However, young managers do not always meet these requirements. For example, Kotter's model requires the first step to "create a sense of urgency" (Hussain, 2023), but young managers may not have enough influence to do so. Also, Lewin's "unfreeze" stage requires changing the existing status quo (Hussain, 2023) but young managers may be afraid to make the situation unstable because they feel insecure. This suggests that traditional change models are not adapted to the needs and constraints of young managers.

In summary, new generation managers, who are increasingly entering modern organizations, have many advantages due to their fresh approach, unsettled attitudes and openness to opportunities. On the other hand, they also face more challenges due to a lack of experience and the sceptical attitude of other colleagues towards them, as it takes more time for new managers to establish their authority and leadership style. This also has an impact on the initiation and management of changes within the

organization, because it is the responsibility of the manager to implement the changes. Although many theoretical models of change management are described in the scientific literature, theory does not always correspond to the practice, especially in the context of changes initiated by less experienced managers.

#### **1.4. The Organizational and Leadership Context as a Risk Factor**

Even though the challenges of managers during the change management process are significant, the main factor that could make the implementation of the change either harder or easier, is the context of the organization itself. The culture of the organization, its structure and support from the team are the systemic factors, that influence the ability of young managers to control the change initiatives efficiently (Prosci, 2023). When organization is not ready or mature enough to meet the change, even the most motivated and talented managers have a risk of failure (Errida & Lotfi, 2021). This means that the change management problem is not linked to a specific person or a role, because it is a part of organizational structure.

Taking into consideration all arguments that were stated before, the problem of effective change management consists of the variation of components and requires deeper research. The scientific literature is full of information about change management models and theories of organizational development, but the fundamental gap is understanding how young managers apply these methods in different stages of organizational development. Most of the current studies focus either on comparison of change models or the theories of organizational development stages, but very rarely combine those two aspects with the experiences of young managers.

Although organizations constantly need to manage complicated changes at different stages of their development, and young leaders are being assigned to implement these changes, there is a lack of understanding in theory and in practice about how young managers adapt and apply change management models in different stages of organizational maturity, and what kind of conditions determine the success or failure of these initiatives.

The scientific research gaps are noticeable mostly in two areas. The first area is methodological because most of the change management models are based on mostly experienced managers and not so often validated in the context of young managers (Hussain, 2023). For example, Kotter's model emphasises the strong influence of a leader and the presence of the supporters (Hussain, 2023), but a young manager very often lacks both (Irehill, Lundmark and Tafvelin, 2023). The second area comes from the context of the organization. Theories, that describe the organizational development stages, such as Adizes, determine the main tendencies but do not analyse how the specific environmental requirements of young managers differ at each stage (Adizes, 2004). For example, at the starting stage of an organization young managers could have more advantages because of flexibility and agility but at the stage of maturity they could be lacking some crucial skills that are needed to manage such a complex organization.

This study intends to fill in the existing gaps in the literature and in practice by analysing a case study of an international company and by providing organizations with the insights, which could help them to prepare young managers for change management in different stages of organizational development. Also, this study will contribute to a wider discussion about how organisations can become more inclusive and supportive of leaders of all ages by considering their unique needs and strengths.

## **2. Theoretical Solutions**

### **2.1. The Concept and Evolution of Organizational Change**

The understanding of organizational changes over the past century has been consistently developed, from mechanistic, linear to hierarchical processes to complex, often changing phenomena (Repovš, Drnovšek & Kaše, 2019). Early studies of change were mainly based on a psychological theory, which main belief was, that people naturally resist changes, because changes mean a shift from known situations to unknown ones. The base for this kind of interpretation was laid by K. Lewin. In 1947 he described the concept of resistance to change and defined it not only as an individual hesitation but more as a systemic phenomenon determined by roles, norms and attitudes of people (Repovš et al., 2019). After Lewin, studies by Coch and French confirmed, that resistance to change is not an individual attitude but it grows from a group's identity and from how organizations are structured (Cohen & McWilliams, 2021).

Over time various theories have developed, and the view of change has expanded. Modern authors note that reactions to change are not simple, they are mixed and not one sided. A person's attitude can be both positive and negative at the same time, as change is often one of the main causes of inner conflicts (Repovš et al., 2019). Newer studies propose to understand change as a complex structure, in which being ready for change, resistance, emotions and various behaviours exist together (Repovš et al., 2019).

The development of the concept of change is boosted by theories of complex adaptive systems. Organizations are increasingly understood as social systems that can learn, organize themselves and quickly adapt to their environment (Turner & Thurlow, 2023). These kinds of systems act in constantly changing environments, so changes are no longer seen as a one-time project. Turner and Thurlow (2023) emphasise, that the change process cannot be fully planned – it must be managed constantly because new things are always discovered because prediction of things ahead of the time is simply not possible. Recent research on change increasingly emphasizes, that both strategy and change management need to be flexible and an organization's ability to implement changes depends on the quality of communication and the possibility to make real-time decisions. Poor information flow, mixed information or a lack of communication create extra resistance and a waste of time, energy and resources (Turner & Thurlow, 2023).

It is important to note, that change emerges from both top-down and bottom-up dynamics. Formal and informal networks play a significant role in organizations and changes are the result of both planned initiatives and experiments. Turner and Thurlow (2023) argue that ignoring those informal changes is a mistake. They are crucial for keeping the organization alive and ignoring them increases resistance. This reveals that change is a group effort that combines culture, communication, leadership and interaction between people.

In conclusion, the way organizational change is understood has evolved from a simple, linear view of change to a complex, multiple and constantly changing process, which is marked by uncertainty, different responses, and changing environments. Modern organizational theories suggest looking at the change not as a one-time thing, but as an ongoing way of how organizations grow, which is needed to be competitive and to survive in a fast-changing environment.

## **2.2. The Types of Organizational Change**

Change in organizations typically happens in several ways, such as strategic, structural, technological and cultural. Strategic change involves changing an organization's mission, vision or the way it competes in the market. Structural change is more about the internal structure, such as leadership roles or the structure of the organization. There is also technological change, which involves things like implementing new technologies or moving to digitalization. Finally, cultural change means inspecting deeper things - the behaviour, values and beliefs, that define the way people work together. The study of Naveed, Jantan, Saidu and Bhatti (2017) showed, that these forms of change were not isolated because they all came together to define what organizational change really means. Essentially, all these elements need to be considered to effectively manage change (Naveed et al., 2017).

Hamzah, Abd Rani, and Matore (2021) argue that different types of organizational changes such as structural, technological, and cultural should not be viewed as separate content areas. They are closely related to how organizations learn and adapt over time. Their study found that these forms of change are closely linked to leadership behaviour, communication processes, performance measurement systems, and everyday decision-making practices

In conclusion, organizational change should be understood as a process that involves multiple, closely related aspects rather than a set of isolated actions. A combination of strategic, structural, technological and cultural types of decisions is what forms an organizational change and company's ability to adapt to it. As previously mentioned in the literature, these types of change are closely connected with leadership behaviour, communication practices, performance management systems, and daily decision-making, influencing how organizations learn, evolve, and sustain competitiveness over time. For this reason, effective change management requires a combined approach that includes the alignment of different change aspects rather than focusing on a single area.

## **2.3. The Success Factors and Causes of Failures of Organizational Change**

To stay competitive and relevant, organizations need to accept and manage both internal and external changes. To do that, they need to understand what factors determine whether change management succeeds or fails and how to effectively deal with those failures (Dempsey et al., 2021). In their research Dempsey, Geitner, Brennan and McAvoy (2021) analyse, what are the main factors, that determine the success or failure of organizational change. The authors did a systematic and wide scale literature review, looking at scientific studies on change management from 2006 to 2021. After going through the sources, they found 38 success factors and 23 factors of failure. All these factors are shown in the figures below.

CHANGE SUCCESS FACTORS

No.	Success Factors	Chrusciel & Field, 2006	Zink, et al., 2008	Armenakis & Harris, 2009	Fritzen-schaft, 2011	Parker, et al., 2013	Lines, et al., 2015	Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2015	Imran, et al., 2016	Lauer, 2019	Zala, et al., 2020	Total
1	<b>Communication: Goals, processes and giving orientation</b>	x	x	x	x		x		x	x	x	8
2	<b>Create a vision/change message and communicate it throughout the organisation</b>	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x	8
3	<b>Early, adequate, active participation of all individuals/groups affected</b>	x	x	x	x			x		x	x	7
4	<b>Top management: commitment, involvement, participation, support, attendance, presence</b>	x	x		x		x	x	x		x	7
5	Train, educate and support employees and users	x			x		x	x		x		6
6	Project management	x		x	x			x		x	x	6
7	Consider scope, size, duration; set a realistic, clear implementation schedule/timeframe	x			x		x	x			x	5
8	Readiness to deal with change, change commitment, positive attitude	x		x	x			x	x			5
9	Communicate usefulness, need, areas of application of sudden changes to create a shared understanding and establish a sense of urgency	x	x	x	x							4
10	Integration		x	x					x	x		4
11	Performance: measure, evaluate, give feedback, monitor constantly	x			x			x			x	4
12	Personalisation: perception of personal gain/utility	x			x				x	x		4
13	Planning and analysis: Identify and evaluate gap where company is now and where it wants to be	x		x	x			x				4
14	Having and making necessary resources available (e.g., money, information)	x	x		x							3
15	Change leadership: visionary, purposeful, transformative, motivational, challenging							x		x	x	3
16	Consider human aspects, address the needs of employees directly				x	x		x				3
17	Consider the impact of company culture					x		x				2
18	Having patience, deploying a long-term strategy		x				x					2
19	Different change initiatives need to be coherent		x					x				2
20	Emphasise structures and behaviour	x	x									2
21	View change initiatives as evolutionary (permanent change) process		x							x		2
22	Involvement of the right personnel			x			x					2
23	Overall satisfaction, content people	x						x				2
24	Manage change initiative in a holistic process		x									1
25	Project prioritisation										x	1
26	Customer focus and involvement										x	1
27	Consider and capture lessons learned from previous change projects					x						1
28	Risk management: manage the exposure and mitigate against risks, benefits should outweigh risks	x				x						1
29	Align change management goals with organisational strategy					x						1
30	Adopt knowledge management strategies: deliver appropriate knowledge in the correct way								x			1
31	Reduce uncertainty			x								1
32	Identify the required environmental conditions							x				1
33	Empower and motivate others				x							1
34	Plan for and create short term wins				x							1
35	Flexibility				x							1
36	Determine competences and responsibilities				x							1
37	Establish confidence				x							1
38	Consultation: use professional consultants									x		1

Fig. 1. Change success factors (Dempsey et al., 2021).

CHANGE FAILURE FACTORS

No.	Failure Factors	Chrusciel & Field, 2006	Zink, et al., 2008	Armenakis & Harris, 2009	Fritzen-schaft, 2011	Parker, et al., 2013	Lines, et al., 2015	Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2015	Imran, et al., 2016	Lauer, 2019	Zala, et al., 2020	Total
1	<b>Resistance to change</b>		x			x	x		x	x	x	6
2	<b>Standardised concept</b>		x		x			x		x		4
3	<b>View change initiatives as short-term program</b>		x		x		x			x		4
4	Clash of values (organisation vs. change approach)					x		x		x		3
5	Insufficient sponsorship, resources					x		x			x	3
6	Consultant-/Expert-driven approach		x							x		2
7	Unmotivated employees		x			x						2
8	Unrealistic expectations						x	x				2
9	Lack of framework to successfully plan, implement, manage change				x	x						2
10	Lack of project management integration				x	x						2
11	Poor project/change leadership	x				x						2
12	No adequate employee participation		x							x		2
13	Manage the change initiative as isolated project		x									1
14	Poor training										x	1
15	Change cynism								x			1
16	Poor planning							x				1
17	Lack of commitment to change							x				1
18	Absence of dedicated and full resources teams				x							1
19	Inadequate process control									x		1
20	Change speed/pace too fast									x		1
21	Unclear objectives, lack of orientation									x		1
22	Fear of the unknown, ignorance									x		1
23	Bad experiences									x		1

Fig. 2. Change failure factors (Dempsey et al., 2021).

The authors of the article identified the most important change success factors:

- Effective and open communication with clear goals, defined processes and orientation.
- Very clear vision of the change and its communication across the organization for employees to understand why the change is needed.
- Early and active employee involvement, which creates trust and reduces resistance.
- Commitment from top-level managers with continuous support, visible engagement and allocation of resources.

The most important change failure factors identified by authors include:

- Resistance to change – usually expressed as passiveness, critique, sabotage or passive aggression.
- Standardised concept – when methods of applying the change are not aligned with the individual context, culture and strategy of an organization.
- Viewing change initiatives as a short-term solution, when changes are understood as short term projects instead of long-term commitments.

Authors also emphasise, that the failure factors are directly related to the success factors, for example, resistance comes from ineffective communication or lack of employee's involvement. The suggested solutions include adaptation of the change to the company's culture, creation of a long-term strategy, better communication, short term victories and active employee engagement (Dempsey et al., 2021).

Even though Dempsey et al. state various factors that have an impact on change implementation failure or success, they do not emphasise psychological and leadership aspects, which often could make those factors critical. This gap is filled in with the research of Hussain (2023), where he deeply analyses four aspects of change management: change management models, leadership, resistance and success reasons.

Hussain (2023) explains that resistance to change is mostly related not to the change itself but to the psychological discomfort, uncertainty about the future and mistakes of managers, for example fake promises, lack of trust or doing everything in a rush. Resistance to change may not be a barrier, but rather an indicator of lack of communication. Also, Hussain (2023) emphasises, that transformational, change and participatory leadership are the key factors, that significantly influence the employees' preparation for change, their trust and positive emotional background. This means, that leaders, who can clearly state the reason and logic behind the change and who are able to include employees in decision making can directly reduce the resistance to change help organization to accept the change as a natural course of action. Also, Hussain (2023) states, that the most failures happen not because the wrong change management model was chosen but because the model was not adapted correctly, actions were taken in a rush, and managers were not able to prepare organization from emotional and structural perspectives.

To summarize, the change success aspects, analysed by Hussain (2023) – such as communication, clear vision, commitment, employee involvement and step by step preparation - correlate with conclusions reached by Dempsey et al. (2021). Additionally, Hussain (2023) adds a wider perspective, that change failure or success depend not only on various factors, but also on effectiveness of leadership and its style, psychological environment, culture of organization and application of change management model and that all these factors are connected to each other in a wide sense.

## **2.4. The Change Management Strategies and Models**

### **2.4.1. The Change Management Strategies**

Change management has become a critical factor for organizational success in dynamic and uncertain business environments. This subchapter combines the scientific literature by focusing on five core

change management strategies - change initiation, change implementation, employee involvement, change monitoring, and change support.

### **Change Initiation**

Successful change processes typically begin with the creation of urgency. Several change management frameworks emphasize the importance of creating a sense of urgency and forming a guiding coalition as one of the most important conditions for initiating change. Empirical research confirms that in practise, managers frequently rely on such strategies, including securing senior leadership support and aligning change initiatives with the organization's mission and vision. At the same time, failures at the initiation stage are often associated with the lack of a clear and shared vision. Failure to identify the purpose and direction of change can prevent initial involvement of the employees. Therefore, the development and communication of a clear vision, aligned with organizational strategy, is considered a key factor for effective change initiation. (Errida & Lotfi, 2021).

### **Change Implementation**

Implementation requires structured methodology and planning. Seventy percent of change processes fail due to poor execution of basics, particularly inadequate communication. Integration of project management with change management ensures proper implementation. Planning must include five essential elements: communication plans, training strategies, coaching approaches, resistance management, and sponsorship roadmaps (Errida & Lotfi, 2021). Classical change management models divide implementation into "moving" stages comprising vision sharing, empowerment, and short-term wins, while more modern ones, such as ADKAR focus on individuals progressing through awareness, desire, knowledge, ability, and reinforcement stages (Sheikh Hamdo, 2021),

### **Employee Involvement**

Employee participation significantly improves change success. When employees are genuinely invested in change, success likelihood increases by 30%, while involvement in decision-making improves outcomes by 15% (Hussain et al., 2018). Employee involvement accelerates the "movement" stage by fostering commitment and overcoming resistance through transparent leadership. Training, coaching, and empowerment facilitate change by developing capabilities and influencing employee mindset (Errida & Lotfi, 2021). Stakeholder engagement strategies should identify required involvement levels and necessary activities. Middle management engagement proves particularly critical, cited by Prosci (2023) as one of seven success factors.

### **Change Monitoring**

Continuous assessment organizations to assess progress and adjust actions when necessary (Errida & Lotfi, 2021). Sustainable change management requires must include mechanisms for assessing change outcomes against organisational objectives and developing continuous improvement actions. Source Change management effectiveness can be measured through employee feedback, adoption rates, project timelines, and return on investment. Monitoring involves establishing clear success metrics, measuring progress, and adjusting strategies in response to problems. Communication of mission, vision, and goals remains critical throughout monitoring, with evidence showing 87.1%

variance in change management success explained by these predictive factors (Sopow, E. & Sushkova, 2025).

## **Change Support**

Long-term change sustainability depends on ongoing support throughout and beyond implementation. Visible and continuous sponsorship from senior management is consistently identified as a key success factor (Errida & Lotfi, 2021). Leaders play a central role in providing training, coaching, and empowerment during the change process. In addition, organizations are encouraged to implement interventions that enhance employees' sense of meaning, self-efficacy, and psychological safety. Research indicates that meaningful change experiences, where employees perceive purpose and personal contribution, have a particularly strong influence on engagement and proactive behaviour (Albrecht, Furlong & Leiter, 2023).

In conclusion, effective change management integrates these five strategies (Errida & Lotfi, 2021). A comprehensive understanding of change type, process, and key elements enables organizations to adopt holistic approaches that balance structured frameworks with adaptive practices, while addressing both technical and human dimensions of change.

### **2.4.2. The Change Management Models**

In various scientific literature the models of change management are often classified based on two most dominant approaches, which are being described as planned (classical) approach and more modern (emergent) change management approaches. Planned change is associated with early models, especially Lewin's, which is based on consistent and stable stages (Hussain et al., 2018; Burnes, 2004). These kinds of models assume that organizations usually operate in stable conditions, and that change can be designed, implemented and stabilized.

