

Systemic perspective in Organisations

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Abstract

A systemic perspective allows one to look at the whole context rather than focusing on specific parts of the system. Previous literature has elaborated on the usage of systemic perspective in organisations as a coaching method. Although the systemic perspective is widely used in organisational and team settings, it still lacks scientific input and evaluation. In this thesis study, we aimed to dig deeper into the importance of using a systemic perspective in organisations. The following research comprised of two parts (1) A systematic literature review exploring systemic perspective in organisations; and (2) validation and further exploration of the importance of systemic perspective in organisational settings through responses of five professionals who have experienced systemic perspective in organisational or team setting collected via semi-structured interviews. After conducting a thematic analysis, we confirmed some findings from the literature review. Furthermore, we made some discoveries. In conclusion, a systemic perspective provides a positive outlook toward the organisation and the individuals. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

Keywords: Systemic perspective, Systemic coaching, Organizations, Teams

Systemic perspective in Organisations

A systemic perspective in organisations aims to make individuals more aware of their social context. It is a view of the whole and not focused on the individual parts. This view acknowledges that all people and elements in a team are interrelated and continuously influence each other. (Scholtens et al., 2020). An organisation can be conceptualised as a complex machine, where each part depends on the other. Dysfunction of one component could lead to hampering the whole organisation. Hence, it is essential to address the problem in a single team by considering the entire context (Hawkins, 2019). In organisations, in case of a conflict between team members or a team dysfunction, resolutions are often focused on the individuals; however, when one looks at the larger picture, a different perspective on the matter may develop. For instance, similar issues might be present throughout the different parts of the organisation. This is often because the whole organisation is interrelated in some or the other way. Hence, it is essential to address the problem in a single team by considering the whole context (Scholtens et al., 2020). Hawkins (2017) mentioned that various approaches to working with groups focus on relationships between team members and less on the relationships between the team and the external environment outside the team, that is, the organisational systems. This view acknowledges that all groups' peoples and elements are interrelated and continuously influence one another (Scholtens et al., 2020).

Even though a systemic perspective on team functioning may be promising, empirical evidence is limited. The theoretical framework describing the systemic view of team coaching is mainly lacking (Lawrence, 2021). This paper aims to shed light on various literature on using a systemic perspective in a team or organisational context and further answer the research question, "Why would a systemic perspective be useful in the organisational or team setting?" We investigate the following by conducting a two-part study;

(1) Systematically reviewing the pieces of literature on systemic perspective in organizations.

(2) Furthermore, performing qualitative analysis using semi-structured interview to study the practical aspect of this perspective from professionals who have experienced systemic perspective in organisations or in team setting.

Study 1: Literature review

Method

Search Strategy

In the literature review, we searched literature up to 28th February 2022. The search algorithm included ‘Systemic perspective’ and ‘organisational functioning’ or ‘organisational development. Further, research was performed using the keyword ‘systemic team coaching’ or ‘systemic coaching’. Most of the literature was found from PsychINFO, Google Scholar, and Business source primer databases. The literature search was not restricted to any publication year, however, it was restricted to the English language. Both empirical and non-empirical studies were included in the search, comprising books, reports, thesis, and articles. Empirical studies, including literature reviews, qualitative and quantitative research, were considered.

