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Determinants of agile team performance: a systematic literature review

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Abstract

Purpose – This study aims to synthesize existing research on agile team performance in software development environments to identify key factors influencing team effectiveness. The review develops an integrative model in which organizational and structural conditions shape performance indirectly, through team processes, rather than as independent predictors.

Design/methodology/approach – A systematic literature review was conducted following established review procedures. Relevant studies were identified through searches of major academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, IEEE Xplore and ACM Digital Library. After applying predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria and screening procedures, 35 studies were retained for analysis. The selected studies were analyzed using thematic synthesis to identify recurring constructs and relationships in the literature.

Findings – The review identifies three major categories of factors influencing agile team performance: team processes, team structure and composition and organizational conditions. Team processes such as communication, coordination, psychological safety and team reflexivity play a central role in enabling collaboration and learning. Structural characteristics including team autonomy, shared leadership and skill diversity influence how teams organize work and make decisions. Organizational conditions such as management support and collaborative culture further shape the effectiveness of agile teams.

Practical implications – The findings suggest that organizations seeking to improve agile team performance should emphasize effective communication practices, support team autonomy and ensure that teams are composed of members with complementary skills. In addition, management support and supportive organizational cultures are important for enabling agile teams to operate effectively.

Originality/value – This review synthesizes fragmented research on agile team performance into an integrative process model, showing that organizational and structural conditions shape performance indirectly, through team processes and emergent states. Grounded primarily in software engineering and information systems research and informed by established teamwork theory, the review offers a mechanism-based account of agile team effectiveness rather than a list of isolated factors, and surfaces two further gaps in the literature: the predominantly co-located origin of the underlying evidence base and inconsistency in how agile team performance is operationalized across studies.

Keywords Agile capability, Information systems development, Team performance, IT governance, Systematic literature review

Paper type Literature review

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1. Introduction

Agile methodologies have become one of the most widely adopted approaches for organizing software development projects in dynamic and rapidly changing environments. Agile development emphasizes iterative delivery, continuous customer feedback and close collaboration among team members to respond effectively to evolving requirements and technological change (Beck *et al.*, 2001).

Software development requires coordination among individuals with diverse technical skills. Agile approaches organize work around small cross-functional teams that collaborate intensively throughout short development cycles. As a result, the performance of agile teams has become a critical factor influencing project success, product quality and delivery speed. Empirical research consistently demonstrates that effective teamwork contributes to improved outcomes in software development environments.

Prior studies highlight the importance of teamwork quality in determining team effectiveness. Teamwork quality includes factors such as communication, coordination of expertise, cohesion, trust and mutual support among team members. Evidence from agile development teams shows that these factors positively influence team performance, learning and work satisfaction (Lindsjørn *et al.*, 2016). Similarly, research examining teamwork models identifies leadership behaviors, team orientation and peer feedback as key elements that support effective collaboration and team performance (Jaroliya and Gyanchandani, 2022; Strode *et al.*, 2022). These findings suggest that agile team performance is influenced by a combination of interpersonal processes and structural team characteristics.

Other studies have examined how organizational and process-related factors influence agile team effectiveness. For example, team autonomy and competence have been shown to influence software development agility through communication and collaborative decision-making processes (Rathor *et al.*, 2024). Team agility has also been conceptualized as an emergent property of complex adaptive systems (Werder and Maedche, 2018), complemented by team delivery capability (Xia *et al.*, 2024). Research also indicates that psychological safety, team climate and social interaction patterns play an important role in enabling learning and performance within agile teams (Ahmad *et al.*, 2022).

Despite the growing volume of research on agile teams, the literature remains fragmented across several academic fields including information systems, software engineering, project management and organizational behavior. Individual studies often investigate specific aspects of agile teamwork such as leadership, communication, team structure or psychological safety without integrating these insights into a comprehensive understanding of agile team performance. Consequently, knowledge about the determinants of agile team effectiveness remains dispersed across individual studies. Earlier systematic literature reviews (SLRs) established this approach's value for the field (Dybå and Dingsøyr, 2008) but did not focus specifically on team-level performance determinants.

