Increasing Organizational Agility based on Effective Meta-Organizational Parameters

Abdolkarim RAHIMIATANI[1], Hamid ZARE[2], Hamidreza YAZDANI[3]

[1] Ph.D. student in Human Resources Management at Aras International Campus, University of Tehran, k_rahimiatani@ut.ac.ir

[2] Public Administration Professor, University of Tehran, hzarea@ut.ac.ir

[3] Assistant Professor of Human Resource Management, University of Tehran, hryazdani@ut.ac.ir

Abstract: Agility in modern era is one of the most important components of organizational superiority towards each other and achieving goals successfully. The speed of doing things and reacting appropriately to the changes are considered as the key factors of success in the present century. However, with a brief glance at the governmental agencies in developing countries, we will find that these agencies are struggling with many problems which prevents their quick and agile performance. Therefore, this research was designed and conducted to explain and identify the effective factors on organizational agility in governmental agencies. The research method used is a case study in which the researcher tried to examine and scrutinize the organizational agility components by studying the taxation organization and conducting open and semi-structured interviews meticulously. Finally, the effective factors were identified. this category was called the meta-organization factors including factors such as economic conditions, media, inter-organizational relationships, intelligent clients, laws and political attitudes. The snowball method has also been used for sampling in the research. At the end of the article, the research model is also stated.

Keywords: *agility; agilizing; adaptation and compatibility; organizational change.*

Introduction

The status of organizations has changed fundamentally over the past 15 to 20 years (Iacocca Institute, 1991). In this era of technology, market conditions and customer demands have changed in different directions and today's organizations have faced issues such as rapid and unpredictable changes. Nowadays organizations are faced with increasing competition from technological innovations and unorganized and garbled environments and changes in customers' demand. Hence, organizations take on different forms to survive and maintain their positions. One of the newest forms of organization is the form of agile organizations. Agile organizations think beyond adaptation to change and tend to use potential opportunities in a turbulent environment. Agility seems not to be something that can only be considered for the private sector. Applying agility to the public sector can be a good area for growth and development in this sector. However, some people believe that expressing agility in this section is practically meaningless due to the absence of competition and speed in the public sector and in one word the absence of dynamism in its work and operational environment. But it should be regarded that the public sector needs more agility than the private sector due to the plurality of clients, the need to resolve their problems and their desires, its maturity and excellence in the areas of speed and quality, and above all, the reduction of cost and since the goal in the public sector is to achieve a high degree of flexibility and productivity simultaneously, agility capabilities can increase productivity in the public sector. Therefore, there is a need to study in this field owing to the importance of the subject and the role of the public sector and their affiliated units in the life of the community.

From the late 1980s to the mid-1990s, following extensive economic and political changes around the world, many efforts and actions have been made to identify the roots and factors affecting new business systems. In 1991, a group of experts observed that the rate of increase in changes in the business environment is faster than the ability of traditional organizations to adapt to it. These organizations were unable to take advantage of the opportunities offered to them, and this failure to adapt to the conditions of change may have resulted in bankruptcy and failure in the long run (Dove, 1994; Hormozi, 2001). Thus, for the first time in the wake of the meeting of many scientific experts, a new paradigm was published in a report titled "Manufacturing Firms in the 21st Century" by the Iacocca Institute and introduced to everyone and became known as agility. Agility is a set of

capabilities and competencies that result in the survival and development of the organization in the business environment (Khoshsima, 2003) and its basis is the alignment of information technology, employees, and processes in a homogeneous and flexible system. People have to go to the public sector to meet their many needs and expecting improvements in the processes, speeding up the work, the proper treatment of employees, and increasing productivity in the public sector.

In the past decade, the most companies chose rebuilding and reengineering strategy in response to environmental challenges and changes. Although these approaches have not always been successful, today many organizations and companies face the stable and uncertain process competition that has been intensified by technological innovation, changing market environments, and the changing needs of customers. This critical situation has led to major reforms in the strategic vision of the organization, business priorities, and the revision of traditional models and even relatively contemporary models. In other words, past approaches and solutions have lost their ability to cope with organizational challenges and contemporary external environments, or better to be replaced with new approaches and perspectives. Hence, one of the ways to respond to the organizational change factors is agility (Tait, 1998).

The Objectives of the investigation

The main objective of the research:

1 - Understanding the appropriate model in order to agilizing governmental Agencies.