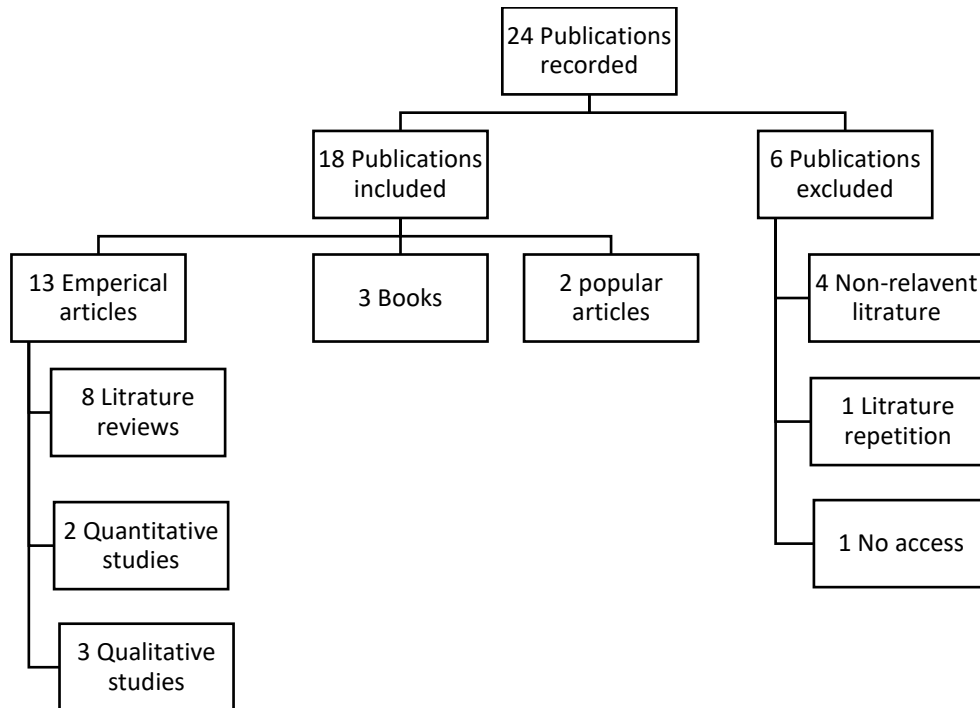
Results

In total, 24 publications were found (see Figure 1). Six publications were excluded from the literature, out of which four pieces of literature were not of relevance; that is, they focused on the application of systemic perspective in family therapy. One article was excluded as it could not be accessed and one was repetition from previously studied literature. Out of 24 publications, only 18 were included in the final literature search (see Table 1). This includes 13 academic articles consisting of quantitative, qualitative studies and

literature reviews. Furthermore, three books were used to define systemic perspectives in the organisation. The literature also included two popular articles. The publications cited in the literature review are not older than 1993.

Figure 1

Flowchart of systematic literature review



Systemic perspective in organisations

Six out of eighteen publications reported on applying a systemic perspective in organisations. According to Jensen (2017), the systemic view in organisations is similar to the functioning of an entire living organism. In general, like a plant with various parts like roots, leaves, seeds, and flowers, where each element plays an essential role in its survival; however, this survival also depends on the surrounding environment (Jensen, 2017). Similarly, the systemic perspective tends to look at the problem in the context of its surroundings rather than looking at it in isolation and, simultaneously, consider various parts of the organisation (Tate, 2010). Systemic perspectives result from interactional dynamics

between components in a system (Lawrence, 2019), where a system is defined as a bunch of interdependent or interacting entities forming a whole. Instead of looking at an organisation having separate parts, Rousseau (2015) mentioned the importance of looking at it as a whole, as a system.

‘The crises we face are systemic. To overcome those crises, we need to understand how systems work. To arrive at such an understanding, we need to think systemically.’ (Rousseau, 2015, p. 523)

The system is a dynamic entity, where relationships and communications between team members create a whole pattern (Tosey, 1993).

Furthermore, a systemic perspective allows us to consider the looking-glass nature of the world; that is, the world is neither wholly rational nor irrational. A system is understood as linear and mechanistic (Tosey, 1993). However, a systemic perspective describes the system as circular and recursive. A systemic perspective enables one to identify more than one possible point of view on a situation (Bateson 1988 as cited in Tosey 1993).

Systemic team coaching in organisations

Seven publications reported on using a systemic perspective in team coaching. In Katzenback and Smith (1993), a systemic view of teams was used via Team coaching. Team coaching empowers a team to manage its dialogue and work towards a common purpose or set of performance goals for which they are mutually accountable. On the other hand, systemic team coaching aims to identify the honesty of the whole system, further restoring the ‘system coherence’, which allows them to understand their place in the design and operate at their best (Lawrence, 2019).

Hawkins (2019) defined systemic team coaching in organisations as the process where the coach works both when the team is together and when they are apart. It aims at

improving collective performance and developing collective leadership. Systemic perspective creates a new association between the group and organisational development using team coaching (Hawkins, 2017; Leary et al., 2017). Systemic coaching recognises that the team creates more value when actively engaging with stakeholders on behalf of the whole group than in team meetings or away days. A systemic team coach must form a committed partnership with the team and work towards co-creating instead of making the team their client.

Moreover, systemic team coaching promotes agile learning teams during unpredictable, complex organisational times (Hawkins, 2017). Hauser (2014) performed an interview study and found that although the experienced coaches across the U.S.A described their method as systemic, very few coaches tried to make connections outside the team's boundaries and considered aspects of the external environment. Systemic coaching is practiced by various organisational coaches. However, it lacks empirical research in terms of its effectiveness in organisational setting (Lawrence, 2021).