On the other hand, as discussed by various authors, such as By (2005) and Ratana et al. (2020), nowadays organizations operate in complex and constantly changing environments, where changes are happening continuously, not episodically. As a result, changes cannot be managed in a very pre-planned way, because they are unpredictable and undefined (By, 2005). By (2005) also argues that emergent change should be understood as an ongoing and fully adaptable process, not as a series of linear events. These changes in reality of organizations led to the development of more modern change management models and practices, that rely on flexibility and adaptation instead of strictly defined change management steps. In summary, the models of change management can be divided into more classical and planned ones and more modern models that have developed in response to the reality of organizational environments.

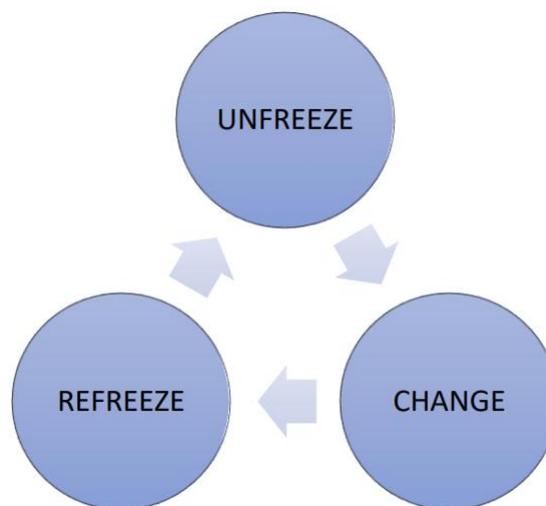
#### **2.4.2.1. The Classical Change Management Models**

##### **Lewin's three step model**

In literature, classical change management models are understood as more consistent and managed through clear stages. Lewin's three step model (unfreeze, change, refreeze) is described as one of the earliest and essential change management models, which focuses on stabilization of organization before and after the change and it also emphasises the importance of the dynamics of the group (Burnes, 2004; Hussain et al., 2018). This model is based on Lewin's belief, that behaviour of both

individual person and a group of persons is being supported by temporary balance between driving and stopping forces. If we want to change this behaviour, then the balance needs to destabilize (unfreeze), then change into a new state (change) and then, eventually, stabilize again (refreeze) (Burnes, 2004).

For usage in planned and predictable change in stable environments or structured industries, Lewin's model would be the very suitable option (Gborogbosi & Amah, 2025). It remains valuable as a basic framework because many other change management models have developed from it (Hussain, 2023). However, Lewin's model could be viewed as too simple and not suitable for rapidly changing environments (Ratana, Raksmeay, & Danut, 2020). Research also suggests that the Lewin's model may be ineffective when the organizational culture is not aligned with the intended change (Appelbaum et al., 2012).



**Fig. 3.** Lewin's change model (Sheikh Hamdo, 2021).

### **The Kotter's 8 step model**

The Kotter's 8 step model expanded this approach with more detailed view, which also included leadership, creation of a vision and involvement of employees and that's how it became one of the most used classical change management models (Appelbaum et al., 2012). The model itself consists of eight sequential steps. The first step is defined as a creation of a sense of an urgency. In this step leaders should express a visionary need for change, which must make employees believe, that the change is needed right now, not some time in a future. The second step is described as a formation of a strong leadership alliance, which means gathering team members from various functions to create a change team, which would encourage and support the whole change process. The third and fourth steps involve developing a strategic vision and communicating it to all levels of the organization and ensuring that everyone understands the common goal. The fifth step calls for enabling action by removing barriers, which also includes empowering employees and giving them the skills and resources they need. The sixth step suggests creating short term wins, because they prove, that the change works, boost motivation, and help overcome scepticism. The seventh step is designed to consolidate all the achievements and continue with the development of the change by using the already gained trust from the team. The final eight step is to implement the change into the organizational culture, making it permanent by using behaviour, values and structural adaptations

(Carreño, 2024). The logic of Kotter's model is sequential. Each step depends on the previous one, which creates a roadmap from the current state to the desired state (Appelbaum et al., 2012).

The Kotter's 8 step model is the most effective when implementing complex strategic changes in sectors such as healthcare, technology, finance, retail, manufacturing or energy, when the organization needs a clear, consistent and systematic approach. One of the greatest advantages of this model is the ability to create a positive effect through early small wins and eventually integrate changes in the organizational culture (Gborogbosi & Amah, 2025). On the other hand, the model can become too rigid in rapidly changing environments, it relies more on the logic of "top-down" management (Carreño, 2024) and can lose effectiveness, if some steps are skipped or implemented only formally (Bekmukhambetova, 2021). For this reason, in nowadays organizations, where changes often happen repeatedly and require constant adaptation, it is appropriate to combine the Kotter model with Agile principles - this way it would be possible to maintain structure while at the same time ensuring flexibility that is necessary (Carreño, 2024).

#### **2.4.2.2. The Modern Change Management Models**

The modern business world, which is experiencing digital transformation, globalization, and constant market change, requires a new approach to change management. Modern change management models emphasize the human, psychological, and adaptive parts of change and provide organizations with flexibility and resilience in current market environment.

##### **The ADKAR model**

The ADKAR model, which was developed by Jeff Hiatt in 2006, is a results-oriented change management model that is focused on the individual and based on the assumption that all successful organizational change comes from the personal level. ADKAR is an acronym that stands for five consistent outcomes, which a person must achieve for a change to be sustainable and successful (Kaminski, 2022). These outcomes include Awareness (A) - understanding why change is needed, what is changing and what the risks are if action is not taken; Desire (D) - personal motivation and choice stage in order to support and participate in the change; Knowledge (K) - knowing how to change and having knowledge about what is needed in the new environment; Ability (A) -the ability to implement the desired skills and behaviours; Reinforcement (R) - actions and processes to to sustain and maintain change in the long term (Kaminski, 2022). It is best to apply the ADKAR model from the very beginning of the project, so that managers can identify obstacles, especially related to employee adaptation, as projects often fail due to problems related to human aspects (Kaminski, 2022).

The ADKAR model works best, where the involvement of every employee is essential (Gborogbosi & Amah, 2025). The strength of ADKAR is its ability to diagnose at which stage an employee is stuck and requires targeted intervention (Bekmukhambetova, 2021). The model stands out for its thorough examination of the human side of change (Sheikh Hamdo, 2021). However, it has limitations: it is less effective in large-scale implementations and focuses mainly on the individual, rather than on the organizational and cultural dimensions of change (Bekmukhambetova, 2021).

##### **The Kübler-Ross change curve model**

The Kübler-Ross change curve model was developed by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross and it identifies five emotional stages that people experience when faced with change: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance (Kilburn, 2025). Originally it was developed to explain the grieving process but later this model has been adapted to organizational change, as change often also represents the so-called death of the old way and the so-called birth of the new way. The model is considered a fluid rather than linear process because not all employees may experience all stages. By recognizing that change causes emotional stress, organizations can prepare additional support mechanisms in advance to help employees overcome stress more quickly and return to productivity (Elisabeth Kübler-Ross Foundation, n.d.).

### **The Satir Change Model**

The Satir change model was developed by Virginia Satir and it defines five stages of change - late status quo, resistance, chaos, integration, and new status quo. This model emphasizes that change is a process of personal growth, and success depends on how well people can overcome chaos. The most attention is given internal feelings, thinking, and changes in behaviour, not only just external events. The Satir model is relevant today, as organizations experience constant change. It emphasizes the importance of periods of chaos and the need to provide a safe environment for employees. Instead of trying to shorten the chaos, as suggest some traditional models, the Satir method encourages organizations to create support structures that help employees learn new ways of working through chaos. This is very important when implementing technological change, which requires a long period of learning and adaptation (Else, 2022; Bhavani & Mahalakshmi, 2023).

### **The William Bridges' Change Model**

The William Bridges' change model highlights the clear distinction between change (situational, what happens to people) and transition (psychological, what happens in people's minds). The model includes an ending phase (saying goodbye to the old order), a neutral phase (a period of confusion between the old and the new), and a new beginning (when people finally accept the new state). This model also recognizes that the change itself happens quickly, but transitions take longer and require additional support (Miller, 2017).

### **The Agile Change Management as an Approach**

Agile change management encourages flexibility and continuous improvement and emphasises moving away from strict plans. The approach is based on close collaboration between change initiators and teams, fast feedback, and the ability to quickly adapt to changing environments (Dr. Yashashvi Goyal et al., 2025). In comparison to traditional models that see changes as projects with an end, Agile recognizes change as a continuous state in modern organizations (Carreño, 2024). Agile principles are very important in fast changing industries because they enable organizations to respond quickly to external changes in the market. By combining Agile principles with traditional (classical) models, organizations can keep their strategic direction while also quickly adapting to real-time challenges. This mixed approach allows to celebrate short-term wins that build confidence in the change while at the same time maintaining the flexibility for long-term success (Carreño, 2024).

In modern organizations, change is not an exception - it has become a constant condition of everyday operations. Processes such as digital transformation, globalization, and market dynamics mean that organizations are required to respond to them constantly, not only using technical solutions, but also

deeply understanding the human factor of the change. For this reason, change management models must be chosen and adapted accordingly.

### **2.4.3. The Change Management Models in Different Organizational Development Contexts**

After reviewing classical and modern change management models, significant structural differences are revealed and different understandings of the concept of change are noticed. Classical change management models tend to focus on a clear structure, to follow certain stages and emphasize the need of more control. They are useful in situations where organizations need stability, clarity and predictable results. Modern models pay more attention to adaptability, human emotions and the ability to act under uncertain conditions. Even though these models may seem like they are contradicting each other, in practice they complementary to each other and can be applied in a variation of situations while also taking into account the concrete situation of the organization (Ratana et al., 2020; By, 2005).

At the same time, the scientific studies emphasize that there is no universal change management model that would be effective in all organizations and in all situations. The suitability of models is identified not only by the type or the size of the change itself, but also by the level of maturity of the organization, the organizational culture, the leadership style, and if the organization is stable, growing or experiencing internal or external transformations (By, 2005; Bekmukhambetova, 2021; Carreño, 2024). For example, in the early stages of an organization's development or when it is rapidly growing, flexibility and fast adaptation may be very important. When an organization is more mature and structured, then step-by-step implementation of changes may be more suitable.

According to these findings and to get a better understanding of how and why some change management models work more effectively than others, it is necessary to analyse the stages of organizational development. These stages could define an organization's structure, processes, logic behind the decisions and leadership style, which may determine which change management model to choose and what initiatives could be the most successful.

## **2.5. The Organizational Development and Life-Cycle Perspectives**

### **2.5.1. The Adizes Organizational Life Cycle model**

Ichak Adizes's Organizational Life Cycle model is one of the most detailed organizational development models of all time. It consists of ten logical stages from the very beginning of an organization to its demise (Ospina Avendano, 2021). What is special about this model, that it not only describes the stages of organizational development but also identifies the main problems, which organizations most often face in each stage and provides various suggestions on what changes and actions are needed for an organization to move from one stage to another (Adizes, 2004).

#### **2.5.1.1. The Initial Stages and Main Challenges**

##### **The Courtship stage**

In this stage, the organization is not created yet, but the founders are enthusiastically building a vision for it. Main problems occur from ideas that are too idealistic, overestimation of reality and having an illusion that it is going to be very easy to reach the success. The main task for the founders is to ensure

that their vision would be connected to reality and that they would have a plan to attract the resources to begin with (Adizes, 2004).

### **The Infancy stage**

During Infancy, the organisation is already established, and its main goal is to survive, but there is no structure of the management. The main challenge is the lack of finances and the undefined activities. The founders tend to be impulsive, skip the planning and mishandle the resources (Adizes, 2004). Organization needs to establish financial control, operational procedures while also keeping the spirit of the business alive (Ospina Avendano, 2021).

### **The Go-Go stage**

It this stage comes the very fast growth, when organization develops and takes over the market. At the same time organization faces challenges such as lack of strategic clarity, insufficient control of activities and a wish to develop too many directions. Very often in this stage the founder needs to effectively delegate tasks to other employees but fails to do that. In this stage it is needed to form an organizational structure, create budgets and establish processes, because otherwise the organization will face a lot of chaos (Adizes, 2004).

## **2.5.1.2. The Middle Stages and Increasing Complexity**

### **The Adolescence stage**

In Adolescence, organization is actively growing but at the same time is facing a challenge how to combine that growth with a formalization of the activities. One of the main very common problems in this stage is a conflict between the founder and the hired professional managers when at least a part of decision-making rights must be transferred (Adizes, 2004). Usually, in this stage the founder is taking a step back. Organization must establish a professional management structure, define the roles and processes (Ospina Avendano, 2021).

### **The Prime stage**

Prime is an optimal state of an organization. All processes are developed, organization's growth is stable and everything is balanced. Main challenges come from living in the past achievements too long, becoming too conservative and forgetting to seek innovations. Organizations must keep the growth and avoid stagnation. For that, the business model must be periodically renewed, and organization must invest into new research and development (Adizes, 2004).

## **2.5.1.3. The Stages of an Aging Organization**

### **The fall stage**

Organization reaches the Fall stage, when it becomes overly confident, underestimates the need for innovations and keeps itself going mostly because of the achievements of the past (Adizes, 2004). Decisions are being taken more slowly, formal processes become more important than actual practical decisions and fresh ideas from external environment or young talents are being dismissed (Mosca, Gianecchini, & Campagnolo, 2021). The hesitation to take risks also starts to be very visible in this stage. To change that, organization must come back to experimenting, taking the risk and developing new business ideas (Adizes, 2004).

## The Aristocracy stage

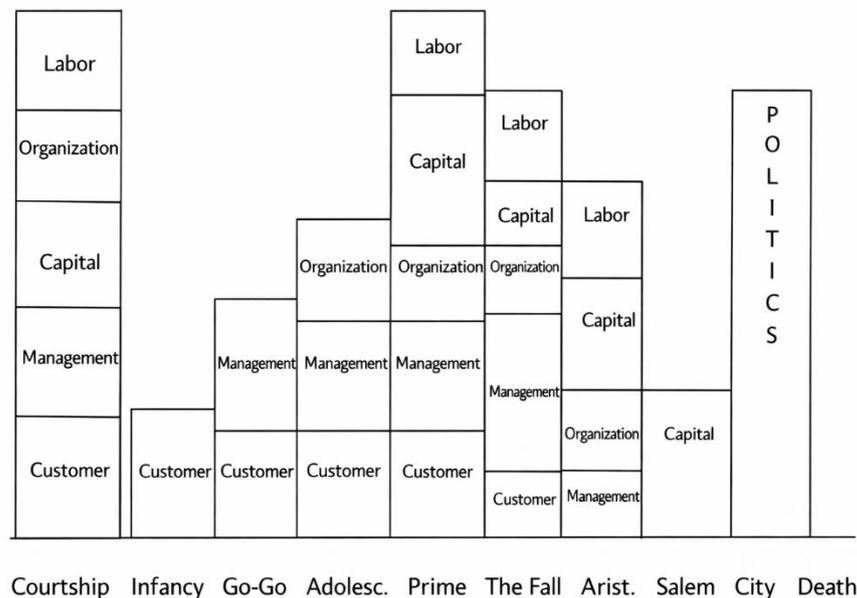
In this stage, there is a growing number of formal procedures rules, but the productivity and results are decreasing. It becomes hard to make decisions because internal conflicts are developing and disappointment is growing inside the organization. To change its course, the organization must have radical massive changes implemented, hierarchy must be decreased and attention and all efforts must be directed to the activities and areas, that generate the most value (Adizes, 2004).

## The Salem City, Bureaucracy and Death stages

In these stages the organization loses the meaning of its existence. It becomes rigid, lack of resources is obvious and there are more political games and imitation of work than actual actions. The decision making becomes basically impossible because the focus is on rules, fears and procedures, not on a logic. Organizational becomes incapable. The only changes, that could have an actual impact in this stage are very radical and large scale – restructuration, closing underperforming units, selling out part or all assets or finally liquidation (Adizes, 2004).

### 2.5.1.4. The Summary and Key Insights from the Adizes Organizational Life Cycle Model

The Adizes’ Organizational Life Cycle model provides clear guidelines for the understanding of organizational development from it’s very beginning until the very end. Each of the ten described stages face different problems but these problems are also potential opportunities to further growth and could help organization to move to the different stage. The main interests of each stage are also summed up in the figure below:



**Fig. 4.** Interests over the lifecycle (Adizes, 2004).

Good management means understanding the appropriate amount of attention to different interests and problems in each stage and recognizing when the risk for organizations’ decline arises. The changes that are needed in each stage are different. In the earlier stages it is important to have flexibility and use the business spirit which is in a peak and in later stages concrete structures and control procedures

must be implemented to balance the chaos but also to avoid stagnation. In conclusion, organizations, that can recognize and understand their life cycle have better chances to initiate the needed changes on time and stay in the best stage of Prime for a long time (Adizes, 2004).

### **2.5.2. The Lippitt and Schmidt Model**

Lippitt and Schmidt describes three stages of organizational development – birth, youth and maturity. Each stage has its own managerial problems and crises, which need to be solved for the organization to move to the different stage. At the stage of birth, main challenges are the creation of organizational structure and keeping it together. At the youth stage, the most attention is needed for reputation, ensuring stability and effective decision taking. The maturity stage is defined as a search for new opportunities and adaptation to changing conditions. According to the model, the failures happen, when important crises are not being recognised during the development of an organization. Also, the model suggests that managers should face problems in ways, which would create a stable base for future challenges (Mosca, Gianecchini and Campagnolo, 2021)

### **2.5.3. The Churchill and Lewis Model**

This model was created based on the results of many empirical studies. On the contrary to other organizational life cycle models, Churchill and Lewis model does not suggest, that organization must go through all stages or die. It puts more emphasis on the establishment of the organization, on its size, complexity and diversity, strategic goals, profitability and organizational structure while suggesting five different stages (Mosca, Gianecchini and Campagnolo, 2021). The first stage, Existence, focuses on business ideas, creation of product and survival. Everything is centralized and formality is minimal. The second stage, Survival, is where organization aims to reach a break-even, seek a balance between profit and loss, structure is still simple. The third stage, Success, face a question either the organization must grow or stabilize itself. In this stage organization is profitable and the organizational structure is being formed. The fourth stage, Take-off, is when an organization experiences a rapid growth, decentralization happens and delegation develops. This stage is critical for an organization's further development. The fifth stage, Maturity, is when an organization has slower growth and enough resources with decentralized structure. Attention is put on productivity and control, with the risk of stagnation too (Myllylä & Kaivo-oja, 2025).