The secondary objectives of the research:

2. Investigating the effective and impressionable factors of organizational agility in governmental Agencies.

3. Analyzing the facilitators and obstacles to agility in governmental Agencies.

A review of theoretical literature

The agility is to coordinate the organization's basic structure and goods and services with the needs of customers (Wieland & Wallenburg, 2012). Agility is the organization's continuous readiness to make changes and accepting them actively and learning from the changes along with the special attention to the values of customers (Conboy, 2015).

Agility is the ability to recognize and respond to opportunities and environmental threats with ease and speed and dexterity (Tallon &

Pinsonneault, 2011). Agility is a constant and continuous process, more like a continuous improvement, actually, agility means to become rather than to be (Doz, 2008; Holsapple & Li, 2008; Williams, Worley, & Lawler, 2013). We do not have a basic formula for agility development in the organization. A company can be increasingly fast, but not to be agile clearly and definably (Alzoubi, Al-otoum, & Albatainh, 2011). The methods of action to achieve organizational agility should be based on the conditions and competitive strategies of the organization in its peripheral world (Nejatian & Zarei, 2013). In a basic form, agility can be divided into two distinct parts: flexibility and adaptability (Falance, 2012).

Agile organization:

Peter Drucker believes that organizations must increase their flexibility and responsiveness based on their structural nature. Dynamism means the ability to move fast, easy, and active and the power of quick and intelligent thinking and the alignment of the organization with the changing needs of work and moving to gain competitive advantage. In the dynamic organization, the goals of the staff are aligned with the goals of the organization and the possibility to meet the changing needs of customers is more than a traditional or static organization. The dynamic organization has the ability to perform profitable operations in a competitive environment which is full of continuous, unpredictable and varied opportunities. The dynamism requires a quick and effective response to the needs of the market. The dynamism depends on the organization's movement in the direction of compatibility and adaption (Drucker, 1954).

Dynamic organization features

1 - High performance 2 - Appropriate organization plan 3 - Dominant strategy and process management 4. Strong leadership and elite and skilled manpower 5 - Rich and environmentally friendly culture 6 - Ready to face up to superficial and fundamental changes 7 - Ready to take advantage of new opportunities 8 - Innovative, creative and inventive 9 - Continuously improving your key capabilities 10 - Utilizing advanced technology (Saatchi, 2011).

The goals of the dynamic and agile organization

The goal of the dynamic organization is to enrich and honor customers and employees. These organizations are looking for mechanisms to meet the real needs of customers and they become inaccessible to

competitors by creating added value. In addition, dynamic organizations focus on the design or development of products that can respond to the unique needs of customers.

Paying attention to the human dignity and creating the necessary condition for development, thinking and dynamic and constructive working conditions in order to create a suitable environment for the participation of all employees, accelerate the process of growth and access to the goals of the organization, continuous improvement of duties, reducing costs, improving operational processes and trends, increasing job satisfaction and solving problems are the most important goals. Effective and efficient management should seek to identify employees' thoughts and morale, encourage thoughtful, creative, interested and innovative experts, disseminate the culture of collaborative participation in solving organizational problems, create and reinforce the spirit of team working in the staff and increase the productivity and improve the service quality (Saatchi, 2011).

Future Organizations

The organizations must first and foremost have a thorough understanding of their internal social changes and feel the need for development in order to meet their future needs. However, the degree of required evolution in it is determined depending on which position the organization is currently in. For this purpose, it is necessary to assess the current situation and the ideal situation with regard to the environmental conditions in order to adopt and implement the most appropriate strategy (Stability Management, Reform Management, Change Management). Alvin Toffler, in the Future Shock, presents an image of future organizations that has features such as dynamism, flexibility, innovation, and learning (Saatchi, 2011).

The capabilities of organizational agility:

Challenging competitive conditions have resulted in increasing the attention and addressing the customer satisfaction, so customer-friendly and timely services are considered as a prominent and key concept. The lifespan of products is short, and raising the quality is essential to survive the organizations. Markets have become increasingly diverse and globalized, and changes are continuous and unpredictable. Researchers from the Iacocca Institute argue that the new foundations of competition in today's world include: continuous and ongoing change, rapid response, quality improvement and social responsibilities. Survival and progress in these

turbulent conditions will be possible, in the event that the organizations have the necessary capabilities to recognize and understand the changes in the environment around them and give appropriate responses to any unexpected change (Sharifi & Zhang, 1999).