Systemic perspective and a constructivist view

Three publications focused on the link between systemic perspective and social constructivism. According to Pavlovis (2021), it is worthwhile to approach a systemic perspective through a constructivist view. A constructivist theory is where people actively develop their knowledge, and their experiences determine their reality (Elliott et al., 2000). The systemic approach integrated with the constructivist view framework was used for family therapy. Various components of a systemic perspective point toward the constructivist principles, such as the dialogical and relational nature of the world (Hawkins, 2017). Systemic team coaching has two central foci: first, the group as a collective and second, considering the team in their systemic context, as their engagement is related to all their stakeholders (Pavlovis,2021).

According to Hawkins (2017), systemic coaching implies an “outside-in” perspective. That is, shifting the team’s focus from the internal functioning and attending to who the team is there to serve. Hence, having a more solution-focused view to a problem. Furthermore, the systemic philosophy stresses the “future-back” engagement, emphasising whom the team responds to and what is required of the group according to the future needs of the stakeholders (Hawkins, 2017). In line with this theorising, this paper will dig deeper into systemic team coaching in an organisational setting and its effects on its functioning.

Effectivity of systemic coaching

Four publications reported the effectiveness of systemic coaching. According to Haan (2017), coaching is highly trusting and motivating in an organisational setting. A systemic perspective provides a holistic view of organisational functions and an innovative way forward for organisations (Cao et al., 2003). However, the literature lacks empirical evidence regarding the importance of adopting a systemic perspective. Indeed, systemic coaching has been used in family therapy (Schweitzer & Drews, 2020). Although the interventions to put systemic team coaching in action in an organisation are still in their infancy in literature, one of the popular methods surfacing is the use of systemic Constellations. As Lawrence (2019) cited, a systemic constellation is a practical intervention to illuminate invisible dynamics in relationship issues and challenges. However, we would not be digging deeper into use of systemic constellations in organisations.

Table 1

Overview of publications found in the systematic literature search

S.no	Article Name	Author, Year of publication	Keywords	Publication type	Conclusion
1	Diversity management in organization change: towards a systemic framework	Cao et. al., (2003)	systems thinking; framework; change management	Academic journal	A systemic perspective provides a holistic view of organizational functions and provides an innovative way forward for organizations
2	A large-scale survey of trust and safety in coaching supervision: Some evidence that we are doing it right	Haan (2017)	Executive coaching, coaching supervision, supervisor effectiveness, satisfaction ratings, trust, cross-sectional empirical study	Academic journal	With the sample of comparatively older coaches, it appears that highly satisfying and trusted supervision relationships are developing.

3	Shape-Shifting: A Behavioral Team Coaching Model for Coach Education, Research, and Practice	Hauser, (2014)	team coaching, systemic perspective	Academic journal	The nature of the complete system as well as how its components function, interact and influence one another must be understood by team coaches using systemic coaching.
4	Leadership Team Coaching	Hawkins, (2017)	Systemic coaching	Book Chapter	Applying systemic coaching in organizations.
5	Systemic team coaching	Hawkins, (2019)	Introduction to systemic team coaching	Book chapter	The Systemic Team Coach's job includes assisting teams in overcoming their "wilful blindness," waking up to the issues in their company ecosystem, and being more fully aware of what lies ahead.

6	The rules for managing cross-functional reengineering teams	Katzenbach, J.R. and Smith, D.K. (1993)	Cross-functional teams, Coaching	Academic Journal	Teams that can foster exceptional innovation in business processes are essential to the survival of many firms. Two characteristics characterize all successful teams. They have a strong sense of commitment to a common cause and precise performance objectives.
7	What do experienced team coaches do? Current practice in Australia and New Zealand	Lawrence (2017)	coaching, team coaching, high performing teams, group dynamics, group process	Academic Journal	Multiple strategies were shown to exist. All of the coaches concentrated on the process, but each coach paid attention to a different component of the process.
8	What is Systemic Coaching?	Lawrence (2019)	coaching, systemic coaching, systems thinking, systemic, systematic	Academic Journal	In order to help coaches understand themselves as

					systemic coaches, first and second-order systems theories, complexity theories, and theories of complex response processes are discussed.
9	What happens in group supervision? Exploring current practice in Australia	Lawrence (2019)	Group supervision and systemic perspective - analyzed using interviews	Academic journal	Both supervisors and coaches acknowledged the supervisor's role in selecting the ideal mix of coaches, creating and upholding a clear working agreement, overseeing a clear process, and setting an example of appropriate behavior.
10	Team coaching: Systemic Perspectives and their Limitation	Lawrence, (2021)	team coaching, systemic coaching, systemic thinking	Academic Journal	Both supervisors and coaches acknowledged the supervisor's role in selecting the ideal mix of coaches, creating and upholding a clear working

				agreement, overseeing a clear process, and setting an example of appropriate behavior.	
11	Positioning in groups: a new development in systemic consultation	Mathews, (2015)	educational psychology; Positioning Theory; Semantic Polarities; consultancy; social constructionism; organisational change	Academic Journal	This new language of participation may be created using Positioning Theory, and everyone in the organization or group can use it to decide how development should proceed and what role they should play in it.
12	Team Coaching Psychology: Toward an Integration of Constructivist Approaches	Pavlović (2021)	Team coaching, Constructivist view, Systemic view, solution-focused team coaching	Academic Journal	The proposed integration helps to develop constructivist approaches to team coaching theoretically.