In conclusion, all these models of organizational development clearly show, that organizations are going through various stages and each of them is defined by different challenges and requirements. In comparison with the model of Adizes, these models are less detailed and more focused on the growth of organization, its size or structure but they are lacking the wider dynamics of organizational aging and for this reason are used in this study only as contextual reference points. Even though these models emphasise how the organizations develop and they all mention repetitive problems and crises in different stages, they provide limited insights about change management in a practical manner.

### **2.5.4. The Organizational Development Stages as a Context for Change Management**

Based on the analysis of the organizational life-cycle models discussed above, all of them define different stages in which organizations face different problems and challenges. The priorities, culture, capabilities of an organization are constantly developing in those stages and because of that, change management strategies also require to be adapted accordingly.

At the beginning of an organizational cycle, in the stages of establishment and early growth, the main challenges are usually associated with incompatibility between informal culture and the growing structure (Mosca, Gianecchini & Campagnolo, 2021). During this period the focus for organizations is having enough resources and overall survival (Jirásek & Bílek, 2018). Main challenges also include:

- Change of the leadership style – informal and spontaneous leadership of one person, usually the founder, becomes insufficient for fast growing organization (Mosca, Gianecchini & Campagnolo, 2021).
- Lack of systems – usually in the early stages organization does not generate big cash flows or profits and the structure simple and centralized. That changes very fast and the need of systemic planning increases a lot (Jirásek & Bílek, 2018). The main challenge is to introduce at least minimal formal processes and structure (Mosca, Gianecchini & Campagnolo, 2021).

At the later stages of organizational development organizations face the main conflict between spontaneous actions and the need of control (Jirásek & Bílek, 2018):

- The need of autonomy. Centralized procedures tend to slow down the growth and development, for this reason more freedom and decentralization need to be implemented in certain levels of an organization (Mosca, Gianecchini & Campagnolo, 2021).
- Formalization against flexibility. Adizes model notes, that during further growth on an organization, the further formalization and systemic management is needed, which creates a controversy between the need to stabilize and the need to grow rapidly. Introduction of strategic planning is needed to manage the growth (Jirásek & Bílek, 2018).
- Avoidance of premature aging. The main challenge is to ensure, that formal systems would deal with real problems and that the natural business drive would not be suppressed (Adizes, 2004).

When an organization reaches the stage of maturity, stability is ensured, but at the same time growth becomes slower, bureaucracy is increasing and innovations become less important (Jirásek & Bílek, 2018), which leads to these main challenges:

- Bureaucracy crisis where the growth activities of an organization are being suppressed with too much formality and control (Mosca, Gianecchini & Campagnolo, 2021).
- Too many control systems where the main activities of an organization are focused on planning and administrative control (Deun & Corbey, 2023). The challenge for management of change is to recognise this state and renew the structures, simplify the control mechanisms (Jirásek & Bílek, 2018).
- Lack of innovations where mature organization usually focuses on effectiveness and profitability, which very often leads to forgetting about new innovations. The necessary change is to come back to diversification of activities and the search for new opportunities (Jirásek & Bílek, 2018).

If in the stage of maturity an organisation is not able to cope with bureaucracy, then the decline starts. Avoiding the risk and focus on internal problems take over, which according to various organizational life cycle models (Jirásek & Bílek, 2018) results into these problems:

- Challenges of a decline could happen at any stage but is mostly associated with later stages. It is often suggested that is enough to change the management, but Adizes emphasises that the main problem is a systemically lost interest in innovations (Adizes, 2004).
- The need for revival strategy because of decentralization, renewed structure, decreased administrative control and emphasis on organizational culture and business spirit should result in a positive change towards revival of an organization (Deun & Corbey, 2023). The main challenge is to avoid demise and to make sure that the efforts to revive the organization would lead towards a long-term growth culture (Jirásek & Bílek, 2018).

Previously reviewed sources of scientific literature (Adizes, 2004; Mosca, Gianecchini & Campagnolo, 2021; Jirásek & Bílek, 2018; Myllylä & Kaivo-oja, 2025) agree on the main assumption, that all organizations go through different stages of organizational development, starting with establishment of an organization and ending either with demise or revival, with each stage requiring different changes in the organization. Nevertheless, these organizational development models do not focus on who initiates the needed changes and how managers implement them.

The models focus on “what”, instead of “how” in situations, where different managers with different experience and authority act. Interaction of managers’ age and experience is also not integrated into these models which spares important practical details, as experienced managers and less experienced ones should have different managerial approaches in the same organizational development stages. All in all, effective change management requires not only theoretical perspectives but also a practical style of management, which includes the synergy between personal development and people inclusion – which these models do not actually provide.

## **2.6. Young Managers in the Context of Organizational Change**

### **2.6.1. The Concept and Profile of Young Managers**

Organizations recognise young leaders and millennials as the ones who, despite their possible lack of experience, are the ones who initiate the organizational change. They usually bring new perspectives, which not always are being considered by senior employees, who are used to doing the same things for a long time (Sessoms-Penny, Underwood & Taylor, 2022).

Even though there is no unified description of young managers in scientific literature, the experience is often described as more relevant criteria in comparison with the age. The professional development of managers is a long term and diverse process, in which personal leadership style and competencies are developing gradually. The competencies develop according to the stages of career, technical skills are more important at the beginning, while more complicated social and strategic competencies develop later in career (Day, Fleenor, Atwater, Sturm & McKee, 2013). The empirical study of Rogleva, Gegovska-Zajkova & Fustik (2014) shows that managers that are in the early stages of leadership usually have between 1 and 10 years of managerial experience. The Young Global Leaders Forum, an official initiative of the World Economic Forum, which is a globally recognized leadership programme, typically requires candidates to have from 5 to 15 years of professional work experience (World Economic Forum, 2023).

Age wise, in various sources a young manager is often defined as someone who is younger than 40 years old. This line is suitable because it sets the boundary between the early career stage (typically 25 – 39 years old) and the mid-career stage (40 – 54 years old), which is traditionally linked to more

senior positions (Daldrop, Homan & Buengeler, 2025). Persons under 40 years old often occupy not typical roles of leadership because management stereotypically is associated with seniority, high status and extensive experience (Irehill, Rantatalo, Lundmark & Tafvelin, 2024; Buengeler, Homan & Voelpel, 2016). As a result, this age group often faces age bias, which results in their leadership status being assigned to a lower level and their competence and team-building qualities being viewed negatively, especially from older and more experienced persons (Daldrop, Homan & Buengeler, 2025). Institutional organizations such as the Young Global Leaders Forum (World Economic Forum) support this definition by limiting eligibility of candidates to under the age of 40 years (World Economic Forum, 2023). Defining young managers by this age is very important for identifying those, who face unique challenges in the early stages of leadership development, such as more burnout and higher emotional demands (Irehill, Lundmark & Tafvelin, 2023).

### **2.6.2. The Change Management Challenges and Capabilities of Young Managers**

During the processes of change management, the capabilities and qualities of young managers create a specific dynamic. Their limited experience positions them as atypical leaders in the context of change management (Daldrop, Homan & Buengeler, 2025) and the effectiveness of change management is based on the skills and experiences that they have acquired and not the age that they have reached. Their specific abilities to easier adapt to always changing environments also contribute to the change management process (Gentry, Eckert, Stawiski & Zhao, 2016).

#### **Capabilities in Contexts of Change**

The main advantage of earlier stages managers is that they are eager to learn and are open to feedback. This mindset is a result of a more open mind because young managers are not so attached to existing practices and methods, which lets them to experiment with the new processes more confidently. For this reason, young managers can create a significant potential for flexible approach and new ideas (World Economic Forum, 2015). Because of the less experience which sometimes can be a holding-back factor for more senior colleagues, young managers are optimistic towards change and can adapt to new methods of work more easily (Irehill et al., 2024).

Young managers tend to have a leadership style, which is based on relationship, dialog, inclusion and trust, rather than a formal power of position. During change processes this capability to have influence on people not through hierarchy but through relationships is very helpful, because it encourages the inclusion of the employees, not only mandatory obedience (Löow, Vinberg, Johansson, Jakobsson, Molnar & Larsson, 2024).

#### **Challenges in Contexts of Change**

The lack of organizational authority and experience is the main obstacle for young managers. Also, young managers often face the challenges of credibility because they are often being viewed as lacking the sufficient authority, especially by older subordinates (Irehill et al., 2024). They also feel the pressure to constantly overachieve their goals and be always available because this is how they want to compensate the lack of experience. This sometimes takes focus away from the main tasks (Larsson & Björklund, 2021).

In addition, young managers often lack a deeper understanding of the organizational context and culture (Irehill et al., 2024), which limits their ability to predict possible obstacles during change.

These gaps make it difficult to explain and justify changes (Bekmukhambetova, 2021) in the eyes of team members. All of that adds additional emotional and psychological tension (Irehill, Lundmark, & Tafvelin, 2023), as young managers must build their leadership identity and at the same time manage the natural stress and uncertainty that goes together with managing change (Benjamin & Reilly, 2011).

### **Compatibility with Classical Change Management Models**

Classical models of change management (for example Kotter's model) tend to emphasise, that leaders or managers must have high formal power, be able to influence people and use that authority for managing the change (Carreño, 2024). This limits the practical effectiveness of classical change management models for young managers, because usually the early-stage managers do not have such powers yet. For example, Lewin's model requires deep cultural and organizational knowledge to include change into the standard practise of an organization. For this reason, the lack of flexibility in classical change management models makes it hard for young managers to use them practically (Bekmukhambetova, 2021).

### **Compatibility with Modern Change Management Models**

Modern models of change management are more people oriented than classical ones. They are more flexible, emphasise getting and giving feedback, step by step planning and constant adaptation to changing situations (Carreño, 2024). This model orientation makes the lack of a professional experience a factor that young managers can control because it does not require to foresee all the possible problems in advance and helps with constant learning. It also coincides with the ability of young managers to make influence through relationships and collaboration (Koutsikouri, Madsen & Lindström, 2020). It shifts focus from the lack of formal authority to shared responsibility and problem solving and lets young managers to use their flexibility and people skills to their advantage (Albrecht, Furlong & Leiter, 2023).

In conclusion, the research show that young managers face specific challenges during process of change management with the lack of extensive professional experience being the main obstacle. On the other hand, when dealing with changes in a modern business world and using more modern models, their proactive and inclusive approach can become as main advantage to successfully managing the processes of change.

### **2.6.3. The Synthesis of Change Management Strategies in the Context of Organizational Development and Young Managers**

The models of Organizational Life Cycle (Adizes, Churchill and Lewis, Lippitt and Schmidt) state, that changes in organizations are different and depending on the stage of their organizational development. In the early stages, changes are needed because of very fast growth, simple structure, and a little formality. In more mature stages, changes are needed because of too formal structures, overcomplicated processes and lost focus on growth and innovation (Adizes, 2004). These differences mean that models of change management (classical and modern ones: Lewin's, Kotter's, ADKAR, Kübler-Ross, Satir, Bridges and Agile approaches) have different relevance in each stage of organizational development. As a result, the selection of change management strategies becomes connected not only to the stage of organizational development, but also to the capabilities and position of the manager who is leading the change.

In this context, the young managers, who are defined by limited leadership experience and younger age, find themselves in specific conditions. Their developing leadership style, which is often based on openness, flexibility and proactivity, could be very useful in certain stages of organizational development, where these qualities are needed (Benjamin & Reilly, 2011). On the other hand, their lack of experience and authority could become obstacles in other stages, where these qualities are essential (Adizes, 2004).

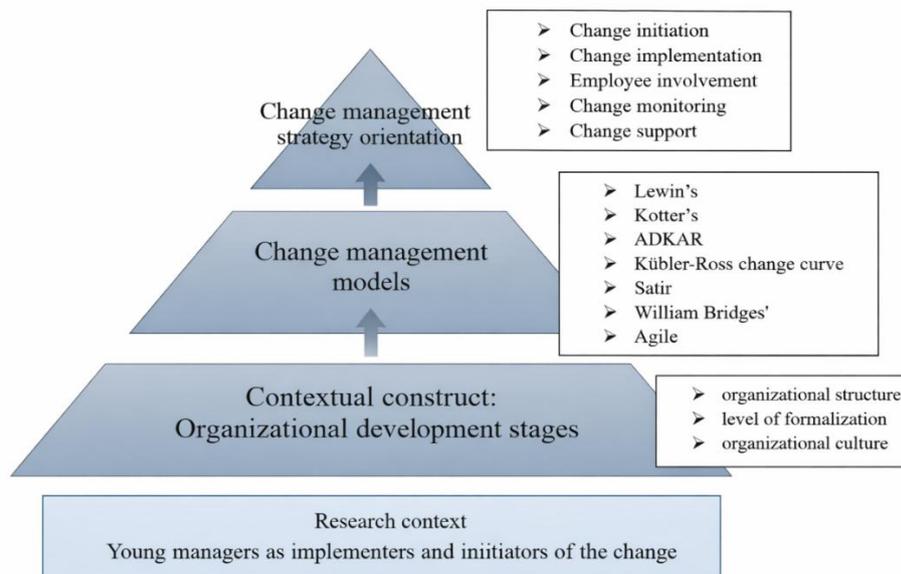
The existing scientific studies mostly examine organizational change or stages of organizational development as broad concepts or define the competencies and characteristics of young managers separately. However, there is not enough research that would specifically explore how young managers, with limited experience and resources, apply strategies of change management in different stages of organizational development. Even less insights are found from the practical perspective.

## **2.7. The Theoretical Model of Change Management Strategies**

This section presents the theoretical model of change management strategy orientation applied by young managers in the context of organizational development (Fig. 5.). The model is based on the analysis of scientific literature on organizational change management, organizational life – cycle perspectives and the role of young managers as change initiators and implementers, supported with insights from various authors, such as Turner & Thurlow (2023), Hussain et al. (2018), By (2005), Adizes (2004), Mosca, Gianecchini & Campagnolo (2021) and others. The proposed model conceptualizes models of change management as a theoretical reference base that informs strategic orientation of change management in practice, rather than treating them as directly applicable instructions.

The theoretical model is based on the assumption that change management in real organizational environments is rarely implemented through the consistent application of a single formal model. Instead, young managers combine and adapt elements of different change management models depending on organizational conditions, available decision-making space, and the stage of organizational development. For this reason, the main focus of the model is placed on change management strategy orientation, which is expressed through the key strategic dimensions of change initiation, change implementation, employee involvement, change monitoring, and change support.

Also, the theoretical model is based on another assumption, that the stage of organizational development acts as a core contextual construct shaping change management practices. Organizations operating at different stages of development differ in their structural complexity, dominant decision-making logic, organizational culture, and level of formalization. The influence of these conditions is embedded in the model as part of the organizational development context. They do not function as independent analytical constructs, but rather as mechanisms through which the stage of organizational development translates into specific strategic orientations of change management.



**Fig. 5.** The theoretical model of change management strategy orientation (created by author)

The stages of organizational development are not treated as analytical variables or objects of measurement in this research. Instead, they serve as a background context that influences the strategic choices and managerial behaviour of young managers. The stage of development affects how change is initiated and implemented, how structured or flexible change processes are, how employees are involved, and how changes are monitored and sustained. Consequently, the same change management strategy orientation may be expressed differently in practice, depending on the organizational development context and the structural conditions it creates.

The theoretical model integrates classical and contemporary change management models, including Lewin's, Kotter's, ADKAR, Kübler-Ross, Satir, Bridges, and Agile approaches, as a theoretical reference base, reinforcing the assumption that change in practice is managed through selective adaptation rather than direct model application. Scientific literature increasingly emphasizes that managers draw on specific elements of different models depending on situational demands, organizational constraints, and the nature of the change.

At the core of the proposed theoretical model lies the concept of change management strategy orientation. In contrast to formal change management models, which describe idealized sequences or normative processes, strategy orientation refers to the dominant pattern of managerial actions and decision-making logic through which change is initiated, implemented, and sustained in practice. Strategy orientation reflects how managers balance structure versus flexibility, control versus participation, and planning versus adaptation during change processes.

In this research, change management strategy orientation is operationalized through five key strategic dimensions: change initiation, change implementation, employee involvement, change monitoring, and change support. These dimensions represent analytically distinct but interrelated aspects of change management practice and serve as the main framework for the empirical analysis. Rather than being treated as isolated actions, they form a coherent strategic orientation that is shaped by organizational context and evolves throughout the change process.

This conceptualization enables the analysis to focus on how change management strategies are enacted in real organizational settings without assuming the consistent application of predefined models. It also provides a flexible analytical structure capable of capturing both structured and emergent forms of change management, which is particularly relevant in contexts where managers operate under varying levels of formal authority and organizational maturity.

In the proposed theoretical model, young managers are positioned as contextual actors through whom change management strategy orientations are enacted. Their age and leadership experience are not treated as analytical variables within the model, but as defining characteristics of the research sample. Young managers operate within specific organizational development contexts and are constrained by varying levels of formal authority, autonomy, and organizational support. Accordingly, they are treated as the research context and as implementers of change management strategies operating under different organizational development stages and structural conditions, rather than as analytical constructs of the model itself.

The theoretical model provides the analytical foundation for the empirical part of this research. It enables the integration of theory with empirical analysis and justifies the chosen qualitative research methodology. The semi-structured interview guide was developed based on this model, and empirical data are analysed using thematic analysis and coding aligned with the constructs refined in the literature review.