Therefore, if an organization seeks agility, it needs to consider a number of capabilities, and build and strengthen them as much as it can. The abilities of agility are the abilities that provide the required strength point so that the organization generates appropriate responses to the changes that have taken place. These abilities are considered as the basis for the preservation and development of agility (Lin, Chiu, & Tsen, 2006: 356; Bottani, 2009).

The abilities of agility are

✱ **Responsiveness**

The definition of responsiveness was started by Frey. Responsiveness is the ability of the organization to collect information from its business environment and to discover and overcome them. In other words, responsiveness is the ability to identify changes, quick reaction to them, and benefit from them. This definition consists of two steps, which in the first step, it is attempted to identify the environmental changes, and in the next step, it is tried to respond quickly to the changes and benefit from them. Therefore, the definition of responsiveness includes (Sharifi & Zhang, 1999):

1. Feeling, understanding and anticipating changes;
2. Rapid response to changes;
3. Modification and improvement of changes;

✱ **Competency**

Which is a broad set of abilities that provide the productivity of activities to meet the goals of the organization. In other words, the organization's ability to achieve its goals effectively and efficiently is called competency. This factor includes (Sharifi & Zhang, 1999):

1. Having a strategic perspective;
2. Appropriate hardware and software technologies;
3. The quality of the product;
4. The effectiveness of the cost;
5. High introduction of new products;
6. Change management;
7. The capability of knowledge and competency of individuals and delegation of authority to the individuals (empowerment);
8. Efficiency and effectiveness of operation;
9. Internal and external coordination;

10. Integration;

✱ Flexibility or adaptability

One of the most important elements of agile organizations is flexibility. In 1994, Dove introduced the flexibility as the cornerstone of organizational agility (Dove, 1994), and recently, Swaffrord et al. have confirmed such a view (Swafford, Ghosh, & Murthy, 2008). Many researchers have researched in the area of flexibility and there are numerous definitions in this regard. All of us have a general view of flexibility, while few know the details. Flexibility means the ability to adapt to the environment, in other words, the flexibility is to produce and provide distinct and diverse products and services and to achieve different goals with the same resources and equipment. Some scholars such as Sharifi and Zhang do not distinguish between agility and flexibility and they use them in place of each other (Sharifi & Zhang, 1999) while others differentiate between these two concepts, it seems that despite the similarities that the term "flexibility" has with agility, it is different. The flexibility is used to make changes that can be predetermined, so the term flexibility can be a background for agility, not corequisite or synonym for agility (Sharifi & Zhang, 1999).

The flexibility is considered in four areas as follows:
- Flexibility in product volume;
- Flexibility in product variety;
- Flexibility of organization;
- Flexibility of individuals;

✱ Speed

Which is the ability to perform operation in the shortest possible time. Speed includes (Sharifi & Zhang, 1999):
- The speed of delivering new products and services to the market;
- Fast and timely delivery;
- Speed at operation time;

Lin, Chiu, and Tsen (2006) argue that the underlying foundation of these capabilities is a method for integrating them within an interconnected and coordinate system. According to them, the ability of agility must be interpreted in the context of competitive strategic capabilities (Lin et al., 2006: 356, 396).

The importance of agility in government agencies

Agility is very important because the results and achievements of the agile government agencies are interesting and admirable. Studies show that these organizations achieve an increasing rate of success (about twenty percent) in the implementation of developmental actions toward their counterparts. In a research carried out by the A. T. Kearney Institute (2003) from 8 countries, the research findings showed that agile government agencies grew up by 53 percent in productivity, by 38 percent in employee satisfaction, and by 3 percent in customers or consumer satisfaction. Governments that invest more in areas of speed, flexibility, and responsiveness will likely achieve their goals, because political, social, economic, and technological factors have influenced governments and their decisions more rapidly, and citizens would need faster and more specialized services (Shahabi & Jafarnejhad, 2007).

Consequently, policies should be developed, implemented and performed faster than before, so that the agility can certainly help organizations and institutions accomplish this mission and achieve organizational goals. The existence of different needs and fields makes the organization continue the agile program. Some reasons for the need to move toward organizational agility can be: intense competition in the business environment, increasing customer expectations, globalization, cultural and social issues, skilled human resource limitations, changes in Information Technology, innovation and invention (Shahabi & Jafarnejhad, 2007).