13	General Systems theory: Its Present and its potential.	Rousseau (2015)	General system theory, General Systems Worldview; Maslow's hierarchy of needs; transdisciplinary	Academic Journal	General systems theory should be an essential part of operations and organisations in this world.
14	Systemic constellations applied in organisations: a systematic review	Scholtens (2021)	Systemic intervention · Systemic organisational constellation · Team coaching · Organisational transformation · Organisational consultancy · Systematic review	Academic Journal	The literature on the systemic constellation approach used in organizations is summarized in the systematic review. It highlights potential mechanisms of action for the intervention and provides coaches and advisors with scientific insights into the method.
15	Symbolic action methods: how systemic team consultation can help to strengthen the self-concept	Schweizer, 2020	speech chorus; symbolic actions methods; systemic team consultation; timeline; who is a who sculpture.	Academic Journal	The action approaches that are discussed can be used in both large and small organizations. They aid in developing team

of teams and foster team cohesion

cohesion by assisting team members in immediately comprehending their internal diversity and creating a shared understanding of the team's past.

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|----|--|----------------|--|------------------|---|
| 16 | Organizations as Machines, Organizations as Conversations: Two Core Metaphors and Their Consequences | Suchman (2011) | s: organizational change, organizational improvement, administration, management, complexity, health services research, quality improvement, hospital administrator. | Academic Journal | Review the premises of the machine metaphor and consider its limitations as a rule of action in a world of relational intelligence and self-organizing ideas. |
| 17 | Interfering with the interference: A systemic approach to change in organisations. | Tosey, 1993 | Systemic perspective to approach change in organization | Dissertation | There are systemic insights in various frameworks, therefore it may be helpful to think of a systemic perspective as inclusive of, rather than as the antithesis of, a linear epistemology. |

18	Systemic perspective in business organizations	Unknown	Defining systemic perspective in organizations	Popular article	Reviewing a problem or challenge from a systemic perspective involves taking into account its surroundings as well as the issue at hand.
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Note. The Following table provides an overview of the literature used in systematic literature review part of this study.

Study 2: Empirical study via interviews

In the empirical part of this thesis, we explored systemic perspective use in organisations via qualitative analysis. To empirically analyse our research question, “Why would a systemic perspective be useful in the organisational or team setting?” we conducted semi-structured interviews with professionals who have experienced and used this perspective in an organisational setting.

Method

Participants

The sample consisted of professionals with over five years of experience with the systemic perspective in organisations and team settings. The interview was conducted with five female respondents, and they were contacted via the network of one of the three researchers of this study. Eight organisational coaches were contacted, and five showed interests in the study. They were from different parts of Europe; three coaches were from the Netherlands, one from the United Kingdom and one from Spain.

Interview methodology and procedure

We conducted one-to-one semi-structured interviews, which provided us with insight into the experiences of participants with systemic perspectives in organisational and team settings (See Appendix for interview guidelines). Data was collected via a 30-minute audio-recorded conversation with each study participant in locations that afforded privacy and distraction-free conditions, such as the participant’s private office. For the geographically distributed participants across Europe, we used online interviews.

The interviews consisted of (i) demographic information of the participants, (ii) experience with systemic perspective, (iii) Systemic perspective and organisational

functioning, (iv) comparison of systemic coaching with other coaching methods and (v) importance of using a systemic approach. Participants received an email with informed consent and were asked to respond to the same before the scheduled interview. Furthermore, at the beginning of the interview, participants were asked for their support for the interview to be recorded using a phone. After covering the interview questions, participants were debriefed about the methodology and procedure of the study.

Analysis

A verbatim transcript was created for each interview using the amberscript software (Amberscript B.V., Amsterdam). The transcripts were further edited and checked for accuracy by a second researcher. The data collected were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Codes were generated inductively in a bottom-up fashion based on the data. Two researchers independently coded the interviews using the constructed codebook. While analysing the data, repeated reading and checking were performed by both researchers. The codebook was created using discordant coding and was discussed with a third researcher to tackle any disagreement. A consensus for coding was reached after discussion with all three researchers. Furthermore, the codes formulated included different viewpoints without giving importance to the individual statements of the respondents. The codes were classified into themes and sub-themes to provide a clean structure to the data collected via the interviews.