Systematic literature reviews provide a rigorous approach for synthesizing existing research and developing a consolidated understanding of a research domain. Such reviews systematically identify, evaluate and synthesize relevant studies to summarize existing knowledge and highlight research gaps (Paré *et al.*, 2015). By integrating findings from multiple studies, systematic reviews enable researchers to identify recurring themes, patterns and relationships within the literature.

Although research on agile development teams has expanded considerably, there remains limited synthesis of the determinants of agile team performance. Existing studies frequently examine individual determinants in isolation, which makes it difficult to understand how different factors collectively influence agile team effectiveness. Furthermore, the

coordination mechanisms and contextual conditions that enable agile teams to achieve high performance have not been comprehensively consolidated in the literature.

To address these limitations, this study conducts a systematic literature review of research on agile team performance. The review aims to synthesize existing evidence and provide a structured understanding of the factors that influence teamwork effectiveness in agile development environments.

The study is guided by the following research questions:

RQ1. What key factors influence agile team performance, according to the existing literature?

RQ2. Which team processes and coordination mechanisms are associated with agile team effectiveness, and how do they relate to structural and organizational conditions?

RQ3. Which organizational and structural conditions enable or constrain agile team performance and how do they relate to team processes?

This review makes three contributions to the literature. First, rather than cataloguing determinants of agile team performance as an unordered list, it synthesizes the reviewed evidence into an integrative process model in which organizational conditions and team structural characteristics operate as antecedent, enabling factors, while team processes and emergent states, including communication, coordination, psychological safety and reflexivity, function as the proximal mechanism through which those antecedents translate into performance outcomes. This addresses a tendency in prior work to treat team-level determinants as parallel, independent predictors rather than as elements of a coherent causal structure. Second, the review highlights a boundary condition that has received little attention to date: much of the underlying evidence on team processes was generated in co-located team settings, yet agile software development increasingly occurs in remote and hybrid arrangements (Adzgauskaite *et al.*, 2025; Khanna *et al.*, 2024; de Souza Santos and Ralph, 2022). Whether communication, coordination and psychological safety operate with the same strength once teams are geographically distributed remains unclear, and this review makes that gap explicit rather than assuming continuity across contexts. Third, the review draws attention to substantial heterogeneity in how agile team performance has been operationalized across studies, spanning productivity and delivery measures, software quality indicators, project success ratings and team satisfaction, a heterogeneity that complicates comparison of findings and has not been made explicit in prior reviews of this literature. In addition to these three contributions, the review is deliberately scoped to agile teams in software development contexts, offering a more precise, mechanism-level account than broader cross-context reviews of agile team effectiveness (e.g. Steegh *et al.*, 2025) while still drawing on established teamwork theory (e.g. Ilgen *et al.*, 2005; Edmondson, 1999) to ground the software-development-specific findings in established models of team functioning. General models of teamwork similarly treat team processes as the mechanism linking team- and organization-level conditions to outcomes (Salas *et al.*, 2005; Kozlowski and Bell, 2013).

2. Methodology

2.1 Research design

This study adopts an SLR approach to synthesize existing research on agile team performance. Systematic literature reviews provide a structured and transparent method for

identifying, evaluating and integrating findings from a body of research (Kitchenham and Charters, 2007; Tranfield *et al.*, 2003). This follows established guidance on literature review methodology (Snyder, 2019; Brereton *et al.*, 2007).

Research on agile software development has expanded substantially during the past decade, with scholars examining topics such as teamwork quality, team autonomy, leadership distribution, coordination mechanisms and psychological safety within agile teams (Lindsjørn *et al.*, 2016; Hennel and Rosenkranz, 2021; Malik *et al.*, 2021; Strode *et al.*, 2022). However, these studies are distributed across several research domains, including software engineering, information systems, project management and organizational behavior. Consequently, empirical insights into agile team performance remain fragmented across disciplines. A systematic literature review is therefore appropriate for consolidating these dispersed contributions and identifying recurring themes in the literature. The review process followed established guidelines for systematic reviews in management and software engineering research (Kitchenham and Charters, 2007; Tranfield *et al.*, 2003). Reporting of the study selection procedure was aligned with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses 2020 framework (Page *et al.*, 2021).

2.2 Search strategy

A comprehensive search strategy was developed to identify studies examining team performance and related constructs in agile software development environments. Multiple academic databases were selected to ensure broad disciplinary coverage and to minimize the risk of omitting relevant publications.