### 3. The Methodology of the Research

In this chapter the methodology of the empirical research is explained. The research design, including the logical framework of the research process, the aim, objectives and methods of the research are described in detail. The chapter also includes the development of research instrument, namely the semi-structured interview guide, and describes the research sample, data collection methods, respondent selection criteria, transcription principles, research ethics, the sequence of the empirical research process and research limitations.

#### The Research Design

The logical framework of the research consists of six steps (Fig. 6 provided below). Firstly, the problem was defined, and the theoretical framework was developed. Then, the research methodology was designed, and empirical data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Lastly, the collected data was analysed thematically which led to the formulation of conclusions and practical recommendations.

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6
<b>Problem Definition and Contextual Grounding</b>	<b>Development of Theoretical Model and Analytical Foundation</b>	<b>Preparation of Research Methodology and Instrument</b>	<b>Empirical Data Collection</b>	<b>Data Analysis and Interpretation</b>	<b>Conclusions and Recommendations</b>
Analyse change management concepts, organizational development theories, and the challenges of young managers' leadership.	Develop a theoretical framework of young managers' change management strategies across stages of organizational development.	Design a qualitative multiple-case study, develop a semi-structured interview guide based on the theoretical framework, and define participant selection criteria.	Conduct semi-structured interviews with selected young managers. Where relevant, use secondary data to support contextual understanding.	Analyse empirical data using thematic analysis and analytical coding. Identify patterns of change management strategies across organizational development stages.	Summarize research findings and formulate practical recommendations for organizations and young managers.
Methods: • Literature review	Methods: • Theoretical modelling • Literature review	Methods: • Literature review • Instrument construction	Methods: • Semi-structured interviews • Secondary data (contextual)	Methods: • Thematic analysis • Analytical coding	Methods: • Results synthesis • Interpretative analysis

Fig. 6. The research design and logical framework (created by author)

The research design is exploratory and interpretive in its nature because it does not aim for statistical generalization but is oriented towards a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. The empirical research focuses on young managers' experiences, decision-making practices, and actions in the context of organizational change, in order to understand how change management strategies vary depending on the level of organizational development.

**Empirical Research Aim** is to explore how young managers apply organizational change management strategies in practice and how these strategies are shaped by the organizational development stage, based on the analysis of semi-structured interview data.

**Objectives of empirical research:**

1. To identify the organizational development stages of the analysed organizations based on the Adizes organizational life cycle model and qualitative interview data.
2. To analyse the change management strategies applied by young managers, focusing on change initiation, implementation, employee involvement, monitoring, and support.
3. To examine how the organizational development stage shapes the application of change management strategies and the decision-making space of young managers in different organizational contexts.
4. To identify fragmented elements of change management models reflected in young managers' practices and to assess their role as theoretical reference points rather than prescriptive frameworks.
5. To explore the challenges faced by young managers in managing organizational change and the lessons learned through practical experience.

**The Research Method and Data Collection**

A qualitative research approach was chosen to conduct the empirical study. It included a multiple-case study and a semi-structured interview (interview guide).

The qualitative research method was chosen to gain a deeper understanding about the phenomenon, to explore the experiences and decision-making processes of participants of the interview in a concrete organizational context. According to Gaižauskaitė and Valavičienė (2016), qualitative methods are suitable for analysing complicated social and organizational processes, which cannot be adequately investigated by using standardized quantitative instruments. This approach provides better conditions to focus on the analysis of experiences, meanings and contexts rather than a statistical summary of results.

The semi-structured interview with young managers was chosen as the main method of data collection because it allows to directly explore the experiences of interviewees. This type of interview is suitable for managerial and organizational studies because it can ensure that data could be comparable across different cases while at the same time maintaining the sensitivity to specific organizational conditions. It also allows respondents to freely reflect on their experiences while also combining the thematic structure with flexibility (Gaižauskaitė & Valavičienė, 2016).

All respondents were asked the same questions according to a prepared interview plan with structured questions, which ensured the comparability of the research data across different cases. At the same time there was space left to deeper investigate the individual experiences of respondents while considering the specific situation of an organization as the questions of semi-structured interview were open with unlimited answers from respondents. If necessary, additional questions were asked during an interview to help the respondents to understand the question better or reveal more information.

## The Research Sample

Respondents were selected by using the principle of purposive sampling. The selection criteria were known before the start of the empirical study and included the respondents' age and management experience in the current organization. Additional information about the respondents' general professional and management experience was collected during the interviews. Such selection allowed to focus on the perspective of young managers and ensured that study participants would have real experience in implementing organizational changes. All study participants were under 40 years of age and had no more than 10 years of leadership experience.

As state Gaižauskaitė and Valavičienė (2016), in qualitative research, researchers do not aim for representative samples or employ random selection because instead, they use purposive sampling, where participants are strategically selected because of their specific characteristics, experiences, or knowledge that could directly illuminate the research phenomenon. The goal is to select the cases that are rich in information and enable researchers to gain deep understanding of particular social realities.

The sample size is not critically important in qualitative research because for researchers it is important to focus on collecting information-rich data (Rupšienė, 2007). In qualitative studies, the validity and meaningfulness of findings depend more on the depth and richness of information obtained from selected cases and on the researcher's analytical abilities than on the size of the sample. Data collection is continued until information begins to repeat and no new aspects relevant to the research question emerge which indicates data saturation (Gaižauskaitė and Valavičienė, 2016).

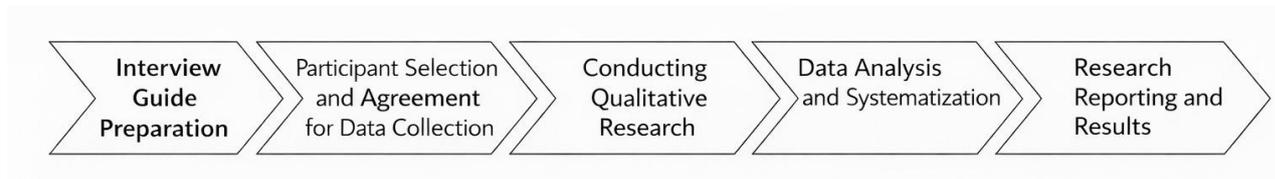
The study involved seven respondents - young managers representing seven different organizations. Each respondent holds a strategic managerial position within an organization with enough knowledge about the organization, decision making power, has subordinates and represents a separate organizational case. All organizations under the empirical study belong to the same international group of companies but operate as independent organizational units with separate management practices and decision-making contexts. Systematized information about the study participants selected through purposive sampling is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Overview of respondents positions, age and leadership experience

Respondent	Current position within the company	Age	Total leadership experience in years
A	Performance Director	34	~2
B	Business Unit Manager	35	5.5
C	Country Manager/CEO	34	7
D	Country Manager/CEO	35	9
E	Country Manager/CEO	35	~3
F	Commercial Director	37	~8
G	CFO	32	~6.5

## The Research Procedure

In preparation for the empirical study, previous scientific research and theoretical aspects were analysed, and a theoretical research model was developed. Figure 7 presents the stages of the empirical research process, which are described in more detail in the following sections.



**Fig. 7.** The process of the empirical study (created by author)

### The Preparation of Interview Guide

The questions of semi-structured interview guide were developed based on change management models and model of organizational life cycle, which was analysed in the theoretical part of the research. The structure of the questionnaire was designed to cover the organizational context, daily management practises and the entire process of organizational change. The questions involved decision making practises, employee involvement, monitoring of the change, evaluation of results, the challenges faced by a manager and lessons that were learned. The interview questionnaire is presented in the Appendix 1 of this document.

### The Selection of Participants and Agreement for Data Collection

The purposeful selection of study participants was carried out - after contacting the HR department of the corporate group (to which all respondents belong), a list of potential respondents whose age, position and experience corresponded to the objectives of the study was obtained. The respondents were then contacted regarding their agreement to participate in the study and regarding the date and time of the study, which was convenient for the participants. The respondents who agreed to participate in the study were contacted and online meetings were scheduled via e-mail.

### The Conducting of Qualitative Research

The qualitative empirical study was conducted in November of 2025, using a semi-structured interview method. The study included seven respondents - young managers holding senior managerial positions in international organization operating in the agricultural sector and its subsidiaries across different countries. The interviews were conducted remotely using the MS Teams platform. All conversations were in English and they were recorded with the consent of participants. The duration of the interviews ranged from approximately 25 to 60 minutes, with an average length of about 45 minutes per interview. The audio recordings were transcribed using automated transcription tools and subsequently reviewed and manually corrected by the researcher to ensure the accuracy of the transcripts and the reliability of the collected data.

### The Analysis of Data and Systematization

The collected interview data were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis principles. During the analysis, key themes and recurring patterns related to organizational change management strategies were identified.

The insights obtained during the analysis were interpreted by linking them to the change management models and organizational life cycle model discussed in the theoretical part of the work. The data collected during the study were systematically coded by applying codes developed based on the analysis of scientific literature and the prepared conceptual research model. These codes were subsequently grouped into subcategories and higher-level categories, forming a structured coding framework for data analysis. The full coding scheme, including categories and subcategories, is provided in Appendix 2.

The level of development of organizations in this study was not determined in advance. It was identified based on the empirical data which was collected during semi-structured interviews. Adizes's organizational life cycle model was chosen to interpret the stages of organizational development, which is used in this study as an analytical and interpretive framework, rather than as a strict classification or measurement instrument.

The stages of organizational development were determined taking into account the decision-making practices, the formality of the organizational structure, the definition of processes, the relationship between control and flexibility, and the role of the manager in the organization. This approach allows for the interpretation of organizational development based on real managerial practices and managers' experiences.

## **The Research Reporting and Results**

The fourth chapter of this document presents the empirical study in detail, analyses the research results, discusses the main research insights, and provides final conclusions and recommendations.

## **Secondary Data and Researcher Position**

In addition to primary empirical data, the research used secondary contextual knowledge about the organizations under study, as the researcher is involved in an employment relationship with the group of companies. The researcher's prior knowledge was used only to understand the general organizational context and interpret the research results. The main empirical conclusions and analysis are based exclusively on the data obtained during the interviews, with a clear separation of the roles of the researcher and the respondents.

## **The Research Ethics**

The study was conducted in accordance with ethical principles described by Gaižauskaitė and Valavičienė (2016). All respondents participated in the study voluntarily. They were informed about the purpose of the study and the use of the data. The anonymity and confidentiality of the respondents were ensured, and the collected data was used for academic purposes only.

## **The Research Limitations**

The limitations of the study are related to the small sample size and the nature of the qualitative study, based on the subjective experiences of the respondents. The identification of the stages of organizational development was carried out interpretatively, based on interview data, therefore, a limited range of different stages of organizational development is possible in the study sample. In addition, the organizations analysed in the study belong to the same group of companies and operate in the same agricultural sector and for that the study results reflect the specifics of the specific

organizational and sectoral context. For these reasons, the study results are not intended for statistical generalization but allow for a deeper understanding of the organizational change management strategies applied by young managers in specific organizational contexts.

## 4. The Research Results and Discussion

In this chapter, the results of the qualitative research are analysed and presented. The results are retrieved from the semi-structured interviews that were conducted with young managers. First, an overview of respondents and their organizations is provided, which provides a basic understanding for the further analysis of the research results. After that, the strategies of change management of young managers are presented in consideration with organizational development stages, which are used as the contextual framework for change. Finally, the challenges and learned lessons of young managers are presented, which allows for exploring their experiences during organizational change management and provides a basis for further discussion of the results.

### 4.1. The Overview of the Research Participants and Organizations

Seven young managers have accepted to participate in this research. All of them hold senior management positions in their companies. The age of respondents ranges from 32 to 37 years old, and their total leadership experience varies approximately from 2 to 9 years. All respondents have direct subordinates, whose number varies from 4 to 26, which allows them to be actively involved into organizational processes and change management. The table with characteristics of respondents and the organizations that they represent is provided below.

**Table 2.** Overview of the respondents and their organizations

Respondent	Sector of the Organization	Size of the Organization	Number of Direct Subordinates
A	Agriculture	140, medium	10
B	Agriculture	22, small	6
C	Agriculture	30, medium	4
D	Agriculture	17, small	5
E	Agriculture	40, medium	4
F	Agriculture	23, small	12
G	Agriculture	1000, large	26

The size of the organizations that are represented by respondents varies from small companies with fewer than 25 employees to a large one that employs about 1000 people. The indications of whether an organization is considered small, medium, or large were provided by the respondents based on their local organizational contexts. Organizations represented by the respondents operate in different countries. However, specific country names are not disclosed in this research to ensure the confidentiality of the respondents. The respondents occupy different functional positions, such as Country Managers / CEO's, Commercial Director, Business Unit Manager, Performance Director, and Chief Financial Officer. This allows to reveal the experiences of young managers in managing organizational change from different managerial perspectives.

All organizations that respondents represent operate in the agricultural sector. All respondents indicate that activities of their organizations include solutions for plant nutrition, fertilizers, specialized products for agriculture, and, in most cases, solutions for animal nutrition too. As a result, the operational sector of all organizations is the same, which reduces the sector-specific differences

as a significant variable and focuses on the analysis of organizational context and experiences of the managers.

All organizations belong to the international group of companies, which operates on several continents and covers a wide range of agricultural businesses. This group of companies has a main centralized strategic direction, shared values, and long-term international history. At the same time, each national or regional organization operates as a separate business unit with its own structure, management model, and decision-making processes that are adapted to the specifics of local markets. Such a structure creates a situation where all organizations operate under the framework of the international group, but at the same time face individual organizational challenges. The information presented in this paragraph is based on the researcher's professional knowledge of the international group and is provided to establish a contextual background for the empirical analysis.

Overall, the respondents of the research represent young managers who work in organizations that operate in the same agricultural sector and international corporate environment, but at the same time, they are different in terms of organizational size, internal structure, managerial roles, and local operating contexts. This combination of shared and distinct features provides a suitable empirical foundation for analysing what change management strategies young managers apply under different organizational conditions and prepares the basis for the further analysis presented in the following sections.

#### **4.2. The Organizational Development Stages of the Analysed Organizations According to the Adizes Model**

This subsection outlines how the development stages of the organizations participating in the research were identified and explains their use as a contextual factor for the further analysis of change management strategies applied by young managers. The development stages of organizations are identified based on the Adizes organizational life cycle model, the choice and logic of which are discussed in the theoretical part of the work (section 2.3). In this research, the development stages of organizations are not analysed as an independent object of research but are used as an analytical context that helps to understand under which structural and managerial conditions young managers initiate and implement organizational changes.

The development stages of the organizations are assigned based on a qualitative analysis of semi-structured interview data, applying the analytical logic of categories, subcategories, and empirical excerpts. This approach allows for a systematic examination of how respondents describe their organizational environments and managerial practices, without treating organizational development stages as an independent object of measurement. Instead, the stages are derived inductively from the interview material and are used as a contextual framework for further analysis. The analysis focuses on several key characteristics of the organizational context that are repeatedly emphasized by the respondents. These include the size and structural complexity of the organization, the degree of formalization of processes and procedures, the level and speed of decision-making, the distribution of managerial responsibilities, and the perceived need for growth and organizational change. Particular attention is paid to how these characteristics interact in practice, as respondents often describe them not as isolated factors but as interrelated conditions that shape managerial action. A more detailed information on these contextual categories and more empirical data is provided in Appendix 3 and a summary of the positioning of organizations according to Adizes' model is provided in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Summary of the organizational development stages according to the Adizes model

The Respondent	The Stage of Development (Adizes)	The Empirical Justification (Summary)	Main Excerpts
A	Prime	The organization has been operating for a long time, has a classical functional structure, and a clearly defined model of governance. Decision-making is based on different levels, and the autonomy of the manager is defined by clear structural rules. Pronounced top-down management is not typical of the early stages of organizational development. A high level of formality and balanced centralization ensures stability and continuation of processes.	<p>“Around 130–140 people, with classic departments like finance, industry, operations.”</p> <p>“All of it is organized through governance and formal processes.”</p> <p>“Change was necessary to adapt to new conditions.”</p>
B	Go-Go	The organization is young, small, and with little formalization. The decisions are taken fast and very often collectively. The manager has a large degree of decision-making, and procedures are in the stage of formation. Flexibility and adaptation are the main principles of operations.	<p>“It’s still a young organization.”</p> <p>“We don’t really have strict procedures yet.”</p> <p>“Usually decisions are taken together with the team.”</p>
C	In transition from Go-Go to Adolescence	The organization is not in a start-up stage anymore. Go-Go logic is suited to high speed and “opportunity grabbing”, but at the same time, the beginnings of formalization are already visible. Decision-making remains fast and concentrated, but the need for clearer processes and the division of responsibilities is clearly expressed. The tension between flexibility and structure is noticed.	<p>“We are no longer in a startup phase.”</p> <p>“We are starting to introduce more rules and processes.”</p> <p>“Most decisions are still taken by a few people.”</p>
D	Late Adolescence	The organization has a high level of formalization and very clear vertical management. The boundaries of roles, KPI, and clear procedures ensure stable and effective operations. Even though some processes relate to the Prime stage, the organization lacks mature integration and horizontal management practices, which is why it more closely corresponds to the late Adolescence stage.	<p>“We have strict discipline and precise descriptions for each position.”</p> <p>“Decision making is centralized, but efficient.”</p> <p>“We needed to formalize processes because of growth.”</p>
E	Adolescence	The organization recently faced a period of restructuring and shifts from the very centralized management to a more shared decision-making model. There is an active search for a balance between control and delegation; the processes that were informal previously are now being formalised.	<p>“We had troublesome years in the past, now we are restructuring.”</p> <p>“We moved from very centralized decisions to a more shared model.”</p> <p>“I had to learn where my decision boundaries are.”</p>

<b>F</b>	Late Adolescence / early Prime	The organization has already passed the initial growth stage and operates with a balance between formal processes and flexibility. Decisions are differentiated according to their level of importance and management level, while sales activities remain fast, adaptive, and often improvisational. At the same time, a clearer operational rhythm is emerging through regular meetings and more clearly defined roles.	<p>“Development requires constant adjustment.”</p> <p>“There are some procedures, but flexibility is still very important.”</p> <p>“Operational decisions are fast, strategic ones take longer.”</p>
<b>G</b>	Late Prime/ early Fall	Large and mature organization with long-term history and a clear structure of governance. The strategic decisions are centralized at the highest level. The role of the manager is focused on the implementation of strategy and stability. The organization is characterized by a mature scale and a high degree of formalization. Procedures and managerial “rituals” increasingly shape organizational life and signal growing caution and process orientation.	<p>“The company is on the market since 1959.”</p> <p>“The governance model is clearly centralized.”</p> <p>“In a transformation plan since two years.”</p>

### The Early-Stage Organizations

The organizations of an early stage include the organization of respondent B, which is identified as operating in the Go-Go stage. Based on the interview data, this organization is defined by its small size, simple structure, and low level of formalization. Decision-making is described as fast and often collective, and the decision-making autonomy of the manager is high. The respondent describes his/hers organizational context is defined by flexibility, quick response, and practical problem-solving, while formal procedures and clearly defined roles are still being developed.