Results

The responses to the semi-structured interviews are categorised in codes (see Table 3) and themes (see Table 2) to help answer our research question, “Why would a systemic perspective be useful in the organisational or team setting?”. The participants favoured using a systemic perspective in organisational and team settings. The responses in the interviews

were, in general, positive. They all had a ‘positive outlook’ towards using a systemic perspective in organisations. Furthermore, the participants provided diverse examples in different contexts (see Table 3).

All participants interviewed for this research were well aware of the definition of systemic perspective. They were introduced and learnt about the same in the recent past. They had different experiences when they first learnt about systemic perspectives. For some, it was the last option to explore to solve problems in their organisation. While for others, it was an addition to their way of coaching, where they used a systemic perspective to understand the situation and other psychological methods like transactional analysis alongside systemic perspective. One of the participants applied systemic coaching to their own life to solve problems and further incorporated it into their coaching methods for organisational set-up.

To answer our research question, the data collected from the interviews is thematically analysed, we formulated three main themes (see Table 2), namely;

- (a) Systemic coaching provides a new and a complete perspective;
- (b) Practical benefits of systemic perspective;
- (c) Challenges in adopting a systemic perspective.

To provide structure, all the themes have two or three sub-themes.

Table 2

Overview of themes and codes

Theme	Sub-theme	Codes
	1. Systemic coaching provides a new (and a more complete) perspective.	
	1.1 The underlying problem is explored instead of the solution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exploring underlying issues• Problem-focused• Provides a language
	1.2. Systemic perspective allows zooming out rather than zooming in	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Zoom-out view• Recognition of patterns.• Systemic glass/view• Cross-functional
	1.3. Systemic perspective provides a positive outlook (on the problem and the individuals)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Positive outlook• Clarity
	2. Systemic perspective has various practical benefits.	

2.1.It is described as Quick and Time-saving.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time-saving
2.2.It is flexible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible
2.3.Encourages organisational development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisational development • Others

3. Systemic perspective can be challenging

- Challenging

Note. This table demonstrates different themes, sub-themes and the codes formulated from thematic analysis.

Theme one; Systemic coaching provides a new (and a more complete) perspective.

The following theme captures how participants use systemic perspective in an organisation and team settings. Systemic coaching is used in various ways, the ultimate purpose is the same which is to get a broader view of the system or the organisation. To elaborate on the same, the following theme consists of three subthemes.

Subtheme 1; The underlying problem is explored instead of the solution

The participants stated that a systemic perspective enables them to understand the underlying problems. As reported by one of the participants in the study: “When solving a problem, you should look at the underlying cause and not just create a solution for a symptom” (participant 2).

In addition, participants mentioned that the approach used from a systemic perspective is generally problem-focused. The main area of attention is the cause of the problem. Systemic coaches recognise the depth of the problem, instead of searching for solutions. As reported by one of the participants: “look at problems that they are telling us something about instead of avoiding them or fighting them” (participant 2).

Furthermore, as noted by a participant: “Give you a language to look at that, what is going on in the context kind of thing” (Participant 3). Systemic perspective provides a language of instruction and communication to look into the organisation. The respondents use it in coaching to understand organisational personnel’s underlying issues.

Subtheme two; Systemic perspective allows zooming out rather than zooming in

The systemic perspective provides the respondents with a zoom-out view of organisational functioning. It allows them to zoom into the depth of the issue by actually taking a broader perspective;

“I think the mechanism of zooming out, which is system dynamics in working, it's zooming out. But also by zooming out, you can zoom in and. That's a rather contrasting movement, but it works very well” (Participant 2).

One of the most commonly mentioned ways of using a systemic perspective organisation was via recognition of patterns. Participants can look for patterns in organisational functioning to go in-depth about the issue while having a wider view. All of the participants mentioned using pattern recognition as an important aspect of systemic coaching. Moreover, exciting knowledge was brought to light by participants. That is, pattern recognition can occur without actually using systemic constellations. Furthermore, it was also reported that systemic coaching is used to see the whole organisation through a systemic glass. That is to view the entire system as well as the context of the problem. Four out of five participants use systemic perspective as a viewing glass to view the whole organisation during the coaching process, providing them with an elaborative perspective on the issue; “opening the lenses, widening the range of, of the scope of vision, the range of vision” (Participant 5). It enabled the coaches to look away from individual issues, and instead work towards the common goals. Hence systemic perspective also provided the participants with a view that is not individual-focused;

“And it's not a very big thing for me is that it leads us from the individual point of view, it tells us it has nothing to do with if a person is not working properly or have a bad functioning. But it's systemic view.” (Participant 1).