The primary databases included Scopus and Web of Science Core Collection due to their extensive indexing of peer-reviewed journals and citation tracking capabilities. To capture research within the software engineering and computer science communities, IEEE Xplore and the ACM Digital Library were also searched. Additional databases such as ScienceDirect, Wiley Online Library and Emerald Insight were included because they index journals in information systems, project management and organizational research.

Google Scholar was used as a supplementary tool for backward and forward citation chaining rather than as a primary search source (Haddaway *et al.*, 2015).

The search covered studies published between 2014 and 2025. This time period reflects a phase during which research on agile methodologies increasingly focused on team-level dynamics, collaboration mechanisms and performance outcomes rather than on early adoption debates.

Search expressions were developed iteratively to capture variations in terminology across the literature. Keywords associated with agile development approaches, including agile software development, Scrum and extreme programming, were combined with constructs related to teamwork and performance. These constructs included team performance, team effectiveness, teamwork quality, team dynamics, autonomy, leadership, communication and psychological safety. Boolean operators were used to combine search terms and refine results.

Table 1 summarizes the search strategy and total records identified.

Following the database search, backward and forward citation tracking was conducted to identify additional relevant studies. Citation chaining is widely recommended in systematic literature review methodology because it helps identify influential publications that may not appear in keyword searches (Wohlin, 2014).

2.3 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion and exclusion criteria were defined before screening began to ensure transparency and reduce bias (Kitchenham and Charters, 2007; Tranfield *et al.*, 2003).

Table 1. Search strategy and total records identified

Category	Details
Databases searched	Scopus; Web of Science core collection; IEEE Xplore; ACM Digital Library; ScienceDirect; Wiley Online Library; Emerald Insight
Search string (adapted to each database's native syntax)	("agile software development" or "agile team*" OR Scrum OR "extreme programming") AND ("team performance" OR "team effectiveness" OR "teamwork quality" OR "team dynamics" OR autonomy OR leadership OR communication OR "psychological safety")
Total records identified (per Figure 1)	612 (500 after deduplication)

Note(s): Figures are taken from the PRISMA flow diagram in Figure 1; the per-database breakdown is not reported separately

Studies were included if they examined agile software development teams and addressed team-level constructs related to performance or effectiveness. Relevant constructs included teamwork quality, coordination, communication, leadership, autonomy, psychological safety, self-organization and team agility. Both empirical studies and theory-based research investigating team dynamics within agile environments were considered.

Only peer-reviewed journal articles and conference proceedings were included, reflecting publication norms in software engineering, where high-quality empirical work often appears at leading conferences (Kitchenham *et al.*, 2009).

Publications were excluded if they focused exclusively on technical aspects of software development, such as programming techniques or software architecture, without addressing team-level mechanisms. Studies examining organizational transformation without analyzing team processes were also excluded. Grey literature, including technical reports, dissertations, editorials and white papers, was not included in the review. The analysis was limited to publications written in English.

2.4 Selection process

The study selection process followed four stages: identification, screening, eligibility assessment and final inclusion. Records retrieved from database searches were first exported into reference management software, where duplicate entries were removed. A total of 612 records were identified through database searching, of which 112 were removed as duplicates, leaving 500 records for title/abstract screening. Duplicate removal is an essential step in systematic reviews because repeated records can distort the screening process (Kitchenham *et al.*, 2009).

In the screening stage, titles and abstracts of the remaining records were reviewed to determine their relevance to agile software development teams and team performance constructs. Publications that focused exclusively on technical development practices or software tools without examining team dynamics were excluded during this stage. At this stage, 420 records were excluded and 80 records were retained for full-text assessment.

The remaining studies were subjected to full-text assessment to evaluate their eligibility. Each article was examined against the predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria to determine its conceptual relevance and methodological clarity. Studies that mentioned agile teams only marginally or did not analyze team processes or performance outcomes were excluded. At this stage, 45 records were excluded, consistent with the counts reported in Figure 1.

After completing this procedure, 35 studies met all selection criteria and were retained for analysis.