Dimensions and principles of agility in the public sector

In the way of becoming more agile, a government institution has given different priorities by the government policy organization, but the results of the A.T.Kearney Institute 2003 study show that the most agile government agencies have considered seven dimensions: 1. leadership, 2. organizational change, 3. E-government, 4. customer service, 5. performance management, 6. cultures and value, 7. supply chain management (Shahabi & Rajabzadeh, 2005).

Research method

So far, there has been no recorded and systematic research on agility dimensions, especially in the governmental agencies and this research was conducted in order to count some factors that by taking them into

consideration and making the necessary amendments to them, adequate organizational agility can be achieved at an acceptable level.

The current research is qualitative (descriptive), the definition of qualitative research is not easy and we can understand this deep enough, when we have enough knowledge about this type of research. According to Powell, if there is a particular field in the research known to an extent and there is a possibility of preliminary modeling, hypothesis setting, or even the presentation of a theory about it, its positivism approach and quantitative method could be used. However, if the information available in a particular field is so small that even identifying the unknowing ones is problematic, the naturalistic approach and qualitative methods should be used.

Qualitative research cultivates two major tensions at the same time and has a contradiction: on the one hand, it seeks to analyze the human experiences with precise concepts of positivist, post- positivist, humanistic, and naturalistic, on the other hand, there is an inevitable critique of everything including the principles of humanistic and naturalistic due to the effect of the hermeneutic, post-empirical, post-modern, and feminist flows. Therefore, it believes in not so favorable views but unfavorable views of post-modern and naturalistic or critical and humanistic perspectives.

Authors such as Gall, Borg define qualitative research as a kind of review that "It is based on the assumption that individuals make social reality in terms of meanings and interpretations and these creations are both conditional and transitional (Delavar, 2017). The dominant method is the discovery of meanings and intensive interpretations in natural environments in such a way that the subject is the data derived from the induction of analysis. Ali Delavar believes: "qualitative research is a set of activities (such as observation, interviewing, extensive company in research activities) that each one helps the researcher in some way to obtain first-hand information on the subject of the research (Delavar, 2017). Hence the analytical, perceptual, and classified descriptions are obtained from the collected information. The main basis of the current research method is the case study. A case study is done more in a qualitative way with emphasis on processes and their perception and interpretation. Doing research using a case study method includes four steps: the expression of the problem and the choice of "case" (analysis unit), performing the field operation (data collection), organizing the data and compiling the reports. The researcher's attention is focused on a "case" in a case study. However, this unit may consist of multiple events and individuals or various processes. In this case, it is necessary to sample the components of the "analysis unit". In this study,

we use a case study as a research method that is one of the subcategories of descriptive research method.

The open, axial, and selective coding has been used for data analysis. In this study, comprehensive and complete information on various topics was obtained using open and semi-structured interviews with experts and managers of the taxation organization selected on the basis of snowball sampling. As open coding, the researchers began to write their text and code it after each interview and after completing it, they proceed to hold the next interview and codify it. Table 1 shows examples of conceptual codes and their corresponding sentences.

In this study, interviews were conducted until they reached the theoretical saturation. Axial coding was done after open coding and more general issues and concepts were extracted. Then, some comparisons were made between the main concepts and two general meta-organizational and organizational concepts were extracted by so-called hammering the concepts and issues at the selective coding stage.

Table 1. An example of tagging for initial codes generation

Some letter-writings with other organizations often take a long time and requests from banks or other agencies are time-consuming.	Lack of cooperation in some organizations
One of the things that is very noticeable is the clients who do not have accurate information about their records and they do not know exactly what documents should be submitted to file.	Lack of clients' awareness of the rules - Unawareness of people about organizational processes
How you can expect that we receive taxes from people who sometimes stay in their daily needs.	Depression in the economic situation - Low income
You are totally wrong to expect that collaboration is done in an organization whose staff cannot stand each other. When you want to put the energy needed for an organization, your sense of belonging to that organization should be positive.	Absenteeism and the spirit of non-participation – Pessimism about the future

Factors affecting organizational agility at the level of meta-organization

Factors identified and investigated at this level are in fact cases that are not in the control of the organization. Although the organization can influence them in different ways, they do not have a perfect control over them. Here are some issues and brief explanations of each one.