Systemic perspective was repeatedly reported as ‘cross-functional’, explained as something that enables them to connect different parts of an organisation and look at the organisation as a system:

“So we started to look at several departments within our organisation and try to teach them how to address certain subjects or certain questions or themes in the systemic organisational field.” (Participant 2).

Subtheme three; Systemic perspective provides a positive outlook (on the problem and the individuals)

It was repeatedly reported that adapting a systemic perspective in an organisation offers a positive view of the organisation and its employees. That is, it encourages honesty and empathy. Moreover, it takes away the focus from the individual and highlights the functioning of the system:

“It's more fun. It's more positive. Because otherwise, it's always, okay, this person is not functioning well. He has to learn all the things, or he has to move, or it's a negative and systemic way”. (Participant 1).

Furthermore, it was reported to act as an efficient conflict management strategy in a team setting.

“We stopped fighting. If we see that there's, for example, the problem with the programmers and the heads of departments was that they had a completely different starting point. One group, the programmers, work for the artist and the head of the departments, work for the organisation, and have two different goals and two different positions in the field”. (Participant 1).

Theme two; Systemic perspective has various practical benefits.

The second theme sheds light on the practical benefits of a systemic perspective in an organisational setting. Throughout the interview process, various practical benefits were mentioned by the participants.

Subtheme one; It is described as Quick and Time-saving.

The systemic perspective is time-saving and provides the organisation with quick solutions to problems. Three out of five participants mentioned the following time-saving aspect of systemic perspective:

“Discuss many issues far more clean and quick. Because we skip many bullocks because we go to the essential issue” (Participant 1).

Subtheme two; It is flexible.

For some participants, a systemic perspective provides flexibility and room to be more adaptive. As mentioned by participant 3, this flexibility allows them to see patterns in issues in organisations and teams.

"The systemic approach helps create enough space for them to start to see some of the patterns and choose whether they want to continue to belong in them or whether they want to shift something" (participant 3).

Subtheme three; Encourages organisational development

An essential aspect of the systemic perspective is that it encourages organisational development by resolving organisational issues. As reported by participants, systemic coaching provides a direction to the organisation. It is essential for organisational development:

“So working with teams and organisational development functions such as culture change, particularly around equality, diversity and inclusion”. (Participant 3)

Furthermore, diversity and inclusivity in an organization can also be explored using a systemic approach; “The equality, diversity and inclusion work actually has a good space for systemic approaches.” (Participant 3).

Theme three; Systemic perspective can be challenging

Although systemic coaching has various practical benefits and uses in an organisational and team setting, as mentioned in the paragraph above, multiple participants, however, reported that adapting to a systemic perspective in an organisational setting can be challenging, such as:

“Many people did not get it or didn't want to get it or were having fears for the unknown" (Participant 2).

Table 3

Overview of the Codes

S.no.	Code	Code description	Example
1	Exploring underlying issues	Looking deep into a problem	"When solving a problem, you should look at the underlying cause and not just create a solution for a symptom" (Participant 4)

2	Problem-focused	Seeing the problem clearly and not focusing on the solution first	"Look at problems that they are telling us about instead of avoiding them or fighting them."
3	Provides a language	Provides a language of instructions and communication to look into the organizational issues and functions	"A systemic view gives 'words'(/body) to something people already knew" (Participant 3)
4	Zoom-out view	Provides a bigger picture and tells about the whole story	"zooming out, which is system dynamics in working, it's zooming out." (Participant 2)
5	Recognizing patterns	Looking out for patterns in the organizational functioning.	"you can also look at patterns without a constellation" (Participant 1)
6	Systemic glass/view	Having common goals, looking at the context and seeing organization as a whole	"opening the lenses, widening the range of, of the scope of vision, the range of vision" (Participant 5)

7	Cross-functional	Different parts of the organization are considered as a system	"some issues being faced by the team, and they work on the solution together." (Participant 4)
8	Positive outlook	Less judgmental, more honesty and empathy	"It's more fun. It's more positive. Because otherwise, it's always, okay, this person is not functioning well. He has to learn all the things, or he has to move, or it's a negative and systemic way". (Participant 1).
9	Clarity	Clarity in issues and provides a different point of view	"discuss a lot of issues far more clean and quick. Because we skip a lot of bullocks because we go to the essential issue" (Participant 1)
10	Not individual focus	Doesn't focus on the main character or the main individual involved in the issue	"Everyone is important, not just the main character" (Participant 4)
11	Time-saving	Saves time and provides quick results	"You get quicker results in a problem solving" (Participant 1)