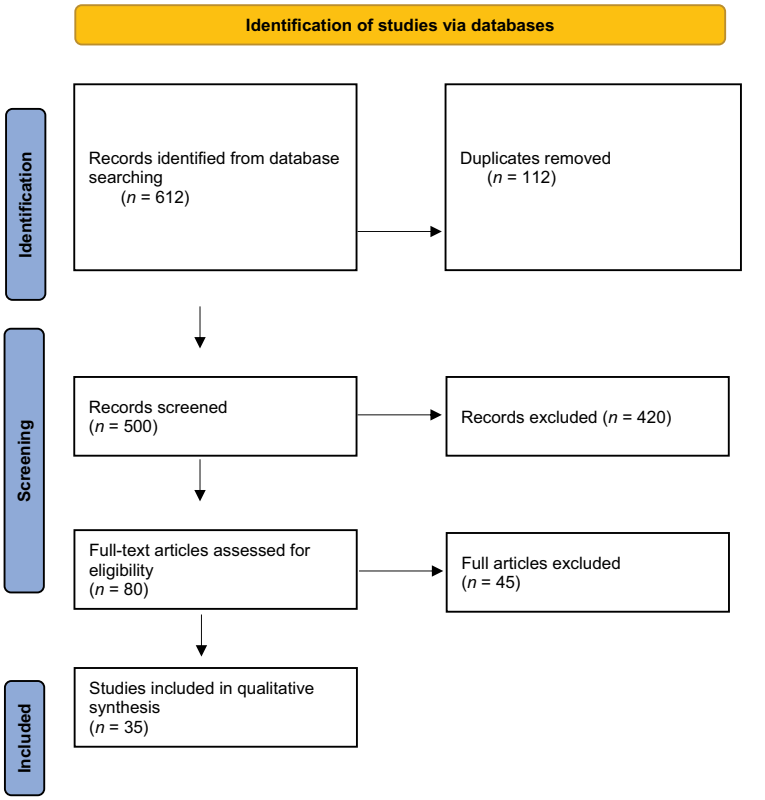

Figure 1. Page *et al.* (2021) flow diagram

Records excluded at full-text review were removed according to five criteria:

(1) technical focus without team-level analysis;

(2) organizational-transformation focus without analysis of team processes;

(3) marginal or nonsubstantive treatment of agile teams;

(4) grey literature (technical reports, dissertations, editorials and white papers); and

(5) publications not written in English.

The distribution of exclusions across these five criteria individually is not reported; only the aggregate counts at each stage, shown in Figure 1, are presented.

2.5 Data extraction and coding

Data extraction was conducted using a structured coding framework designed to capture key characteristics of the included studies. Coding and synthesis followed established procedures for thematic synthesis of qualitative and mixed-methods research in systematic reviews (Thomas and Harden, 2008). Information extracted from each article included publication year, research method, study context, theoretical foundations, constructs examined and reported performance outcomes.

The coding process followed an iterative procedure. Initial coding identified recurring constructs across the literature, including autonomy, communication quality, shared mental models, leadership structure, teamwork quality, psychological safety and coordination mechanisms. These constructs were then grouped into broader categories representing major dimensions of agile team functioning.

3. Results

3.1 Descriptive analysis of the studies

The systematic review resulted in a final sample of 35 studies published between 2014 and 2025. The increasing number of publications during this period reflects growing scholarly interest in understanding the mechanisms that influence team performance in agile software development environments. The emergence of agile methodologies has shifted research attention toward collaborative development practices, team coordination mechanisms and the organizational conditions that support agile work.

Quantitative survey research was the most frequently used method. For example, Lindsjørn *et al.* (2016) demonstrated that teamwork quality significantly influences team productivity and project success, and Malik *et al.* (2021) showed that psychological empowerment predicts stronger collaboration and effectiveness. Among the subset of included studies with verified methodological detail reported in Table 2, quantitative survey designs predominate, consistent with the pattern described above.

Qualitative case studies also featured prominently. Moe *et al.* (2010) examined coordination practices, highlighting self-organization and collective decision-making, while other qualitative work has investigated large-scale environments where multiple teams collaborate (Dingsøyr and Moe, 2014).

Several studies employed mixed-method designs, using interviews or observations to identify teamwork practices before testing relationships with survey data, capturing both social dynamics and measurable outcomes.

The reviewed studies were conducted in software firms, technology companies and large-scale agile environments. This diversity of contexts indicates that agile team practices are widely adopted across industries and that research on agile teamwork is relevant to multiple organizational settings. Despite differences in research methods and contexts, many studies examined similar constructs related to team processes, team structure and organizational support.