This stage is also characterized by the fact that the organization's operations are based on personal involvement, informal agreements, and constant adaptation. This creates a context in which changes are initiated quickly but often without prior structural support, which later becomes a significant factor in analysing the change management strategies used by young managers.

### The Adolescence-Stage Organizations

This group includes organizations represented by respondents C and E, which operate in the transition stage between Go-Go and Adolescence and in the Adolescence stage. The context of these organizations is characterized by increasing organizational complexity and a clearly expressed need for structuring. The statements of the respondents reveal that the organizations are no longer considered to be in the “early growth” stage but have not yet reached stable maturity.

In the analysed cases, there is a clear tension between flexibility and control, which is identified from the expects of the interviews. On one hand, organizations fell the need and strive to maintain rapid decision-making and adaptation to circumstances, on the other hand, they clearly see that the need for more formalized processes, better structure, more concise role development and allocation of responsibilities is increasing. Respondents mention restructuring processes, the introduction of more collegial decision-making and a conscious transition from a highly centralized management model. This context is particularly important for further analysis, because it is at this stage of development that change management clearly becomes a continuous and structurally more complex process.

## The Mature Organizations

The mature organizations group includes organizations represented by respondents A, D, F and G, which are identified as operating in the Prime stage or in its early phase. These organizations are characterized by a high level of formalization, clearly defined management structures and established decision-making mechanisms. Respondents' statements show that decision-making in such organizations is differentiated by organizational levels: strategic decisions are usually made centrally, and operational decisions are delegated.

This organizational context is characterized by stability, continuity of processes and clear rules that help ensure the consistency of the organization's activities. In these organizations, young managers more often operate within the framework of defined systems, and their change management strategies are oriented towards structural implementation, coordination and long-term support, rather than spontaneous initiation.

In summary, the organizations included in the research represent different levels of organizational maturity - from early growth to mature and stably operating organizations. Since all organizations operate in the same sector and in the context of an international corporate group, the stages of organizational development in this research serve as an important analytical background, allowing for further systematic analysis of the differences in change management strategies applied by young managers depending on the organizational context.

### 4.3. The Identification of Change Management Models Applied by Young Managers and Relation with Organizational Development

The empirical analysis reveals that change management models are not applied as complete or consistent frameworks in any of the analysed cases. Instead, elements of different change management models are discovered fragmentarily through respondents' descriptions of change-related practices, decision-making logic, and managerial actions as shown in Table 4. More details regarding the identification of the models are provided in the Appendix 4. These model elements became visible indirectly, through strategic choices and behaviours described by young managers rather than through explicit references to formal model application.

**Table 4:** Fragmented change management model elements identified across respondents

Category	Subcategory	Excepts	Respondent
Change management models	Kübler-Ross change curve; ADKAR	"People are afraid of change." "Everyone wants to be safe." "We have the Great Place to Work framework and survey."	Respondent A
	Agile; Satir; William Bridges'	"So that was a big, big experiment." "We were really building things as we went along." "We didn't have everything prepared in advance, it was more about testing."	Respondent B

		“You learn by doing, not by waiting for perfect conditions.”	
	Kotter’s; ADKAR; Satir	“We need to explain why we are doing it.” “So with this initiation of change, we give it the experiment, we give it a time.” “Feedback from people helps you to adjust.” “It’s a bit of experimenting.”	Respondent C
	Lewin’s; Kotter’s	“And when they understand the reason why we do it, we said to them how we will do it.” “We monitor both the quantitative progress.” “A lot of procedures were implemented.”	Respondent D
	Agile; Satir	“It’s really case by case.” “So it’s about flexible situation.”	Respondent E
	ADKAR; Lewin’s; Kübler-Ross	“Training was key, otherwise people wouldn’t change their habits.” “This was like follow up for this training.” “Sometimes you don’t need numbers, you just see it.” “Everyone wants to be safe to save their role.”	Respondent F
	Lewin’s; Agile; Kübler-Ross	“Which KPI we are going to follow.” “We tried something fast and then adjusted along the way.” “You feel the resistance even if people don’t say it directly.”	Respondent G

Respondent A most strongly reflects elements of the Kübler-Ross change curve and the ADKAR model, with a clear emphasis on employees’ emotional reactions, fear, and the need for psychological safety, complemented by the use of feedback mechanisms to assess employee sentiment. Respondent B demonstrates fragments of Agile, Satir, and William Bridges’ transition models, characterised by experimentation, learning by doing, and managing change as an ongoing transition rather than a predefined process. Respondent C combines elements of Kotter’s model, ADKAR, and the Satir change model, highlighting the importance of explaining the purpose of change, adjusting actions based on feedback, and using experimentation during initiation phases.

Respondent D mainly reflects elements of Lewin’s and Kotter’s models, with a stronger focus on formal procedures, structured communication, and monitoring of change outcomes. Respondent E

shows a limited but clear alignment with Agile and Satir-related logic, emphasising flexibility and situational adaptation rather than formalised processes. Respondent F demonstrates a combination of ADKAR, Lewin's model, and the Kübler-Ross change curve, where training, reinforcement, behavioural observation, and emotional safety play a central role in supporting change. Finally, Respondent G most clearly reflects Lewin's model and Agile principles, combining indicator-based monitoring and procedural stabilisation with iterative adjustment and sensitivity to employee resistance.

The distribution of fragmented change management model elements also reflects differences related to the organizational development stage. In the Go-Go stage organization represented by Respondent B, change management practices are predominantly associated with Agile, Satir, and William Bridges' transition model fragments. This stage is characterised by high uncertainty, limited formalisation, and rapid decision-making, which is reflected in experimentation, learning by doing, and continuous adaptation during change processes.

In organizations operating in the Adolescence stage, represented by Respondents C and E, change management practices combine elements of Kotter's model, ADKAR, and the Satir change model. At this stage, the need to introduce greater structure and clarity becomes more evident, while flexibility and experimentation remain important. As a result, young managers in these organizations demonstrate a mixed pattern, where vision-setting and communication are combined with adaptive and situational approaches to change initiation and implementation.

In more mature organizations operating in the Prime or early maturity stages, represented by Respondents A, D, F, and G, fragmented elements of Lewin's model, ADKAR, and the Kübler-Ross change curve are more pronounced. These organizations are characterised by higher levels of formalisation, clearer decision-making structures, and established processes. Accordingly, change management practices in these contexts place greater emphasis on formal procedures, indicator-based monitoring, training, reinforcement, and the management of employee resistance and emotional responses.

Overall, the results indicate that young managers apply change management models selectively and fragmentarily. The manifestation of change management model fragments is not random but systematically related to the stage of organizational development. The observed model-related patterns are closely linked to organizational context and managerial decision-making space rather than to conscious adherence to specific theoretical frameworks.

#### **4.4. The Change Management Strategies Applied by Young Managers at Different Stages of Organizational Development**

This chapter examines the change management strategies used by young managers, based on semi-structured interview data and qualitative analysis using categories, subcategories and excerpts. The analysis focuses on how young managers initiate, plan, implement, monitor, and maintain organizational change, taking into account the stage of organizational development as a contextual factor. Unlike the previous subsection, where the stages of organizational development are used to define the context, this section focuses on specific leadership strategies and their expression at different stages of organizational maturity.

#### 4.4.1. The Change Initiation and Planning Strategies

This subsection focuses on the strategies used by young managers to initiate and plan change. The analysis is based on data from the *Change initiation and planning* category, which is summarized in Table 4. This category includes three subcategories: vision and direction setting, structured preparation for change, and experimental initiation. They reflect different ways in which young managers initiate change in an organization and how structured they are in planning its implementation. The choice of these strategies is closely related not only to the stage of development of the organization, but also to the real decision-making opportunities of young managers at the initiation stage.

**Table 5.** Change initiation and planning

Category	Subcategory	Excerpts
Change initiation and planning	Vision and direction setting	<p>“First of all, I think for me we need a vision. Without a vision, people don’t understand why they should change.” (Respondent G)</p> <p>“We have a vision of what we expect from it and then we try to explain why this direction is important.” (Respondent C)</p> <p>“There was a quite huge explanation why it’s happening and what we want to achieve with that change.” (Respondent F)</p> <p>“We made a strategy and agreed on the goals, so everyone understands where we are going.” (Respondent E)</p> <p>“It’s important that people clearly understand the direction, otherwise they resist.” (Respondent A)</p>
	Structured preparation for change	<p>“We analyse what are the key things that this vision will be successful and what could go wrong.” (Respondent C)</p> <p>“We try to cover all the aspects before implementing, not to be surprised later.” (Respondent D)</p> <p>“We prepared different scenarios, because you never know which one will work.” (Respondent A)</p> <p>“Before starting, we spent quite a lot of time preparing and thinking through the steps.” (Respondent E)</p> <p>“It’s not just doing something, it’s really planning how it will affect the organization.” (Respondent F)</p>
	Experimental initiation	<p>“That was a big, big experiment. We didn’t know if it would work.” (Respondent B)</p> <p>“We tried something fast and then adjusted along the way.” (Respondent G)</p> <p>“Sometimes you just need to try and see how people react.” (Respondent C)</p> <p>“We didn’t have everything prepared in advance, it was more about testing.” (Respondent B)</p>

#### Vision and Direction Setting

Respondents A, C, E, F, and G associate the initiation of change primarily with the formation of a clear direction and vision. They emphasize that the start of change must be based on a clear explanation of why change is necessary and what results are sought. In this case, vision becomes the main tool for initiating change and reducing employee resistance.

For example, one respondent emphasises that without a clear direction, employees do not understand the meaning of change: *“First of all, I think for me we need a vision. Without a vision, people don't understand why they should change.”* (Respondent G). Other respondents also emphasize the

importance of direction, pointing out that change must be linked to clearly defined goals and an overall strategic direction.

This strategy indicates that young managers perceive the initiation of change as a meaningful and communicative process. Even in cases where their formal decision-making power is limited, they often have sufficient scope to shape the narrative and direction of change, thereby indirectly consolidating their role in the initiation stage.

### **Structured Preparation for Change**

Another strategy for initiating change that emerged is based on structured preparation and in advance planning. Respondents A, C, D, E and F mention this approach the most often. They emphasize the importance of analysis, scenario development and assessment of potential risks before initiating change. Initiating change is perceived as a sequential process that requires preparation, not spontaneous decisions.

Respondents' statements show that planning helps not only to better prepare for change, but also to legitimize it within the organization. One respondent notes: *"We analyse what are the key things that this vision will be successful and what could go wrong."* (Respondent C). Other respondents also emphasize that in advance preparation allows to reduce surprises and ensure a smoother start of change.

This strategy reflects that structured planning becomes a means to manage increasing organizational complexity, especially in organizations in the growth and adolescence stages. In addition, a detailed plan often helps young managers gain higher-level approval for initiating changes in cases where decision-making rights are limited.

### **Experimental Initiation**

The third strategy for initiating change – the experimental, emergent approach – is most clearly revealed in the statements of respondents B and C. In this case, changes are initiated as tests, without detailed prior planning, based on the principle of *"trying and seeing what works"*. The course of changes is adjusted already during the process, taking into account practical results and employee reactions.

One respondent openly describes such initiation as an experiment: *"That was a big, big experiment. We didn't know if it would work."* (Respondent B). Other statements show that in such situations speed and flexibility are more important than a detailed plan.

This strategy shows the context of organizations at an early stage of development, where formal structures are not yet established, and decision-making is fast and less constrained by procedures. However, this method of initiation requires constant involvement of the manager and increases uncertainty, especially in the long term.

In summary, the change initiation and planning strategies applied by young managers differ depending on the stage of organizational development and the decision-making capabilities related to it. In organizations at the early stage of development, experimental, emergent change initiation is more often applied, based on quick action and adaptation. In organizations at the Adolescence stages, the need for structured preparation and planning becomes more evident, while in more mature

organizations, change initiation is more often associated with the formation of direction and vision. These differences reveal that young managers' strategies at the initiation stage are formed not only due to individual choices, but also due to their real position in the organizational decision-making system.

#### 4.4.2. The Change Implementation Strategies

This subsection analyses the change implementation strategies used by young managers. The analysis is based on the data of the *Change implementation* category, which are summarized in Table 5. This category includes three subcategories - phased and project-based implementation, formalized implementation through structures, and soft implementation through people. They reveal how young managers move change decisions from the planning stage to practical action and what tools they use to ensure the implementation of changes in the organization.

**Table 6.** Change implementation

Category	Subcategory	Excerpts
Change implementation	Phased and project-based implementation	<p>“Each project should have a clear leader and clear steps.” (Respondent E)</p> <p>“We did it step by step, not everything at once.” (Respondent F)</p> <p>“It was implemented in phases, so people could adapt.” (Respondent B)</p> <p>“We treated it as a project with milestones.” (Respondent E)</p> <p>“It’s a combination of strictness and experimentation.” (Respondent C)</p>
	Formalized implementation through structures	<p>“Every time we have a change, we have a procedure.” (Respondent G)</p> <p>“We implemented procedures to make sure it stays.” (Respondent D)</p> <p>“It was decided centrally and then deployed downwards.” (Respondent D)</p> <p>“Some decisions had to be centralized to make it work.” (Respondent B)</p> <p>“At some point, we needed clearer rules to move forward.” (Respondent C)</p>
	Soft implementation through people	<p>“We started to have monthly trainings for them.” (Respondent F)</p> <p>“We had a social process to follow with employee representatives.” (Respondent A)</p> <p>“Training was key, otherwise people wouldn’t change their habits.” (Respondent F)</p> <p>“People need time and support to really change the way they work.” (Respondent C)</p>

#### Phased and Project-based Implementation

As mentioned in statements of respondents E, F, B and C, some young managers implement changes in stages. The implementation of changes is perceived as a sequential process, divided into clear stages, with defined responsibilities and assessment of intermediate results. This approach helps to reduce organizational shock and gives employees time to adapt to the changes.

Respondents emphasize that phased implementation helps to maintain control and clarity. For example, one of them indicates: *“We did it step by step, not everything at once.”* (Respondent F), while another describes the changes as a project with clear stages and leadership: *“Each project should have a clear leader and clear steps.”* (Respondent E).

Overall, it shows that young managers seek to structure the implementation process even in cases where flexibility prevails in the organization. Project thinking becomes a means to combine control and adaptation, especially in growing and more mature organizations.

### **Formalized Implementation Through Structures**

Another implementation strategy identified in the data is based on formalization of structures, procedures, and centralized decision-making. This approach is most common in more mature organizations and is particularly noticeable from the interviews of respondents D and G. Changes are implemented through formal procedures, clear rules, and vertical transfer of decisions within the organization.

According to respondents, formal structures help ensure that changes do not “*dissipate*” and are maintained in the long term. One respondent notes: “*Every time we have a change, we have a procedure.*” (Respondent G), while another emphasises that decisions were made centrally and then deployed in the organization: “*It was decided centrally and then deployed downwards.*” (Respondent D).

In more mature organizations, this strategy provides insights on how young managers operate within clearly defined structures. In this case, their role in implementing change is more focused on coordination, assurance, and adherence to procedures, rather than on forming the decision itself.

### **Soft Implementation Through People**

From the answers of respondents F, A and C the most evident strategy for implementing change is based on the so-called “soft” instruments - employee training, social processes and ongoing support. Changes are implemented not only through rules or procedures, but also through changing people’s behaviour and habits.

Respondents emphasise the importance of training and support in order to ensure that changes are actually accepted. One respondent states: “*Training was key, otherwise people wouldn’t change their habits.*” (Respondent F), while another emphasises the importance of the social process: “*We had a social process to follow with employee representatives.*” (Respondent A).

This strategy highlights that young managers perceive change implementation as a social process, in which not only the formal implementation of decisions is important, but also the involvement and support of employees. This approach is often combined with other implementation strategies and is particularly important in organisations where changes affect the daily work habits of employees.

Overall, the analysis indicates that the change implementation strategies applied by young managers differ depending on the stage of organizational development. In early and growth stage organizations, phased and project-based change implementation is more often used, allowing them to maintain flexibility and adapt to changing conditions. In more mature organizations, formalized implementation through structures and procedures dominates, and “soft” measures usually act as a complementary, but not the main mechanism. These differences reveal that change implementation strategies are formed as a compromise between organizational maturity, structural limitations and young managers’ real operational capabilities.

### 4.4.3. The Employee Involvement and Communication Strategies

The employee involvement and communication strategies applied by young managers in the process of organizational change are explored in this subsection. The analysis is based on the data of the *Employee involvement and communication* category presented in Table 6. This category includes three subcategories such as direct and individual communication, formalized and cascading communication and empowerment through roles and channels. They reveal how young managers communicate changes, involve employees and distribute responsibilities in different organizational contexts.