Table 2. The meta-organizational factors affecting organizational agility

General class	Issues	Conceptual codes
Meta-Organizational factors	Political attitude	People's lack of trust in the government - Change in people's view in recent years - Negative reaction to government decisions - No participation in government affairs - Disregard for Bayt al-mal consumption and loss of resources in unnecessary sectors
	Rules	The lack of clarity of some regulations – Failure of rules to comply with requirements - Some outdated rules - Overlap and interference of some rules with each other
	Inter-organizational relationships	The lack of cooperation of some organizations - Prolongation of the process of cooperation with organizations - Not justification of some organs with issues and regulations - Individual look at issues in some organizations – The absence of responsibility in organizations towards each other - Unawareness of different organizations to the goals of each other
	Media	Government media coverage in Iran- The huge audience of the media, especially the television - The great influence of the media on the people - The high level of government control over the media - The need to inform the people through radio and television - The profound and well-known influence of the media on advertisements and the disseminating a particular attitude
	Intelligent clients	The clients' lack of awareness of the rules - Unawareness of people about the organization's processes - Unfamiliarity with the process of file formation - The lack of mastery of many clients on computers and internet work – the existence of some kind of secret fear in applying new technology to some customers.

	Economic conditions	Depression in the economic situation - Low income - Sanctions and its impact on people's income - Inconsistent distribution of incomes - Low turnover - High tariffs - Exports are very tough and difficult.

The general concept of political attitude: This is about the way the society and its people look to the government and, more specifically, to the organization. If people's attitudes are negative towards government officials and managers in a society, it certainly affects how they interact with organization and government, so it can confront an organization like the taxation organization with a serious challenge. The absence of trust and interaction between people and government institutions is a major damage that affects the organization's direct performance and also affects people and their welfare level indirectly.

The general concept of the rules: In the area of rules, it may be possible to identify blind spots and bottlenecks in many organizations that impact the overall performance of the organization. In the taxation organization, more specifically, there are cases in which many tax evasion cases may be due to a lack of laws or a lack of specific law, so that this requires more attention and oversight by the legislature to resolve the problem. However, the managers of the taxation organization can advise the representatives of the nation on making the correction and supplementation rules with a full awareness.

The general concept of inter-organizational relations: Many of the things that need to be done in any organization depend on the performance of the units and other organizations so that if the performance of other organizations is not appropriate, it also affects your organization's overall performance. In the taxation organization, many issues are in direct contact with other agencies and organizations, including the handling of claims or cases in which an organization needs to obtain specific financial information and other organizations, including banks and the judiciary, should have the necessary cooperation as soon as possible so that the organization can do its part in the shortest possible time. Unfortunately, we now see a lot of neglects in this area that require rigorous scrutiny of taxation organization directors.

The general concept of the media: The unique role of the media in culture and the promotion of various issues in the present century cannot be ignored. Undoubtedly, failure to pay enough attention to this issue could have devastating consequences for any society. The existence of distrust

between people and the government today can be reduced to some extent by using different media. The media, in particular radio and television, can play a significant role in promoting tax culture, stating the role of taxation in the development and improvement of the country. It can also be effective in reducing tax evasion by clarifying how taxes are spent.

The concept of the intelligent clients: One of the main inefficiency factor of organizations, and in particular the taxation organization, is the lack of awareness of the clients about the rules and procedures of the organization. People's confusion in many cases in the taxation organization will prolong the process of handling the cases. Furthermore, according to the electronization of things today, unfortunately, we are observing that a large section of the people does not have the ability to use these systems and this also has an effect on the slowdown of affairs in the taxation organization. Therefore, an inclusive role can be considered in this case for the taxation organization to make people more aware of their organizational rules and procedures. However, it should also be expected this organization to spend on training people in order to succeed and attain its goals in due time.