3.1.1 Heterogeneity in the measurement of agile team performance. A further observation from the descriptive analysis concerns how agile team performance itself was measured across the reviewed studies. Rather than relying on a shared outcome construct, the literature operationalizes performance through a range of distinct measures, including productivity and delivery-related indicators, software quality, project success ratings and team satisfaction. Table 2 illustrates this heterogeneity using studies discussed elsewhere in this review. This inconsistency in outcome measurement complicates direct comparison of effect patterns across studies and has not been made explicit in prior syntheses of this literature; it is treated here as a distinct methodological gap that future research, including future systematic reviews and meta-analyses, should address through a shared outcome taxonomy.

3.2 Thematic findings

The thematic synthesis of the literature identified three major categories of factors influencing agile team performance: team processes, team structure and composition and

Table 2. Illustrative heterogeneity in the operationalization of agile team performance across included studies

Study	Outcome construct measured	Method
Lindsjørn *et al.* (2018)	Team productivity; project success	Survey (quantitative)
Schmidt *et al.* (2014)	Team performance	Survey (quantitative)
Malik *et al.* (2021)	Team performance and collaboration effectiveness	Survey (quantitative)
Moe *et al.* (2010)	Coordination and collaboration effectiveness (qualitative)	Case study
Tripp *et al.* (2016)	Job satisfaction	Survey (quantitative)
Rathor *et al.* (2024)	Software development agility	Survey (quantitative)
Alami *et al.* (2024)	Software quality	Survey/mixed methods
Hennel and Rosenkranz (2021)	Software quality; project outcomes	Case study
Buvik and Tkalich (2021)	Team performance (self-rated efficiency, quality and overall performance)	Survey (236 members, 43 teams)
Jaroliya and Gyanchandani (2022)	Team performance (leader-rated)	Survey (354 respondents)
Dingsøyr *et al.* (2024)	Project success (large-scale, multiteam)	Survey (196 participants, 34 teams, four projects)
Moe *et al.* (2021)	Team autonomy classification and alignment mechanisms (qualitative, not a performance outcome)	Multiple case studies (two large-scale telecom organizations)

Note(s): This table reports outcome measures verified against the original publications for 12 of the 35 included studies, illustrating the pattern of heterogeneity described above. Extending this table to the remaining included studies would further strengthen the empirical basis for the shared outcome taxonomy recommended in the Future Research section

organizational conditions. These themes emerged consistently across the reviewed studies and reflect the multilevel nature of teamwork in agile software development environments.

3.2.1 Team processes. RQ1 examines the factors influencing agile team performance. A consistent finding across the reviewed studies is the importance of team processes that facilitate collaboration and coordination among team members. Agile development practices emphasize continuous interaction through mechanisms such as daily standup meetings, sprint reviews and retrospectives. These practices create opportunities for teams to exchange information, coordinate tasks and adjust their strategies during development cycles.

Communication quality emerges as one of the most frequently cited drivers of team effectiveness in agile environments. Empirical research shows that frequent and transparent communication improves coordination and reduces misunderstandings among team members. Lindsjørn *et al.* (2016) demonstrated that communication and coordination are central elements of teamwork quality and are strongly associated with project success in agile teams. Similarly, Schmidt *et al.* (2014) showed that agile practices enhance team performance by supporting shared mental models that allow team members to anticipate each other's actions and coordinate complex tasks more effectively. This theoretical mechanism has also been examined directly in agile contexts using shared mental models theory (Yu and Petter, 2014).

Psychological safety is another process repeatedly identified in the literature. Psychological safety refers to a shared belief that team members can express ideas and concerns without fear of negative consequences (Edmondson, 1999). Studies examining agile development teams show that psychologically safe environments encourage open discussion of problems and learning behaviors, which contribute to improved software quality and project outcomes (Alami *et al.*, 2023; Hennel and Rosenkranz, 2021).

Team reflexivity also contributes to agile team effectiveness. Reflexivity refers to the collective process through which teams evaluate their goals, strategies and work practices to improve performance. Agile retrospectives are designed specifically to support such reflection and learning. Research suggests that teams engaging in regular reflection are better able to adapt their work practices and respond to changing project requirements (Buvik and Tkalich, 2021). Consistent with this, reflexive software development teams have been found to outperform less reflexive teams on delivery outcomes (Kakar, 2017).