12	Flexible	Provides flexibility and room to be more adaptive	"the systemic approach helps create enough space for them to start to see some of the patterns and choose whether they want to continue to be belonging in them or whether they want to shift something" (Participant 3)
13	Organizational development	Directing and developing the organization	"We wanted it to head it in a direction" (Participant 1)
14	Others	Recruitment, diversity and inclusivity	"The equality, diversity and inclusion work actually has a good space for systemic approaches." (Participant 3)
15	Challenging	Found adapting to a systemic perspective challenging.	"There were a lot of people who didn't get it or didn't want to get it or were having fears for the unknown" (Participant 2)

Note. The following table illustrates different codes, their description and examples mentioned by the participants in the interviews.

Discussion

The following study looked at the importance of adapting the systemic perspective of coaching in organisational and team settings. To explore the following, we conducted an intensive literature review (Study 1). Further, to gain empirical evidence, we interviewed five participants who have used a systemic perspective in real-life scenarios (Study 2). The literature view (Study 1) provided insight into the use of systemic perspective in the organisational setting. In study two, participants seem to positively respond to using a systemic perspective in organisations. Furthermore, different usage and practical aspects of systemic perspective were brought to our attention by the participants. Also, challenges in adopting a systemic perspective were mentioned. The previous literature cited that the systemic perspective provided a more expansive view of the whole system (Rousseau, 2015). The following was also repeatedly reported by the participants, referring to the systemic approach as providing a zoom-out view of the organisation. The zoom-out view allows the participants to look deeper into the issues of the organisation. Furthermore, the systemic perspective is cross-functional, where different departments of an organisation come together to solve a particular problem. We found similar mentions in the literature (Tate, 2010; Lawrence, 2019). We could speculate from the interview results that a systemic perspective is helpful to see the organisation as a whole and dynamically look at different parts of the organisation. The use of systemic perspective as a language to understand the underlying issues in an organisation was an interesting point mentioned by many participants. Moreover, the literature illustrated the use systemic lens is beneficial to looking at the organisation to have a deeper understanding; the participants in study two also supported the following claim.

The interviews opened our horizons to various practical benefits of systemic perspective in organisational and team settings. However, the literature had no mention of these benefits. Firstly, systemic coaching clarified and allowed the participants to explore the underlying issues. Second, the respondents repeatedly mentioned that a systemic perspective is problem-focused. This finding was contradictory to what was found in the literature, as the literature said the systemic perspective as a future-back perspective that is more focused on finding a solution (Hawkins, 2017). Thirdly, participants reported the use of a systemic approach as more flexible and adaptable to the surrounding, which indicates that it can be moulded as per the organisation's requirements and used in favour of the same. Overall, systemic coaching has a positive outlook on organisational functioning. That is, it is a less judgmental and more empathetic coaching process. On the one hand, it provides a wiggle room for better functioning; on the other, it can sometimes be challenging to adapt to an organisation as a systemic perspective has such a practical base and is not an evidence-based method (Scholtens, 2020). Furthermore, it brings about a change in organisational functioning; this change makes it highly challenging to be accepted by everyone in an organisation.

A significant strength of this study is the combination of the literature review and the further exploration using qualitative analysis in the second study. This combination provided us with great insight into the topic. It allowed us to confirm some previously known information and discover new valuable insights. Although performing a qualitative analysis has its drawbacks, the analysis could be biased as the data collected was our interpretations of the interviews. However, we tried to overcome this setback as the interviews were coded independently by two researchers and further discussed with a third researcher, thereby increasing the inter-rater reliability of the study.

Nevertheless, we acknowledge the following limitations of the study. The drawback of the literature review was that few studies were published in English. Hence, due to language restrictions, various scientific literature was not considered. Furthermore, our observation was that the literature found lacked empirical evidence. Most of it was grey literature, like books, non-scientific articles and other popular sources. However, literature was used to build a strong base for our qualitative part of the study. Furthermore, our empirical study could be a stepping stone for future research in this field.