**Table 7.** Employee involvement and communication

Category	Subcategory	Excerpts
Employee involvement and communication	Direct and individual communication	<p>“We were speaking on one-on-ones.” (Respondent F)</p> <p>“You need to talk directly to people, otherwise you don’t know what they really think.” (Respondent A)</p> <p>“Sometimes informal discussions work better than official meetings.” (Respondent B)</p> <p>“We try to talk directly with people to understand their concerns.” (Respondent C)</p> <p>“You should give people space and talk to them individually.” (Respondent E)</p>
	Formalized and cascading communication	<p>“First of all, we start with a kickoff meeting.” (Respondent G)</p> <p>“We shared it vertically with the management and then with the teams.” (Respondent D)</p> <p>“We had regular meetings to communicate the change.” (Respondent F)</p> <p>“We have regular meetings where changes are explained step by step.” (Respondent C)</p> <p>“We explain changes through regular meetings and structured communication.” (Respondent E)</p> <p>“If people don’t hear the same message several times and from different levels, the change simply doesn’t happen.” (Respondent G)</p>
	Empowerment through roles and channels	<p>“They were somehow our ambassadors for the change.” (Respondent A)</p> <p>“Our main platform for communication is a Teams chat.” (Respondent B)</p> <p>“It’s important to motivate people and show them why it matters.” (Respondent F)</p> <p>“We give people responsibility so they feel part of the change.” (Respondent C)</p> <p>“When people feel ownership, they are more engaged.” (Respondent E)</p>

#### Direct and Individual Communication

One of the most noted strategies for engaging employees is direct, individual communication, which most often takes the form of personal conversations, informal meetings and daily communication. This strategy is frequently mentioned in the responses of respondents F, A, B, C and E. In their interviews they emphasise that individual conversations allow for a better understanding of employees’ moods, fears and reasons for resistance, which are not always evident in formal meetings.

For example, one respondent states: “*You need to talk directly to people, otherwise you don’t know what they really think.*” (Respondent A), while another talks about the importance of individual conversations: “*We were speaking on one-on-ones.*” (Respondent F). This shows the efforts of young

managers to compensate for the lack of formal communication channels or limited trust in them, especially in organizations where structures are not yet fully established.

### **Formalized and Cascading Communication**

One more employee engagement strategy identified in the data is based on formalized and hierarchically cascaded communication. This approach is most commonly used in organizations represented by respondents G, D, F, C, and E. Changes are communicated through formal meetings, management chains, and regular briefing sessions to ensure a consistent message throughout the organization.

Respondents' statements show that structured communication helps to avoid information distortion and different interpretations. One respondent notes: *"If people don't hear the same message several times and from different levels, the change simply doesn't happen."* (Respondent G). This strategy illustrates young managers' efforts to promote employee engagement. This strategy reflects the context of more mature organizations, where communication is perceived as a managed process that requires coordination between different organizational levels.

### **Empowerment Through Roles and Channels**

The third employee engagement strategy is based on empowering employees through formal and informal roles and communication channels which respondents A, B, F, C, and E mention very often. Respondents talk about creating "ambassador" roles, delegating responsibility to employees, and using digital communication channels to maintain a constant dialogue.

For example, one respondent states: *"They were somehow our ambassadors for the change."* (Respondent A), while another emphasizes the importance of digital channels: *"Our main platform for communication is a Teams chat."* (Respondent B). This strategy illustrates young managers' efforts to promote employee engagement through participation and responsibility, while also reducing the need for formal authority.

Overall, employee engagement and communication strategies differ depending on the organizational development stage. In organizations at an early stage of development, direct and individual communication dominates, allowing for quick response to employee moods. In the Adolescence stage, the need for empowerment through roles and channels becomes more evident in order to distribute responsibility and maintain engagement in the face of increasing complexity. In more mature organizations, formalized and cascading communication becomes more important to ensure consistent understanding of change throughout the organization. These differences reveal that young leaders use employee engagement as a strategic tool to adapt to their organizational context and compensate for structural constraints.

#### **4.4.4. The Change Monitoring Strategies**

The change monitoring strategies applied by young managers in the process of organizational change are analysed in this subsection. The analysis is based on the data of the *Change monitoring* category presented in Table 7. This category consists of three subcategories such as indicator-based monitoring, feedback-based monitoring and informal evaluation. They show how young managers

evaluate the progress and success of changes, what criteria they use and how they combine formal and informal evaluation methods.

**Table 8.** Change monitoring

Category	Subcategory	Excerpts
Change monitoring	Indicator-based monitoring	<p>“Which KPI we are going to follow.” (Respondent G)</p> <p>“We monitor both the quantitative progress and the measurement of time.” (Respondent D)</p> <p>“The main point was the final sales.” (Respondent F)</p> <p>“We used profitability as a bit of a litmus test.” (Respondent B)</p> <p>“If it was expected to have a certain impact, we want to know.” (Respondent E)</p> <p>“We also look at numbers to see if the change really worked.” (Respondent C)</p>
	Feedback-based monitoring	<p>“We have the Great Place to Work framework and survey.” (Respondent A)</p> <p>“We regularly ask people how they feel about the change.” (Respondent F)</p> <p>“Feedback from the team was very important.” (Respondent E)</p> <p>“We listen to what people say during and after the change.” (Respondent C)</p>
	Informal evaluation	<p>“We saw it in the mindset of the people.” (Respondent C)</p> <p>“You can feel if something works or not.” (Respondent B)</p> <p>“Sometimes you don’t need numbers, you just see it.” (Respondent F)</p> <p>“You see it in daily behaviour.” (Respondent G)</p>

### Indicator-based Monitoring

One of the most frequently mentioned change monitoring strategies is indicator-based evaluation as respondents G, D, F, B and C state. The success of changes is assessed using specific quantitative indicators, such as KPIs, sales results, profitability or time indicators. Such indicators enable young managers to more objectively assess whether the changes are producing the planned result.

Respondents emphasize that indicators provide a clear point of reference for decisions. One respondent talks about *“Which KPI we are going to follow.”* (Respondent G), and another notes that *“The main point was the final sales.”* (Respondent F). These responses point to the need to substantiate the results of changes with facts, especially in cases where decision-making or change initiation must be justified by higher-level management.

### Feedback-based Monitoring

Another significant change monitoring strategy is based on collecting employee feedback as mentioned by respondents A, F, E and C. They mention, that employees’ opinions and emotional reactions help them to understand how changes are accepted in daily activities and whether they really affect the culture and work practices of the organization

For example, one respondent states: *“We regularly ask people how they feel about the change.”* (Respondent F). Another mentions the importance of more formal feedback tools: *“We have the Great Place to Work framework and survey.”* (Respondent A). This shows that young managers perceive

the success of changes not only through results, but also through the experience of employees, involvement and change in attitude.

### Informal Evaluation

The third change monitoring strategy is informal evaluation, based on daily observations and the subjective “feeling” of the manager as understood from the answers of respondents C, B, F and G. The success of change is assessed by observing employee behaviour, moods, and work practices without using formal measurement instruments.

One respondent describes this approach as follows: “*Sometimes you don’t need numbers, you just see it.*” (Respondent F). Another emphasizes the importance of behavioural changes: “*You see it in daily behaviour.*” (Respondent G). This is relevant in contexts where formal indicators are not sensitive enough or have not yet been fully developed, especially in the earlier stages of organizational development.

In summary, the analysis shows that change monitoring strategies are different depending on the stage of organizational development. Organizations in the early stages of development more often use informal assessment, which allows for a quick assessment of the impact of changes in daily activities. In the Adolescence stage, monitoring practices become mixed - quantitative indicators and employee feedback are combined. In more mature organizations, indicator-based assessment dominates, which allows for standardization of change monitoring and its integration into existing management systems. These differences indicate that young managers adapt to the organizational context and use different monitoring mechanisms to justify and sustain change.

#### 4.4.5. The Change Support Strategies

This subsection focuses on the change support strategies applied by young managers to ensure that implemented changes are maintained in the long term. The analysis is based on the data of the *Change support* category presented in Table 8. This category includes three subcategories such as support through formalization, continuous managerial involvement and learning and adaptation. They reveal how young managers support changes using structural, personal and learning mechanisms.

**Table 9.** Change support

Category	Subcategory	Excerpts
Change support	Support through formalization	<p>“Every time we have a change, we have a procedure.” (Respondent G)</p> <p>“We implement procedures to make sure it stays.” (Respondent D)</p> <p>“We review processes regularly to see if the change is still working.” (Respondent A)</p> <p>“You need rules, otherwise people go back to old habits.” (Respondent C)</p>
	Continuous managerial involvement	<p>“We lead by example.” (Respondent E)</p> <p>“It’s required a lot of direct in person contact with that team.” (Respondent B)</p> <p>“You need to be there constantly, not only at the beginning.” (Respondent F)</p> <p>“Managers must stay involved to make the change last.” (Respondent G)</p> <p>“You have to support people every day.” (Respondent C)</p>

	Learning and adaptation	<p>“It must not end. Never actually.” (Respondent F)</p> <p>“We need to adjust our process and our way of working.” (Respondent A)</p> <p>“We constantly adapt based on what works and what doesn’t.” (Respondent B)</p> <p>“We change the process when we see it’s not efficient.” (Respondent D)</p>
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### Support Through Formalization

One of the most frequently mentioned strategies for supporting change is formalization, where changes are anchored through procedures, rules and regular review. Respondents G, D, A and C emphasize that without clearly defined rules, employees tend to return to previous work practices, therefore formalization becomes an essential tool for stabilizing change.

One respondent mentions the importance of procedures in supporting change: *“Every time we have a change, we have a procedure.”* (Respondent G), while other talks about the importance of continuous review: *“We review processes regularly to see if the change is still working.”* (Respondent A). Formalization allows for the transfer of changes from the level of personal manager involvement to the organizational system while also reducing dependence on specific individuals.

### Continuous Managerial Involvement

Another significant change support strategy is continuous manager involvement after the formal change implementation stage. Respondents B, F, E, C and G emphasize that supporting change requires constant presence, daily communication and setting of a personal example.

According to respondents, formal rules alone are not enough if the leader does not get involved in daily support of change. One respondent notes that *“You need to be there constantly, not only at the beginning.”* (Respondent F), while another mentions the importance of leadership by example: *“We lead by example.”* (Respondent E). This suggest, that young managers often compensate for not yet fully established systems with personal involvement, especially in organizations where formal structures are not yet fully established.

### Learning and Adaptation

Additional strategy for supporting change is based on continuous learning and adaptation. This approach is evident in the statements of respondents F, A, B and D. In their responses, change is not perceived as a one-time project but as an ongoing process in which practices are continuously reviewed, decisions are adjusted, and learning emerges from practical experience.

One respondent describes this approach very clearly: *“It must not end. Never actually.”* (Respondent F). Other respondents also emphasize the importance of constant adaptation: *“We constantly adapt based on what works and what doesn’t.”* (Respondent B). These responses show that young managers perceive change support as a dynamic process, in which not only stability is important, but also the ability to adjust changes based on the organization’s real experience.

Taken together, the results of the analysis indicate, that change support strategies differ depending on the organization’s development stage. In more mature organizations, changes are more often supported through formalization and integration into existing management systems, reducing dependence on individual manager involvement. In early and Adolesce stage organizations, ongoing

leadership engagement and flexible adaptation are more important because formal structures are not fully established yet. Learning and adaptation act as a connecting strategy across all stages of development, allowing for sustained change in changing organizational conditions.

#### 4.5. The Challenges and Lessons Learned in the Change Management Process

This chapter examines the challenges young managers face in managing organizational change and reflects on the lessons learned. It focuses on the factors that limit the selection, application and consistent implementation of these change management strategies in practice. The analysis follows the logic of categories, subcategories, and excerpts and illustrates how structural, human, and contextual constraints shape young managers’ performance in the change management process.

##### 4.5.1. The Challenges Faced by Young Managers in Managing Organizational Change

This subsection focuses on the main challenges that young managers face in managing organizational change. These challenges reveal factors that limit young managers' ability to select, apply, and consistently implement change management strategies in practice. The data are drawn from category *Managerial challenges* and analysis is based on three main subcategories - time and priority management challenges, people management challenges, and contextual and systemic challenges as shown in Table 9.

**Table 10.** Managerial challenges

Category	Subcategory	Excerpts
Managerial challenges	Time and priority management	“You don’t have time to do everything properly.” (Respondent F) “Sometimes you have to choose what is more important and leave the rest.” (Respondent E) “The biggest challenge is to manage priorities.” (Respondent D) “You need to focus, otherwise you are lost.” (Respondent C)
	People management challenges	“People are afraid of change.” (Respondent A) “You feel the resistance even if people don’t say it directly.” (Respondent G) “Keeping people motivated during change is very difficult.” (Respondent F) “It’s emotionally heavy, because you are responsible for people.” (Respondent B) “You have to deal with emotions, not only tasks.” (Respondent C)
	Contextual and systemic challenges	“Sometimes you don’t have all the information.” (Respondent E) “Decisions are taken at a higher level and you need to adapt.” (Respondent D) “You don’t control everything.” (Respondent G) “There are financial constraints that limit your choices.” (Respondent A)

#### Time and Priority Management

One of the challenges that respondents most frequently mention is limited time and the need to constantly decide which actions to prioritize during change. Respondents C, D, E and F highlight limited time as a key challenge. They emphasize that change management often occurs alongside daily operational tasks, so it is not always possible to plan and implement changes as consistently as

one would like. As respondent F noted, *"You don't have time to do everything properly"*, and respondent E added that *"Sometimes you have to choose what is more important and leave the rest"*.

These statements suggest that the lack of time directly limits the application of structured and consistently planned change management strategies. Limited time prevents teams from using organized change management practices, so young managers often simplify plans or respond to immediate demands. Respondent D's statement that *"The biggest challenge is to manage priorities"* reveals that choosing what deserves a manager's focus during change becomes a significant challenge. These responses show that managers prioritize actions based on time constraints rather than theory.

### **People Management**

The second significant group of challenges is related to employees' reactions, emotions and resistance to change as highlighted by respondents A, B, C, F and G. They indicate that employees' emotional response to change complicates not only the implementation of the changes themselves but also requires additional efforts from the manager for communication and support.

Respondent A notes that *"People are afraid of change"*, while respondent G emphasizes a hidden form of resistance: *"You feel the resistance even if people don't say it directly"*. This confirms that young managers often face indirect resistance, which complicates the management of the change process and forces them to look for more inclusive and relationship-based leadership strategies.

In addition, emotional responsibility for employees emerges as an additional burden. Respondent B states that *"It's emotionally heavy, because you are responsible for people"*, while respondent C adds that during change you must *"deal with emotions, not only tasks"*. These statements indicate that the challenges of people management limit the possibility of applying strictly structured or formally oriented change strategies, because young managers are forced to constantly adjust decisions to the emotional state and reactions of employees.

### **Contextual and Systemic Challenges**

The third subcategory of challenges is related to the broader organizational context and systemic limitations, which often do not depend on the manager himself. These aspects are highlighted by respondents A, D, E and G, who indicated that they do not always have all the necessary information or decision-making freedom needed to initiate and plan changes.

Respondent E notes that *"Sometimes you don't have all the information"*, while respondent D emphasizes the centralization of decisions: *"Decisions are taken at a higher level and you need to adapt"*. This shows that young managers sometimes operate under conditions of limited autonomy, especially in organizations that are part of larger structures, such as respondent G, who mentions in his/hers statement that *"You don't control everything"*. Respondent A mentions financial constraints - *"There are financial constraints that limit your choices"*. It reveals that systemic factors can directly limit the scope of possible changes and the strategies chosen.

These contextual constraints result in young managers often being forced to align their change initiatives with existing structures, financial capabilities and higher-level decisions, which limits long-term and strategically consistent change planning.

## Challenges Associated with Organizational Development Stages

When analysing challenges in the context of organizational development stages, certain patterns are evident. In early and Adolescence stage organizations (respondents B, C, E), time and priority management challenges are particularly pronounced, as organizational structures are not yet fully stable and changes occur alongside intensive daily operational activities. In such contexts, young managers are often required to balance immediate operational demands with change-related initiatives, which limits the possibility of structured and long-term planning.

Meanwhile, people management challenges occur at all stages of organizational development (respondents A, B, C, D, E, F, G), but in more mature organizations (respondents A, D, F, G) they are more often related to employee resistance to established routines and long-standing practices. In these organizations, resistance is less associated with uncertainty and more with the difficulty of changing deeply embedded behaviours and mindsets.

Contextual and systemic challenges are particularly pronounced in more mature organizations (respondents A, D, F, G), where decision-making is more centralized and young managers are required to adapt to existing systems, frameworks, and higher-level strategic decisions. This supports the argument that the stage of organizational development acts as an important contextual factor, shaping not only the challenges experienced by young managers, but also limiting the choice and implementation of the change management strategies they are able to apply in practice.

### 4.5.2. The Learned Lessons and of Young Managers

This subsection focuses on the lessons learned by young managers in the process of managing organizational change, which are directly related to the challenges discussed earlier. The analysis explores how young managers adapt to these limitations through experience and how this adaptation contributes to their strategic development. The data is used from category *Lessons learned*, and analysis is based on three main subcategories - strategic maturity, importance of communication and feedback, and learning through experience, as shown in Table 10.

**Table 11.** Lessons learned

Category	Subcategory	Excerpts
Lessons learned	Strategic maturity	“You cannot do everything at once.” (Respondent C) “Now I understand better where I should focus.” (Respondent E) “You need to manage risks, not ignore them.” (Respondent A) “Experience helps you to see what really matters.” (Respondent D)
	Importance of communication and feedback	“Communication is probably the most important thing.” (Respondent F) “You have to explain again and again.” (Respondent G) “Feedback from people helps you to adjust.” (Respondent C) “It’s important to recognize progress, not only problems.” (Respondent A)
	Learning through experience	“You learn by doing, not by waiting for perfect conditions.” (Respondent B) “You don’t need to be perfect, you need to move forward.” (Respondent F) “Trusting the team was one of my biggest lessons.” (Respondent E) “Data helps you to take better decisions.” (Respondent D)

## **Strategic Maturity**

Respondents A, C, D and E emphasise the maturity of strategic thinking related to the choice of priorities, risk management and clarity of focus as one of the best lessons that they have learned. Respondents reflect that in the previous stages of change management they used to take too many initiatives at once, but practical experience has shown the limitations of such an approach. Respondent C clearly reflects these statements: *“You cannot do everything at once.”*

The growth of strategic maturity is also illustrated by respondent E’s reflection on the importance of focus: *“Now I understand better where I should focus.”* These quotes show a shift from fragmented action to more deliberate and selective decision-making. In addition, strategic maturity is also associated with the perception of risks - respondent A emphasizes: *“You need to manage risks, not ignore them.”*, while respondent D notes the role of experience in decision-making: *“Experience helps you to see what really matters.”* This suggests that strategic maturation is manifested not only in the ability to choose priorities, but also in a more conscious decisions.