3.2.2 Team structure and composition. *RQ2* examines the structural mechanisms that shape agile team performance and how these relate to team processes. Agile methodologies rely on cross-functional teams composed of members with complementary technical skills and expertise. Structural characteristics of teams therefore influence how tasks are organized and how team members collaborate during development activities.

Team autonomy is widely recognized as a defining feature of agile team design. Autonomous teams are responsible for organizing their own work processes and making decisions regarding task allocation and development practices. Empirical studies show that autonomy enhances team motivation and adaptability in complex project environments (Tripp *et al.*, 2016). Research also indicates that autonomous teams are better able to respond to evolving customer requirements and technological challenges (Rathor *et al.*, 2024). Autonomous teams must also actively negotiate the boundaries of that autonomy with the surrounding organization (Mikalsen *et al.*, 2019).

Leadership arrangements also influence team performance in agile environments. Rather than relying on hierarchical leadership structures, agile teams frequently adopt shared leadership models in which leadership responsibilities are distributed among team members. Strode *et al.* (2022) argued that shared leadership improves coordination and collective problem-solving by enabling team members to contribute their expertise during decision-making processes. This pattern extends to multinational agile teams, where leadership style shapes collaborative attitudes and outcomes (Quill *et al.*, 2024).

Team size and skill diversity further affect team effectiveness. Smaller teams facilitate communication and reduce coordination complexity, while teams composed of members with diverse expertise are better able to address complex development tasks. Research on agile development teams indicates that balanced skill distribution supports collaboration and improves project outcomes (Dingsøyr *et al.*, 2024). Individual-level traits also matter: personality has been linked to Scrum team effectiveness, alongside skill diversity (Truong *et al.*, 2025).

3.2.3 Organizational conditions. *RQ3* concerns the role of the organizational environment in shaping agile team performance and how organizational conditions relate to team processes. The literature indicates that agile teams do not operate in isolation but are embedded within broader organizational structures that influence how they function.

Organizational culture plays an important role in enabling team effectiveness. Prior research indicates that organizational culture and employee engagement significantly influence employee performance and work outcomes (Singh and Randhawa, 2020; Hennel and Rosenkranz, 2021). Agile teams operate within broader organizational systems, including digital workplace practices affecting engagement (Rani and Suneja, 2025); consistent with the proposed model, agile working relates to performance partly through

team engagement (Peeters *et al.*, 2022). Management support also emerges as a key organizational factor influencing agile team performance. Leadership commitment to agile practices facilitates the allocation of resources, training programs and organizational alignment required for agile teams to operate effectively (Malik *et al.*, 2021). Comparable evidence from other sectors confirms this pattern (Foli and Caesar, 2020).

Coordination mechanisms at the organizational level become particularly important in large-scale agile environments where multiple teams collaborate on complex projects. Studies examining large-scale agile development highlight the importance of governance structures and communication mechanisms that enable coordination across teams (Dingsøyr and Moe, 2014). Case studies identify specific enabling mechanisms, including synchronization meetings and boundary-spanning roles (Bjørnson *et al.*, 2018), while others highlight the difficulty of tailoring standard practices to large, multiteam programs (Rolland *et al.*, 2016). The findings indicate that agile team performance emerges from the interaction of team processes, structural team characteristics and organizational conditions. These factors operate at different levels but collectively shape the effectiveness of agile software development teams.

3.3 Integrative synthesis: an antecedent–process–outcome model of agile team performance

The findings reported under *RQ1–RQ3* are not independent of one another. Read together, they indicate that organizational conditions and team structural characteristics do not influence agile team performance directly, but operate as antecedent, enabling factors whose effects are carried by team processes and emergent states. This section makes that mediating logic explicit, drawing on relationships already implied by individual studies within the reviewed literature but not previously consolidated into a single model.

