

## Organizational Isomorphism in the Context of Institutional Theory

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### Abstract

Institutional theory that investigated social, economic and political nature of events is an approach. Institutional theory seeks to understand the organizational isomorphism. The level of analysis makes up an organizational field. The organizational field refers to the interacting organizations. This interaction not only results from the exchange of goods but also leads to organizational isomorphism through being in the same industry or to be registered in the same association includes the development of a common behavior. In this study, organizational isomorphism and three basic types of it- coercive isomorphism, normative isomorphism and mimetic isomorphism are handled in the context of institutional theory. A field study based on survey method on 31 quarry plants operating in the cement sector in the provinces of Konya was applied in the study. The main aim of the study is to determine the organizational structure and levels of organizational isomorphism of the quarry plants operating in the cement sector in the province of Konya and to analyze the relationship between organizational structure and organizational isomorphism. In accordance with this purpose, it is confirmed that the firms that possess organic organizational structure are different from the firms that possess mechanic organizational structure in the dimension of mimetic isomorphism type of organizational isomorphism and there is a very strong positive and statistically significant relationship between organizational structure on the one hand and organizational isomorphism and mimetic isomorphism on the other.

**Keywords:** Institutional Theory, Organizational Isomorphism, Coercive Isomorphism, Normative Isomorphism, Mimetic Isomorphism.

## INTRODUCTION

Organizational theory is an ongoing process that starting from the classic approach to the modern approach from past to today. One of the current approaches to organizational theory is institutional theory that deals with within the framework of modern approaches. Institutional theory bases on many branches of sciences such as economics, sociology and political science; and is important to give the new dimension of organizational theory. Institutional theory deals with environment affecting organization in two dimensions as technical and institutional environments. Organizations within same environment facing the same set of environmental constraints will tend to be isomorphic to one another and to their environment because they face similar conditions. Thus organizations will come to resemble their environments and each other [5] In this study will be examined the relationship between organizational structure and organizational isomorphism levels in the context of Institutional Theory of the stone quarry enterprises operating in the cement sector in Konya.

### New Institutional Theory and Organizational Isomorphism

Although most organizational analyzes focused on the organizations' internal functioning before the 1970s, researchers of old theoretical school such as Selznick (1949), Gouldner (1954) and Zald (1970) discussed organizations in connection with their surroundings. On the other hand, in the 1960s, within the framework of the dominant Contingency Approach theory, with the discussion of organizations' interaction with the environment by the researchers such as Thompson (1967), Lawrence and Lorsch (1967), interaction of organizations with the environment became the main focus of research in the 1970s [16]. Most of the modern theories of organization have tried to explain the differences between structure and behaviour of the organizations assuming that organizations in the world are varied and different. While Hannan and Freeman (1977) look for an answer to the question "Why are the many types of organizations?" through Organizational Ecology Approach, new institutional theory focuses on the similarities between the structures and processes of organizations [7]. Therefore, it is suggested that the new institutional theory was put forward as an alternative to Organizational Ecology Approach [11].

New Institutional Theory is based on the article of Meyer and Rowan (1977) with the title of "Institutionalized Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony" [19]. The question leading to the emergence of new institutionalism approach is "Although there are many different states and about fifteen thousand private school districts in the United States, why are schools in the same structure and order seen if one enters from the state of Main in the east of the country and exits from the state of Washington in the west? Does the affinity of the organizations have a facilitator impact on maintaining the existing structure and status quo?" [1].

Meyer and Rowan (1977) suggests that organizations put forward stories according to the social rules for acting to gain legitimacy [16]. According to Meyer and Rowan [15], the institutionalized products, services, techniques, policies and programs, serve as powerful myths in the organizations, and many organizations adopt institutionalized structures in a ceremonial manner. However, complying with institutional rules often causes the organization to create a conflict between itself and the efficiency criteria. If not, co-ordination to improve the efficiency will damage the cohesion and legitimacy that the organization gains in control. For this reason, organizations complying with institutional rules ceremonially suggest that they will protect the formal structure of themselves against the unexpected changes occurring in the external environment by establishing a bridge between their formal structure and activities.

Another survey conducted on the new institutional theory is Zucker's (1977) "The Role of Institutionalization in Cultural Persistence" article. Zucker (1977) suggests that cultural persistence and continuity can be explained by the concept of institutionalization. In this he defines institutionalization context as an owned characteristic as well as a process. Institutionalization as a process is defined to be the transfer of identified social reality between individual actors. Then institutionalized action must bear the objectivity and externality characteristics. For institutionalization of an action, it must have potential reproducibility by the various actors without changing the meaning (objectivity), must be inter-subjectively identified enough to be recognized as a part of external reality [27], [19].

In Zucker's (1977) approach, cognitive nature and logic of the process under obeying or adopting a single organizational behaviour, is focused. In contrast to this approach, Meyer and Rowan (1977) focused on distinguishing process of institutionalization [21], and the how institutionalized rules, formed in macro environment shape organizational structures [19].