Another limitation is associated with the data collection for the interviews, where one of the audio recordings was corrupted. The following technical difficulty was resolved, where notes taken during the interview were used as a substitute for the transcript of the audio recording. In addition, the answers to various questions asked by the interviewer diverted the original context, leading to much irrelevant information and diversion from the actual research question. To avoid this in the future, a follow-up study with more structured and to-the-point follow-up questions is advisable. Given that the sample for this study was small and only restricted to the Netherlands, UK and Spain, we cannot generalise the results to a large extent. Suggestions for future research would be to have a more diverse sample from around the world to make the results more generalisable. Although we believe that increasing the sample size wouldn't make a significant difference in answering our research question, however introducing a diverse sample could have a possible impact on the results.

Even though the study had various limitations, the results recorded answered our research question to a great extent. They provided us with a deeper insight into the uses of systemic perspectives in organisations. We understood the practical benefits and ways systemic perspective is used in an organisational and team setting. However, this study did

not focus on the difference between systemic and other coaching methods in an organisational environment, and future research is recommended to explore that.

Conclusion

In this thesis project, we aimed to study the usefulness of adopting a systemic perspective in an organisation or team setting. We did the following using a two-part study: the first was a literature review and the second was a qualitative analysis using semi-structured interviews. Despite the opinions, case studies and reports in the literature search, empirical evidence is lacking. Therefore, it is still unclear if a systemic perspective used in organisations is effective and when and where a systemic perspective shall be used in an organisation. However, the interviews' results of individuals with experience with the systemic perspective corresponded with the literature. Despite the limitations, this study has brought about new theoretical and practical insights into the systemic approach in an organisation and team setting. The positive responses towards the systemic perspective from the respondents of the interviews suggest that the systemic approach might be practical and has various benefits for an organisation. This observation opens further research in this field to confirm this finding in a more extensive and diverse sample and further explore the difference between systemic coaching and other coaching methods in an organisational context.

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Appendix

Interview format; systemic perspective in organizations

Introduction

- ***Explain the reason for the research***

I am shriya bhalla working on this project along with Salome and Hedwig as my supervisors for this project. The research is a bachelor thesis by the University of Groningen. The research topic revolves around the use of a systemic perspective in organizational function and in a team setting. We have done a literature search on this topic and would like to further gather experiences from clients and coaches that have used this perspective in the organizations. Therefore, we invited a number of participants to do an interview with us, to help us understand why would systemic perspective be useful in organizations and team settings. I expect this interview to take about 30 minutes.

- ***Explain the IC and let the interviewee sign the IC***

I have shared with you the informed consent of the interview. I hope everything is clear from it?

- ***Turn the recorder on***

I will now turn on the recorder so our conversation will be recorded from here.

- ***Main research question***

Our main research question is “*Why would systemic perspective be useful in the organizational or team setting? According to the people who have experienced systemic perspective in organizations.*”

- ***Explain the goal of the interview in brief***

During the interview, I would like to hear more about your experiences using a systemic perspective in organizations. This interview will provide us with insight into how useful is systemic perspective in an organizational context.

Questions

- ***Familiarize the client with systemic coach/consultant***
 - A systemic perspective in organisations aims to make individuals more aware of their social context. It is a view on the whole and not focused on the individual parts. This view acknowledges that all people and elements in a team are interrelated and continuously influence each other.
 - Do you have any possible questions for me at this point?
- ***Ask the following questions -***
 1. Can you share your experiences with a systemic coach? how was your experience as a systemic coach in an organization?
 2. Did you specifically search for systemic coaching?
 - *Yes - Why?*
 - *No - How did you end up with this coach? Which way do you think was this approach helps you or your organization?*
 3. How did having a systemic coach/consultancy change your perspective/ changed your perspective towards organizational functioning (or team functioning)?
 4. There are of course other coaching methods. In what way was the systemic approach different from other coaching or training methods?
 - *Could you please elaborate on it more?*
 5. Why according to you a systemic coach should be sought in an organization?
 - a. Imagine there are no restrictions in financial matters/ conduction of the coaching, why do you think people will reach out to systemic coach? (*only to ask if they mentioned some financial or functional issues in the organization*)
 - b. Imagine, you have options to decide from about which coaching method to adapt in the organization. Why do you think systemic coaching will be a better choice?

Closing

- *Leave some space for other comments*
 - Is there something else you want to add or say?
- *Thanking for his/her input*
 - Thank you very much for your input during this interview
 - You took part in a study about the usefulness of taking a systemic perspective in team functioning in organisations. The audio recording will be transcribed and deleted. The transcription will be used for data analysis. You can contact us if you want to remove your data before May 2022. Thanks for participation.
 - If you would like to hear about the results, I could send you my thesis in June
- *Turn off the recorder*
- *Ask whether they know other people who have used this systemic perspective in their organizational/team functioning, or who reached out for a systemic coach/consultant.*