Three pieces of evidence from the reviewed studies support this structure. First, team autonomy and competence have been shown to influence software development agility specifically through communication and collaborative decision-making, rather than directly (Rathor *et al.*, 2024), indicating that a structural antecedent (autonomy) operates through a team process (communication and decision-making). Second, psychological empowerment, a structural and motivational condition, has been linked to team performance via its effect on collaboration, again consistent with a process-mediated rather than a direct pathway (Malik *et al.*, 2021). Third, supportive organizational cultures have been shown to foster the psychological safety that in turn strengthens teamwork effectiveness and software quality, rather than acting on performance outcomes directly (Hennel and Rosenkranz, 2021). In each case, a structural or organizational condition is associated with performance only in conjunction with or through a team process.

Accordingly, this review proposes that: (*P1*) organizational conditions, particularly management support and organizational culture, shape the structural design choices available to agile teams, including autonomy and shared leadership arrangements; (*P2*) structural characteristics of teams influence performance indirectly, through their effect on team processes and emergent states such as communication, coordination, psychological safety and reflexivity; and (*P3*) team processes and emergent states function as the proximal mechanism through which organizational and structural antecedents are translated into agile team performance outcomes, including productivity, software quality and team satisfaction. Agile team performance, in this view, cannot be explained by any single factor; it emerges from the alignment of organizational conditions, team structure and team processes, with team processes carrying the effects of the more distal antecedents.

4. Implications for research and practice

4.1 Theoretical implications

This review's primary theoretical contribution is the antecedent–process–outcome model developed in Section 3.3, which reframes team-level determinants as operating at different causal distances rather than as a flat list of correlates. Studies that treat autonomy, shared leadership or organizational culture as directly predicting performance, without accounting for the team processes through which they operate, risk misspecifying the underlying causal structure.

Beyond the model, the co-located origin of most team-process evidence suggests existing teamwork-quality and psychological-safety models may need re-examination in remote and hybrid contexts. Similarly, the measurement heterogeneity in Table 2 shows the field lacks a shared operationalization of performance, a first-order concern for theory-building, not a footnote.

4.2 Practical implications

The practical implications follow directly from the mediation model. Organizations should not treat autonomy, shared leadership or culture as ends in themselves; these conditions improve performance only when translated into stronger communication, coordination, psychological safety and reflexivity. Structural redesign alone, such as granting more autonomy, without attention to whether it improves team processes, is unlikely to produce the intended gains.

Second, organizations operating remote or hybrid agile teams should not assume co-located practices transfer directly; managers should monitor whether communication and psychological safety are sustained under distributed conditions. Third, organizations benchmarking performance across teams should be explicit about which outcome, productivity, quality, delivery speed or satisfaction, is being compared, given the field's measurement inconsistency.

5. Limitations and future research

Despite the contributions of this review, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the review focused on studies published in peer-reviewed journals and conference proceedings written in English. As a result, relevant studies published in other languages or grey literature may not have been included. Second, although multiple databases were searched, it is possible that some relevant studies were not captured due to variations in terminology used to describe agile teams and team performance.

Future research can extend this work in several directions. First, empirical studies are needed to test the mediating relationships proposed in this review, specifically whether organizational conditions and team structural characteristics influence performance indirectly through team processes and emergent states, rather than directly. Second, given that much of the underlying evidence on team processes originates from co-located settings, future research should examine whether communication, coordination and psychological safety operate with the same strength and function in remote and hybrid agile teams, building on emerging work in this area (Adzgauskaite *et al.*, 2025; Khanna *et al.*, 2024; de Souza Santos and Ralph, 2022). Third, future systematic reviews and meta-analyses should work toward a shared outcome taxonomy for agile team performance to address the measurement heterogeneity identified in Table 2, enabling more direct comparison of findings across studies. Finally, longitudinal studies may provide deeper insights into how agile team processes evolve over time and influence project outcomes.

6. Conclusion

This review synthesized existing research on the determinants of agile team performance. Based on 35 studies, it finds that team processes and emergent states function as the proximal

mechanism through which organizational conditions and team structure translate into performance outcomes, rather than as a parallel category of determinants.

This model is the review's central theoretical contribution. It also surfaces two further gaps: the co-located origin of the team-process evidence base and the inconsistent operationalization of performance across studies. Addressing these, alongside testing the proposed mediating relationships, is a promising agenda for future research.

For practice, the findings suggest that organizations seeking to improve agile team performance should not treat team autonomy, shared leadership and management support as ends in themselves but as conditions that must be translated into effective communication, coordination and psychologically safe team climates to shape performance outcomes.

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