The general concept of economic conditions: The economic situation affects all aspects of people's lives, and thus affects the performance of organizations such as the taxation organization. The main goal of the taxation organization is to achieve maximum tax, but in a society where people's income is negligible, taxing is difficult because even those who are willing to pay their taxes cannot do this due to their bad financial conditions. Similarly, many companies that are considered as important tax resources are unable to pay their taxes due to bad economic conditions and they are often in bankruptcy. Thus the introduction of an appropriate tax revenues is to improve the economic situation of the country.
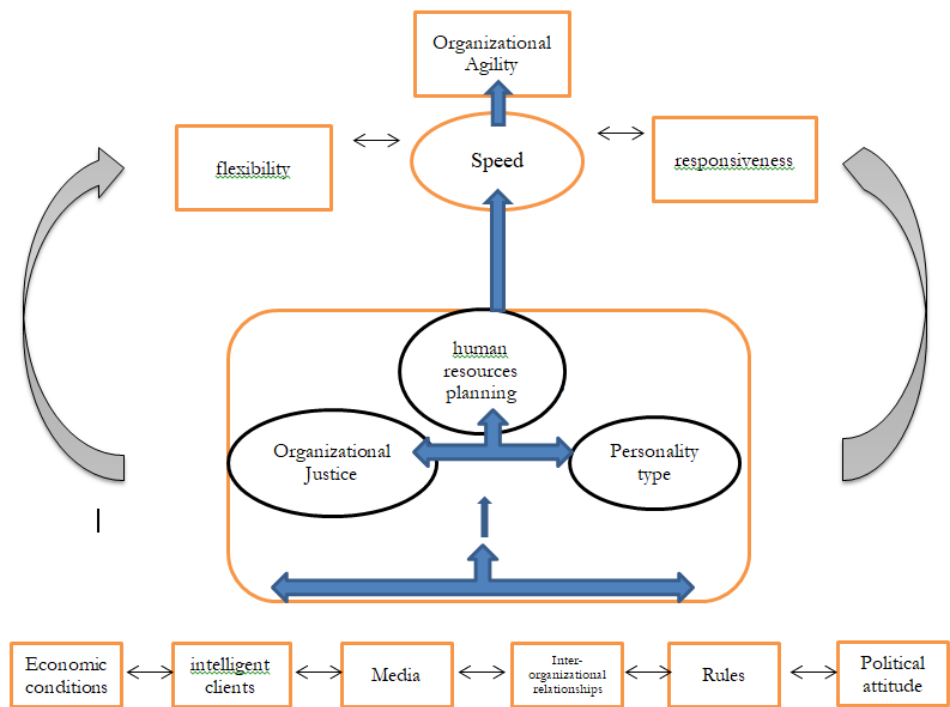
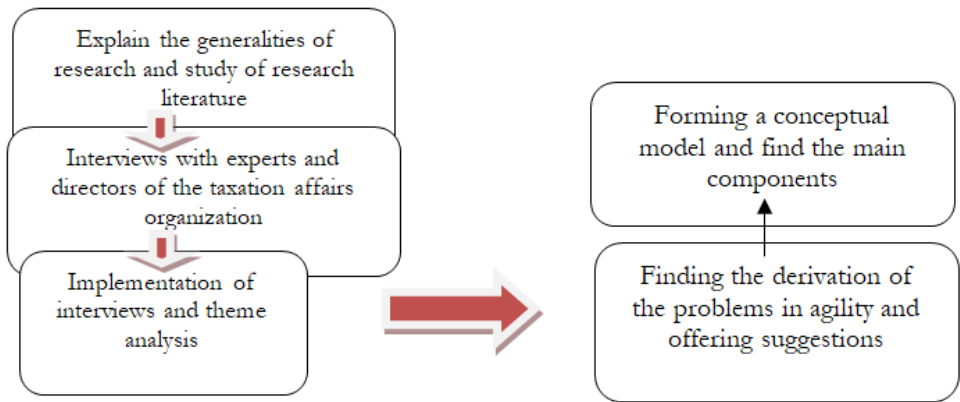**Chart 1**. The organizational agility model

Chart 2. The steps to conduct research schematically

Table 3. The research onion

Interpretativeism	Research philosophy
Inductive	Research approach
Case Study	Research method
Single sectional	Research timeframe
Interview	Data collection method

Conclusion

Organizational agility and achieving speed and flexibility in the affairs are a serious demand of all organizations. New era has created conditions for organizations that traditional ways of doing other things do not meet the diverse and constantly changing needs of customers and organizations need to take advantage of the new trends in service delivery for survival and continuity. Government agencies in the country are faced with serious challenges in providing services and we see massive public criticism about how we deliver services every day. this study was conducted as a case study to identify and count the factors affecting organizational agility in the form of a model. After conducting field researches and doing open and targeted interviews, the meta-organizational factors were identified in total, meta-organizational factors (economic conditions, media, inter-organizational relationships, intelligent clients, political rules and attitudes).

In the model, certain factors can be examined more closely that they have not received much attention in previous studies, factors such as media and intelligent clients that can play a constructive role in making the organization more agile. The personality type is a new issue whose relationship with agility has not already been investigated and it was considered in this model. Moreover, the agile-oriented planning discussion should not be overlooked since the development and movement towards agility is not possible without a compiled program. Ultimately, economic conditions can be considered as a key factor which can act as both motive and obstacle.

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