## **Importance of Communication and Feedback**

Respondents A, C, F and G mention that understanding of the role of communication and feedback in the change management process is one more lesson learned. The respondents’ statements show that change communication is perceived as an ongoing process, not a one-off information session. Respondent F emphasizes the importance of communication by stating: *“Communication is probably the most important thing.”*, while respondent G complements this idea by mentioning the need for repetition: *“You have to explain again and again.”*

Feedback in this context becomes an important adjustment tool. Respondent C notes: *“Feedback from people helps you to adjust.”*, while respondent A draws attention to the importance of recognizing progress: *“It’s important to recognize progress, not only problems.”* These quotes show that young managers are learning to view communication not only as a means of transmitting information, but also as a way to maintain trust, engagement, and adjust the course of change.

## **Learning Through Experience**

The third main lesson learned is related to learning through experience and the ability to adapt to the process of change as mentioned respondents B, D, E and F. They indicate that strategic maturity is formed through practical action, not by waiting for ideal conditions. This is clearly reflected in the statement of respondent B: *“You learn by doing, not by waiting for perfect conditions.”*

Learning through experience is also associated with a pragmatic approach to perfection - respondent F emphasizes that *“You don’t need to be perfect, you need to move forward.”* At the same time, this lesson includes the growth of trust in the team, which respondent E names as *“Trusting the team was one of my biggest lessons.”* Respondent D’s statement *“Data helps you to take better decisions.”* additionally shows that learning through experience also includes the awareness of the importance of analytical, data-based decisions. This suggests that the strategic maturation of young managers is closely related to reflection, adaptation, and consistent learning from practice.

## **Links between Lessons Learned and the Stages of Organizational Development**

Analysing lessons learned in the context of the stages of organizational development also reveals certain regularities. In organizations at an early stage of development (respondent B), strategic maturation most often manifests itself through learning to act under conditions of uncertainty and through the logic of trial and error. In this context, young managers learn to accept flexibility as an inevitable part of change management.

In organizations in the Adolescence stage (respondents C and E), strategic maturation is associated with an awareness of the importance of clarity of priorities and structuring. Young leaders begin to consciously limit the scope of change and focus on strategically most important initiatives.

In more mature organizations (respondents A, D, F and G), strategic maturation is manifested in the ability to operate within the boundaries of existing systems and use indirect mechanisms of influence, such as communication, coordination and formalization of processes. This suggests that the strategic maturation of young leaders is closely related to the organizational context and its constraints.

### **4.6. The Summary and the Discussion of the Results**

This subsection summarizes the results of empirical qualitative research obtained by analysing semi-structured interviews with seven young managers. The aim of the research is to reveal what organizational change management strategies young managers use and how the nature of these strategies is related to the stages of organizational development. The stage of organizational development according to the Adizes model is used in this study as a contextual analytical framework for interpreting the choice and application of strategies in different organizational situations. The summary is based on the analysis of interview data and focuses on identifying the main empirically observed patterns.

#### **The Summary of the Results**

The analysis of the interviews indicates that the change management strategies applied by young managers are not based on a single or clearly identifiable change management model. The statements of the respondents reveal that change management is seen as a dynamic and constantly changing process, in which planning, implementation and adjustment often occur in parallel. Most respondents describe their actions not as managing change as a project, but as a constant reaction to the challenges of the situation, employee emotions and organizational limitations.

During the interviews, respondents emphasize that the personal involvement of the manager, informal communication and direct work with the team, play a significant role in change management strategies. Even in cases where formal structures or procedures exist in organizations, the respondents mention the need to adapt them to the real situation and not apply them mechanically. These findings indicate that the strategies applied by young managers are empirically characterized by an adaptive and situational nature.

Comparing the statements of respondents operating at different stages of organizational development, clear differences in the nature of strategies related to organizational context are identified. In the early stages of organizational development, respondents more often speak about spontaneous responses to operational or market challenges, limited planning, and a close connection of change management

with daily activities. In such organizations, change initiatives usually come from direct needs, and decision-making is fast and less formalized.

In the growth and adolescence stage, interviews reveal greater tension between the need to structure activities and the necessity to maintain flexibility. Respondents at this stage more often mention attempts to define direction, priorities, and responsibilities more clearly, but at the same time emphasize that plans are often adjusted due to the pace of organizational growth, instability of internal processes, or limited resources.

In more mature organizations, change management strategies in the statements of respondents are more often associated with formal processes, systems, and higher-level decisions. During the interviews, some respondents note, that in such organizations, the opportunities for young managers to independently initiate fundamental changes are more limited, and their role is more often focused on implementing, coordinating, and supporting changes within the boundaries of established structures.

In addition, the synthesis of results shows that the fragments of change management models identified in the empirical data function as analytical reference points rather than prescriptive frameworks. At different stages of organizational development, young managers demonstrate fragmented elements of various models, which become visible depending on the organizational context. In early-stage organizations, elements related to Agile, Satir, and William Bridges' models emerge through experimentation, learning by doing, and managing transitions under uncertainty. In the Adolescence stage, fragments of Kotter's and ADKAR models become more apparent, reflecting the growing need for direction-setting, communication, and individual engagement, while adaptive and situational elements remain important. In more mature organizations, elements associated with Lewin's model, ADKAR, and the Kübler-Ross change curve are more prominent, indicating a stronger focus on formalization, stabilization of change, monitoring, and managing employee reactions. These findings confirm that change management models are not applied as complete sequences, but rather selectively and situationally, shaped by the stage of organizational development and the structural conditions in which young managers operate.

Based on the results of subsection 4.4., young managers' change management strategies are revealed through three main stages: change initiation, planning and implementation, and support. Interview analysis shows that these stages are not perceived as clearly separated or sequentially following phases. On the contrary, in respondents' statements they often overlap, and strategic decisions are formed and adjusted during the process.

Change initiation is usually based on solving practical problems or the need to respond to environmental changes. Planning elements, even though they exist, are often fragmented and situation dependent. Change implementation and support have empirically emerged as processes in which communication, employee involvement, and continuous feedback are of particular importance. This suggests that the strategies applied by young managers more often correspond to the logic of emergent rather than strictly planned change management.

The analysis of interviews indicates that the ability of young managers to choose and apply change management strategies is influenced by various limiting factors. Respondents most often mention lack of time and priorities, the complexity of people management, employee resistance and limited

decision-making autonomy. These factors are mentioned in the context of all stages of organizational development, but their nature and impact on strategies vary.

In early stages of organizational development, limitations are more often associated with a lack of structure and resource limitations, while in more mature stages - with centralization of decisions, established practices and greater organizational inertia. The interviews reveal that these limitations not only complicate the implementation of changes, but also shape the nature of the strategies themselves, which lead young managers to apply informal, relationship-based solutions.

The strategic maturation of young managers is empirically shown through the ability to reflect on experience and adjust their actions, and not through clearly measurable differences in experience or age. The managers who participate in the research are of similar age and leadership experience, that is why individual characteristics do not emerge as the main factor in differentiating strategies in this research.

The interviews reveal that over time, young managers begin to choose priorities more consciously, pay greater attention to communication and employee involvement, and perceive change as a long-term process rather than a one-time action. This maturation is not homogeneous and depends on the organizational context, decision-making boundaries and challenges experienced, therefore its expression varies in different organizations.

After summarizing the results, it can be stated that the change management strategies applied by young managers are formed through the interaction of the stage of organizational development, the organizational context and the space of managers' action. Empirical data provides the insights that the observed differences in strategies are more related to organizational conditions, decision-making structure and stage of development, rather than to individual manager differences, which are not highlighted in this research as a differentiating factor. The results of the research do not show a linear relationship between the stage of organizational development and the experience or decision-making maturity of a young manager. On the contrary, the empirical data reveal different forms of experience that are shaped depending on the organizational context and decision-making freedom.

A generalized synthesis of the research results, revealing the relationship between the stage of organizational development and the nature of the change management strategies applied by young managers, is presented in Table 11.

**Table 12.** Synthesis of the research results

<b>Stage of Organizational Development</b>	<b>Change management models</b>	<b>Strategies for Initiating Change</b>	<b>Change Planning Strategies</b>	<b>Strategies for Implementing and Sustaining Change</b>
Early (Go-Go)	Agile, Satir, William Bridges'	Changes are initiated in response to specific problems or opportunities, often based on the personal judgment of the manager.	Planning is minimal or fragmented, strategy is formed during the process.	Changes are implemented through intensive management involvement, informal communication, and constant adjustment.

Adolescence	Kotter's, ADKAR, Satir, Agile	Changes are initiated to manage growth and internal tensions within the organization.	Planning becomes more conscious but is often adjusted due to changing circumstances.	Implementation combines structural solutions and situational flexibility; employee involvement is important.
More Mature (Prime)	Lewin's, ADKAR, Kübler-Ross, Kotter's, Agile	The initiation of change often stems from organizational strategy or established procedures.	Planning is formalized and linked to existing systems.	Changes are implemented through processes, allocation of responsibilities and monitoring mechanisms; the role of the manager is coordinating.

This table summarizes the results of the empirical research and shows that the change management strategies and models used by young managers vary depending on the organizational context and stage of development but does not indicate a linear or universal model of strategy development. The synthesis presented in the table forms the basis for further discussion of the research results, in which these empirical regularities will be interpreted in the context of theoretical change management models.

## The Discussion

When analysing the research results in the context of theoretical change management models, it becomes clear that the strategies applied by young managers only partially correspond to classical change management models. Empirical data do not indicate the consistent application of one specific model but shows that certain elements of different models are revealed in fragments and depend on specific situations.

When discussing the research results in relation to change management models, the findings show parallels with the dimensions of communication, employee involvement, and support described in the ADKAR model. Respondents often emphasise the importance of employee understanding, involvement, and ongoing support, especially in the stages of change implementation and support. However, empirical data do not confirm the consistent application of the ADKAR sequence in practice - the elements of the model more often manifest themselves as separate actions in response to specific situations. As stated by Carreno (2024), the models of change management, which are considered sequential, such as ADKAR, often face significant critique for their linear rigidity. Also, researchers recommend integrating the ADKAR model with broader approaches, which would include addressing the culture and strategy of organizations simultaneously (Kherrazi & Roquilly, 2025).

In addition, the research results indicate partial alignment with Kotter's change management model. The research results indicate that elements such as direction setting, vision communication, and employee involvement exist empirically, but they are not implemented as a sequence of consistent steps. Applications of case studies show that even though Kotter's model is effective for change initiation, its strict linear sequence limits the adaptability in rapidly changing environments (Carreno, 2024). As stated by Appelbaum et al. (2012), in the real world, the implementation of Kotter's model requires simultaneous actions across various organizational levels rather than predetermined steps, which contradicts the linear design of the model. In this research, initiation and implementation of

changes often occur in parallel, and elements of short-term “wins” or formal consolidation of changes are not always consciously planned.

More modern and emergent models of change management often challenge linear models and focus on adaptive and continuous processes that are happening in organizations. The emphasis is changed from top-down planning to bottom-up flexible solutions, which recognise the unpredictable conditions that are often driven by new technologies (Ratana, Raksmeay & Danut, 2020). In addition to that, the results of the research are consistent with emergent and process change management approaches, in which change is perceived as a continuous, nonlinear process, rather than as a pre-planned project. Adaptation of change management, adjustment of decisions during the process, and response to constantly changing circumstances are clearly revealed in the statements of young managers. Taken together, the empirical results point more strongly toward adaptive change management approaches than toward classical models.

The empirical material shows that the stage of organizational development according to the Adizes model acts as a significant contextual factor shaping the nature of change management strategies applied by young managers. Although the stage of organizational development does not mechanically determine the choice of specific strategies, empirical data show that it shapes the boundaries of decision-making, the level of formalisation of strategies, and the manager’s space for action. The Adizes organizational life cycle model suggests that management strategy should be aligned with the development stage of organizations (Adizes, 2004). The empirical studies confirm that the managerial actions taken in a specific organizational development stage can significantly affect the effectiveness of the strategy of organizations (Elsayed & Wahba, 2016).

As it is revealed from the interviews, in the early stages of organizational development, change management is empirically characterised by greater spontaneity and responsiveness to daily operational challenges. In these conditions, young leaders have more space to initiate change, but at the same time face a lack of structure, processes, and resources. This leads to more emergent change management strategies, in which planning and implementation overlap.

In the Adolescence stage, the findings of the research reveal a tension between the need to structure activities and the necessity to maintain flexibility. Young managers at this stage more often seek a clearer direction, but empirically, it is seen that strategies are often adjusted due to unstable processes, growth rate, and internal organizational tensions.

The findings suggest that in more mature organizations, change management strategies are more formalised and more closely linked to organizational systems and higher-level decisions. In larger organizations, young leaders more often act as change implementers and coordinators. This supports the idea that the stage of organizational development acts as an important contextual factor that effects the application of theoretical aspects in practice.

Nevertheless, as noticed by Jirásek & Bílek (2018), the empirical studies emphasise limitations connected with the adaptation of managerial practices to the stages of development, because the progress of organizations is not strictly determined, and organizations go through development stages in various ways. The studies also emphasize that adaptation of management strategies according to the organizational development stage does make sense, because formalization increases during the development of organizational maturity and decreases during the revival or earlier stages (Jirásek &

Bilek, 2018). Authors such as Mosca, Gianecchini, & Campagnolo (2021) support management methods that are related to the organizational development stages, but at the same time warn against strict and linear assumptions in a modern and unstable business environment.

When discussing the role of young managers in the change management process, the interview data allow us to distinguish a certain logic of action that is frequent for this group of managers. Empirical data do not reveal fundamental differences in strategies based on individual characteristics of managers but clearly showed that young managers empirically manifest themselves as mediators between the strategic and operational levels. They often take responsibility for bringing changes into everyday practice, while compensating for limited formal power through intensive communication, personal involvement, and relationship building. These findings are supported by other authors who agree that young managers often act as initiators of change while encouraging innovations and challenging the long-term rules. They value flexibility and collaboration (Sessoms-Penny, Underwood & Taylor, 2022). Due to their lack of experience, they face difficulties in gaining recognition from senior subordinates (Irehill et al., 2024). The essential role of young managers is to translate the strategic vision into daily operations, even though they may lack specific training or skills (Löow et al., 2024). The research results show that it is precisely these compensatory strategies that allow young managers to operate effectively even in conditions of limited structural opportunities.

The research results contribute to the existing change management literature by emphasizing the importance of context and the limitations of normative models. Empirical data show that change management practices often do not conform to linear, universal models, especially in cases where organizations operate in a dynamic environment or at different stages of development. These results are backed up by Quinlan et al. (2022), as they state that contextual factors significantly affect the effectiveness of change management strategies, as there is no universal model that fits all organizations. Also, characteristics of organizations, such as size, structure, and culture, determine the applicability of the model of change management (Carreno, 2024). For adaptation to be successful, managers must choose strategies that match the specific conditions of the change context (Quinlan et al., 2022). That is why it is now recommended by other researchers to combine classic models of change management with modern ones (e.g., Agile or Lean) to achieve the best and most sustainable results (Carreno, 2024).

This research contributes to the change management discourse by providing empirical evidence for the claim that change management strategies should be viewed as adaptive sets of decisions rather than as rigidly defined sequences. The experiences of young managers reveal that the effectiveness of strategies depends more on the ability to adapt to the context than on the strict application of the theoretical model.

When evaluating the results of the research, it is necessary to take into account its limitations. The research is conducted with a limited sample of seven young managers operating in organizations of the same international corporate group and for this reason the results cannot be generalized to all organizations or groups of managers. The stages of organizational development that are identified during the empirical research are limited to mostly three stages, leaving the most mature stages of organizational development (the Fall, Aristocracy, and Bureaucracy) without evaluation. In addition, the research focuses on young managers, and it does not allow for a direct comparison of the strategies they apply with the practices of older or more experienced managers. It is also important to note that

change management strategies are analysed based on the respondents' reflections, rather than direct observation of the processes. The impact of individual managers' personal characteristics on change management is not the subject of this research and because of that the significance of this aspect remains open for further research.

Future studies could include a wider sample of respondents, include managers of different age groups, or compare change management strategies in different sectors. Also, promising are studies analysing the interaction of young managers and organizational development stages over a longer time horizon.

In summary, the results of the research reveal the contextual and adaptive nature of change management strategies applied by young managers. The stage of organizational development according to the Adizes model acts as an important factor modifying the application of theoretical change management models in practice, and young managers in this context act as active but structurally limited change agents.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

1. The findings of the research show that the choice of change management strategies by young managers is significantly affected by the organizational context and the stage of organizational development. Empirical data are more closely aligned with emergent, and process approaches to change management, in which change is perceived as a continuous, nonlinear process. Young managers often adjust decisions on the fly, combining planning, implementation and support according to changing organizational conditions, and they often face limited decision-making autonomy, lack of time and priorities, and people management challenges that limit the ability to apply consistent, pre-planned change strategies. These challenges occur at all stages of organizational development, but their nature and intensity vary depending on the maturity, structure and level of decision-making centralization of the organization. In earlier stages of development, flexible strategies based on informal agreements and direct communication are more often applied, focused on rapid decision-making and adaptation. In more mature organizations, change management practices tend to be more structured, planned and formalized change management practices, in which process definition, division of responsibilities and systematic monitoring play a greater role. In terms of change management models, the empirical results show that young managers do not consistently apply any single model in practice. Instead, fragmented elements of different models become visible depending on the organizational development stage. In early-stage organizations, practices more often reflect elements of Agile, Satir, and transition-oriented models, while in the Adolescence stage, elements related to Kotter's and ADKAR models become more apparent alongside adaptive approaches. In more mature organizations, elements associated with Lewin's model, ADKAR, and the Kübler-Ross change curve are more frequently observed, indicating a stronger focus on formalization, stabilization, monitoring, and managing employee reactions to change.
2. Having defined the theoretical aspects of organizational change management at different stages of organizational development, the analysis shows that change management models do not sufficiently reflect real change management practices in different contexts. The literature also emphasizes that classical change management models (e.g. ADKAR, Kotter) are usually presented as normative, linear sequences, but modern scientific literature increasingly emphasizes adaptive, process and context-sensitive approaches to change management. It was also found that the stages of organizational development have a significant impact on change management processes, the nature of decision-making and the role of the manager in the organization. Different stages of development are characterized by different ratios of formalization, control and flexibility, which determine not only the course of change initiation and implementation, but also employee involvement and reactions to changes. The literature also emphasizes that theories of organizational development, especially the Adizes model, allow us to better explain why change management strategies should be applied differently at different stages of development.
3. During the work, a qualitative research methodology is developed and applied, based on semi-structured interviews and data analysis according to the logic of categories-subcategories-quotes. The stages of organizational development are determined based on the Adizes model and used as a contextual analytical factor, rather than as a separate object of analysis. The

applied methodology enabled the revelation of the experience of young managers, their strategic decisions and their links with the organizational context.

4. The results of the research provide the basis for practical recommendations for young managers managing organizational changes. The results show that young managers most often apply adaptive and situational change management strategies, combining elements of different theoretical models according to the stage of organizational development and the freedom of decisions that are available. Empirical data provides the basis for formulating recommendations focused on flexible change management, employee involvement, strengthening communication and adapting strategies to a specific organizational environment. The results indicate that for successful change management it is important not only to choose specific strategies, but also to be able to adapt them to the stage of development of the organization, structure and emotional maturity of employees. The experiences of young managers show that reflection, learning from experienced challenges and a flexible approach to change management become essential factors that allow for more effective implementation of changes in different organizational contexts.

### **Recommendations**

1. Young managers are recommended to consider the stage of organizational development as the main point of reference when choosing change management strategies. The results of the research show that different types of change management strategies are effective at different stages of organizational development. For this reason, young managers, before initiating changes, should consciously assess the level of organizational maturity, centralization of decision-making, the degree of formalization of processes and employees' readiness for change. This would enable more realistic planning of the scope, pace of change and the measures applied.
2. It is recommended to apply an adaptive and situational approach to change management, rather than seeking to mechanically implement one specific theoretical model. Empirical data show that young managers work most effectively in practice by combining elements of different change management models, taking into account the specific situation. It is recommended to use theoretical models (e.g. ADKAR or Kotter) as landmarks or a "toolkit" rather than as a strict sequence of actions, leaving room for adjustments and adaptation of solutions during the course of changes.
3. Young managers are recommended to consciously strengthen communication and employee involvement as key compensatory strategies in conditions of limited formal power. It is revealed in the interviews, that young managers often face limited decision-making autonomy, especially in more mature or more centralized organizations. In such situations, intensive communication, personal involvement, continuous feedback and building trust become the most effective. It is recommended to invest purposefully in these competencies as the main levers of change management.
4. Also, it is recommended to differentiate the practices of initiating and planning changes according to the level of organizational maturity. In the early stages of organizational development, it is appropriate for young managers to use more flexible, less formalized initiatives based on direct communication and rapid decision-making. Meanwhile, in more mature organizations, it is recommended to pay more attention to structuring processes,

distributing responsibilities, monitoring changes and integrating them into existing organizational systems.

5. Young managers are recommended to systematically reflect on their experiences and learn from the implemented changes. The results of the research indicate that reflection and learning from practical challenges become an important factor that allows young managers to improve their change management strategies. Therefore, it is recommended to regularly assess which decisions were effective, what challenges arose and how they could be addressed in the future, especially as the organization's development stage changes.
6. Organizations are recommended to provide young managers with clearer decision-making boundaries and support in change management processes. The results of the research suggest that the effectiveness of young managers in change management is increased by clearly defined responsibilities, decision-making boundaries and organizational support. Organizations are recommended to consciously create conditions for the empowerment of young managers, especially as organizations transition from one development stage to another.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Interview Guide for Young Managers

1. Please introduce your role in the organization: your position and how long you have held it, your main responsibilities, previous leadership experience, and the number of direct subordinates.
2. Please describe the organization: its field of activity, size, and market segment.
3. How are decisions usually made in your organization – quickly and in a centralized manner, or through discussions and formal procedures, or do they require lengthy coordination? (*Infancy/Go-Go – fast decisions by the owner or a few people; Adolescence – many debates and conflicts; Prime – balance; Aristocracy/Bureaucracy – high formality and long approval processes.*)
4. What does everyday work in the organization look like? Is it dominated more by ideas, experimentation, and the search for new opportunities, or by strict order, formal procedures, and efficiency assurance? (*Go-Go – chaotic creativity; Adolescence – conflict between freedom and order; Prime – balance; Aristocracy – formality; Bureaucracy – rules only.*)
5. How are employees' work roles distributed: does everyone have clearly defined responsibilities, or is there frequent improvisation and the need to perform multiple functions? (*Infancy/Go-Go – improvisation and chaos; Adolescence – transitional phase; Prime – clear roles; Aristocracy – rigid roles with little flexibility.*)
6. How does your organization respond to new opportunities or changes in the market: are you inclined to take risks quickly, or do you deliberate for a long time, argue, or avoid risk? (*Go-Go – takes risks; Adolescence – considers but argues; Prime – balances; Aristocracy – avoids; Bureaucracy – no longer responds.*)
7. What are the main challenges your organization is currently facing: survival in the market, smooth cooperation between departments, balancing growth and structure, ensuring efficiency, or maintaining the current situation? (*Infancy – survival; Go-Go – coordination; Adolescence – balance between growth and structure; Prime – efficiency; Aristocracy – status quo.*)
8. How is change usually initiated in your organization? Is the main focus on vision, preparation, employee involvement, and clear plans, or are you more inclined toward small experiments? (*Helps identify Kotter – vision and urgency; ADKAR – individual involvement; Lewin – preparation; Agile – experiments.*)
9. How is employee involvement in change usually ensured? Through defined communication plans, individual conversations, or short-term wins and motivating results? (*ADKAR – individual work; Kotter – formal communication channels and wins; Lewin – collective “unfreezing”.*)
10. How, if at all, do you monitor the progress and results of change? Through clear KPIs, deadlines, and plans, through employees' reactions and moods, or through intermediate achievements? (*Kotter – KPIs and short-term wins; ADKAR – individual acceptance of change; Lewin – implementation of steps; Kübler-Ross / Satir – emotional dynamics.*)
11. How is change usually embedded in the organization (if it is)? Are procedures and KPIs changed, or is more emphasis placed on habits, culture, and training? (*Kotter – integration into culture; Lewin – “refreezing”; ADKAR – reinforcement; Agile – continuous improvement.*)
12. Please describe one important change that you implemented over the past couple of years. How did it start – with analysis, vision creation, or small experiments? (*Lewin – analysis; Kotter – vision; Agile – experiments.*)
13. How did you prepare the team for this change? Did you explain the reasons for change, clearly communicate the vision, or focus more on individual conversations, motivation, and

training? (*ADKAR – individual readiness; Kotter – communication; Lewin – motivation to change.*)

14. How did you monitor (if you did) whether the change was progressing successfully? Did you have clear KPIs, celebrate short-term wins, or mainly observe people's emotions, evaluate reactions, and manage resistance? (*Kotter – wins and KPIs; ADKAR – people's reactions; Kübler-Ross / Satir – emotional dynamics.*)
15. How did you ensure that the change would last in the long term? Were procedures, reward systems, or communication changed, or was the focus more on helping people accept the change themselves and continue to develop and sustain it? (*Lewin – “refreezing”; Kotter – integration into culture; ADKAR – reinforcement; Agile – continuous improvement.*)
16. How do you evaluate the outcome of the change (on a scale from 1 to 5), and what were the main success factors?
17. What were the biggest challenges for you as a manager during the change – communication, motivation, resources, time management?
18. What lessons did you learn – what worked best and what would you avoid in the future?

Open-ended question:

If you wish, please share any additional comments or recommendations that, in your opinion, could help other young managers manage change more successfully.

## Appendix 2. Coding Framework: Categories and Subcategories Used in the Research

Category	Subcategory
Change management models	ADKAR model
	Kübler-Ross change curve
	Satir change model
	William Bridges' transition model
	Agile approach
Organizational context	Organizational size and structure
	Organizational maturity and age
	Level of formalization
	Centralization and decentralization
	Decision-making speed
	Growth dynamics and need for change
Decision-making and structure	Decision-making levels and responsibility distribution
	Degree of centralization
	Formal structures and rules
	Decision-making speed and flexibility
	Managerial decision-making autonomy and boundaries
Change initiation and planning	Vision and direction setting
	Structured preparation for change
	Experimental initiation
Change implementation	Phased and project-based implementation
	Formalized implementation through structures
	Soft implementation through people
Employee involvement and communication	Direct and individual communication
	Formalized and cascading communication
	Empowerment through roles and channels
Change monitoring	Indicator-based monitoring
	Feedback-based monitoring
	Informal evaluation
Change support	Support through formalization
	Continuous managerial involvement
	Learning and adaptation
Managerial challenges	Time and priority management
	People management challenges
	Contextual and systemic challenges
Lessons learned	Strategic maturity
	Importance of communication and feedback
	Learning through experience

### Appendix 3. Interview Excerpts Relating to Identification of Stages of Organizational Development

Category	Subcategory	Excerpts
Organizational context	Organizational size and structure	<p>“Around 130–140 people, with classic departments like finance, industry, operations.” (Respondent A)</p> <p>“It’s not a very big structure, everyone knows each other.” (Respondent B)</p> <p>“We are around 30 people, so the structure is still quite simple.” (Respondent C)</p> <p>“We are a medium-sized organization with clearly separated functions.” (Respondent D)</p> <p>“The organization has grown and now includes several management levels.” (Respondent E)</p> <p>“We are operating in several countries, with local teams.” (Respondent F)</p> <p>“Almost 1000 people working... almost 25 units of production.” (Respondent G)</p>
	Organizational maturity and age	<p>“The organization exists for many years already.” (Respondent A)</p> <p>“It’s still a young organization.” (Respondent B)</p> <p>“We are no longer in a startup phase.” (Respondent C)</p> <p>“Things are stabilizing compared to the past.” (Respondent D)</p> <p>“We had troublesome years in the past, now we are restructuring.” (Respondent E)</p> <p>“The company has already passed its initial growth phase.” (Respondent F)</p> <p>“The company is on the market since 1959... almost 65 years old.” (Respondent G)</p>
	Level of formalization	<p>“All of it is organized through governance and formal processes.” (Respondent A)</p> <p>“We don’t really have strict procedures yet.” (Respondent B)</p> <p>“We are starting to introduce more rules and processes.” (Respondent C)</p> <p>“We have strict discipline and precise descriptions for each position.” (Respondent D)</p> <p>“We are formalizing processes that used to be informal.” (Respondent E)</p> <p>“There are some procedures, but flexibility is still very important.” (Respondent F)</p> <p>“The governance is quite clear and structured.” (Respondent G)</p>
	Centralization and decentralization	<p>“Some decisions are taken at group level.” (Respondent A)</p> <p>“We were allowed to do things a little bit differently for our market.” (Respondent B)</p> <p>“Most decisions are still taken by a few people.” (Respondent C)</p> <p>“Decision making is centralized, but efficient.” (Respondent D)</p> <p>“We created a local board because one person cannot manage everything.” (Respondent E)</p> <p>“Some autonomy is given, but key decisions stay centralized.” (Respondent F)</p> <p>“The decision making process is centralized at the Comex committee.” (Respondent G)</p>
	Decision-making speed	<p>“It depends on the level and complexity of the topic.” (Respondent A)</p> <p>“Decisions are usually taken quite fast.” (Respondent B)</p> <p>“We can decide quickly because the structure is simple.” (Respondent C)</p> <p>“It is fast and centralized.” (Respondent D)</p> <p>“Some decisions take longer because of discussions.” (Respondent E)</p> <p>“Operational decisions are quick, strategic ones take time.” (Respondent F)</p>

		“We can make a decision on Monday and implement it on Tuesday.” (Respondent G)
	Growth dynamics and need for change	<p>“Change was necessary to adapt to new conditions.” (Respondent A)</p> <p>“Growth creates pressure to change.” (Respondent B)</p> <p>“The organization is growing and becoming more structured.” (Respondent C)</p> <p>“We needed to formalize processes because of growth.” (Respondent D)</p> <p>“We had to make a lot of changes because results were decreasing.” (Respondent E)</p> <p>“Development requires constant adjustment.” (Respondent F)</p> <p>“France is in a transformation plan since two years.” (Respondent G)</p>
Decision-making and structure	Decision-making levels and responsibility distribution	<p>“Some decisions are taken at group level, others locally.” (Respondent A)</p> <p>“Usually decisions are taken together with the team.” (Respondent B)</p> <p>“Most decisions are still made by a small group of people.” (Respondent C)</p> <p>“Responsibilities are clearly defined for each level.” (Respondent D)</p> <p>“We decided to split responsibilities, because one person cannot handle everything.” (Respondent E)</p> <p>“Managers are responsible for operational decisions.” (Respondent F)</p> <p>“Strategic decisions are taken by the Comex committee.” (Respondent G)</p>
	Degree of centralization	<p>“The decision process is quite centralized.” (Respondent A)</p> <p>“We have a lot of freedom locally.” (Respondent B)</p> <p>“Decisions are centralized because the structure is still simple.” (Respondent C)</p> <p>“Centralization helps to keep control.” (Respondent D)</p> <p>“We moved from very centralized decisions to a more shared model.” (Respondent E)</p> <p>“Key decisions are centralized, operational ones are decentralized.” (Respondent F)</p> <p>“The governance model is clearly centralized.” (Respondent G)</p>
	Formal structures and rules	<p>“Everything is structured through governance and formal processes.” (Respondent A)</p> <p>“We don’t really have strict rules yet.” (Respondent B)</p> <p>“We are starting to introduce clearer rules.” (Respondent C)</p> <p>“We have strict discipline and procedures.” (Respondent D)</p> <p>“We are formalizing what used to be informal.” (Respondent E)</p> <p>“Some rules exist, but flexibility is still important.” (Respondent F)</p> <p>“Processes and rules are clearly defined.” (Respondent G)</p>
	Decision-making speed and flexibility	<p>“Some decisions take time because of approvals.” (Respondent A)</p> <p>“We can decide quite fast.” (Respondent B)</p> <p>“Decision making is fast because the structure is simple.” (Respondent C)</p> <p>“It is fast and centralized.” (Respondent D)</p> <p>“Discussions sometimes slow down decisions.” (Respondent E)</p> <p>“Operational decisions are fast, strategic ones take longer.” (Respondent F)</p> <p>“We can decide on Monday and implement on Tuesday.” (Respondent G)</p>

	<p>Managerial decision-making autonomy and boundaries</p>	<p>“There are clear limits to what I can decide.” (Respondent A)          “I have a lot of freedom to adapt decisions.” (Respondent B)          “My freedom depends on the topic.” (Respondent C)          “You follow the system, not personal preferences.” (Respondent D)          “I had to learn where my decision boundaries are.” (Respondent E)          “Freedom comes with responsibility.” (Respondent F)          “My role is to execute decisions taken at higher level.” (Respondent G)</p>
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#### Appendix 4. Interview Excerpts Illustrating the Fragments of Change Management Models

Category	Subcategory	Excerpts
Change management model	Lewin's model	<p>"Which KPI we are going to follow." (Respondent G)</p> <p>"We monitor both the quantitative progress." (Respondent D)</p> <p>"The main point was the final sales." (Respondent F)</p>
	Kotter's model	<p>"We need to explain why we are doing it." (Respondent C)</p> <p>"And when they understand the reason why we do it, we said to them how we will do it." (Respondent D)</p>
	ADKAR model	<p>"Training was key, otherwise people wouldn't change their habits." (Respondent F)</p> <p>"This was like follow up for this training." (Respondent F)</p> <p>"We regularly ask people how they feel about the change." (Respondent F)</p> <p>"Feedback from people helps you to adjust." (Respondent C)</p> <p>"You see it in daily behaviour." (Respondent G)</p> <p>"Sometimes you don't need numbers, you just see it." (Respondent F)</p>
	Kübler-Ross change curve	<p>"People are afraid of change." (Respondent A)</p> <p>"You feel the resistance even if people don't say it directly." (Respondent G)</p> <p>"It can create fear." (Respondent C)</p> <p>"Fatigue as well to be sure everyone is involved." (Respondent G)</p> <p>"He's very resistant to trusting people." (Respondent B)</p> <p>"Everyone wants to be safe." (Respondent F)</p> <p>"We are a bit afraid for next year." (Respondent A)</p>
	Satir change model	<p>"So we that was a big, big experiment." (Respondent B)</p> <p>"It's a bit of experimenting." (Respondent C)</p> <p>"So with this initiation of change, we give it the experiment, we give it a time." (Respondent C)</p> <p>"So I would say it's a combination of thickness and experimentation." (Respondent C)</p>
	William Bridges' transition model	<p>"So we're looking to try to do that transition now a little bit." (Respondent B)</p> <p>"So we 1/2 years there was a transition." (Respondent C)</p> <p>"Everyone wants to be safe to save their role." (Respondent F)</p>
	Agile approach	<p>"We were really building things as we went along." (Respondent B)</p> <p>"Something in theory versus what is practical in the field isn't always going to match up." (Respondent B)</p> <p>"It's really case by case." (Respondent E)</p> <p>"So it's about flexible situation." (Respondent F)</p> <p>"We constantly adapt based on what works and what doesn't." (Respondent B)</p> <p>"We tried something fast and then adjusted along the way." (Respondent G)</p> <p>"Sometimes you just need to try and see how people react." (Respondent C)</p> <p>"We didn't have everything prepared in advance, it was more about testing." (Respondent B)</p> <p>"You learn by doing, not by waiting for perfect conditions." (Respondent B)</p>