Another study effective on the new institutional theory is DiMaggio and Powell, (1983)'s "The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields" article. In this study, they seek to answer the question "What do the organizations do to resemble each other?" [7]. The most important contribution of this study to the new theoretical theory is to clarify the concepts of isomorphism [19].

Isomorphism is the concept that best describes the process of homogenization in organizations. Hawley (1986) defines isomorphism as a classifier process that cause a unit in a population to resemble other units in the same environmental conditions [7], [2]. Organizations behave in an isomorphic manner with the idea that they will be

rewarded when they apply the correct considered structures and processes [21], [4].

According to Hannan and Freeman (1977) isomorphism is the sum of competitive pressures that force organizations to show relative similar characteristics as a result of environmental pressures [18]. Therefore, over time, organizations resemble to each other and their environment [5]. Isomorphism occurs as a result when organizations select non-ideal structures outside the population or decision-makers learn appropriate responses and arrange their behaviour according to these responses. However, within the framework of organizational ecology, Hannan and Freeman's approach is focused on the selection process. In this respect, following Hannan and Freeman's studies Meyer (1979) and Fennell (1980) discuss the concept of isomorphism in the form of two types: competitive and institutional [7].

In Hannan and Freeman (1977), advocate market competition, market changes, and system rationalization which ground on adaptation criteria to these changes in their study [7]. By highlighting market competition and rational system, competitive isomorphism is defined as economic pressures on organizations and organizations' adaptation to these economic pressures [11]. Thus, competitive isomorphism occurs as a result of organization's being faced to face with competitive pressures in the environment [16].

Pressures of their organizational environment force organizations to comply with similar structures [9]. Therefore, there will be a similarity between structural and operational characteristics of the organizations operating in the same environment [26]. Institutional isomorphism is defined as the resemblance of an organization to another organization operating in the same sector or in a certain time period, to an organizational community [6].

In addition, compliance with the organizational environment and being isomorphic to this environment, allow the organization to gain legitimacy and an image of "the right organization to do business with" [25]. In this respect, being isomorphic to the organizational environment provides some of the advantages to the organizations. These advantages are [15]:

- Provides combination of the organization's elements that are legitimized outside the organization.
- Forms the external or ceremonial value criteria, in identifying structural value of the organization.
- Commitment to external organizations reduces the uncertainties surrounding the organization and the helps to protect the stability.

On the other hand, DiMaggio and Powell [8] explain the change through homogeneity (isomorphism) that occurs in the organizational area, with three mechanisms. These mechanisms are:

- Coercive isomorphism, which arise from political influence and legitimacy problem,
- Mimetic isomorphism, which arise from standard reactions to reduce the uncertainty,
- Normative isomorphism, which occur as a result of professionalization.

*Coercive isomorphism* occurs as a result of formal or informal pressures that are made by other organizations, which organizations dependent on, or cultural expectations of society [7]. In other words, coercive isomorphism occurs as a result of the pressures of social actors in the external environment such as the government, trade unions or trade associations [3]. The most important point that should be

emphasized about coercive isomorphism is that: there must be an absolute power difference between organizations, or in other words, there must be a dependency between organizations (Daft, 1998). Furthermore, these pressures may occur in the form of using power as well as persuasion [2]. As a result, pressure of government regulations, the non-written characteristics of organizational field, and legal obligations on organizations, which lead the organizations towards isomorphism are defined as coercive isomorphism [25].

*Mimetic isomorphism* is defined as organizations' imitation of each other's structures and applications, when especially goals and methods are fuzzy and environmental uncertainty is high [19]. Additionally, mimetic isomorphism is defined as an organization's receiving the applications that are appropriate for them as a model, rather than their exactly imitating the applications of the other [7]. When organizations face with uncertainty they try to reduce the cost of research works, by applying institutional rules rather than technical rules, and they imitate the behaviour of other organizations [12]. Organizational ecology approach assumes that organizations in the same industry constitute a population. So, in the framework of this approach Haveman [12] suggests that organizations will imitate organizations in their own population more than the ones in other populations. Just because organizations with similar size will have similar structure and strategies, will be dependent on similar environmental resources and will face similar structural constraints, to the organizations in their own population; they will imitate the organizations in their own population [12].

*Normative isomorphism* occurs as a result of professionalism in the organizations [7]. Normative isomorphism provides continuity and legitimacy of organization members' behaviour and organizational structure, by standardizing the social and cognitive foundations of them [17]. Universities, vocational training institutions and commercial organizations in institutional environment create a pool of employees, who can work in similar positions, have similar training and can be changed one-to-one, by forming normative rules about organizational and professional behaviour [7]. This allows identification of working conditions and methods of the persons engaged in a business, in short, professionalism [11]. Normative isomorphism is defined as organizations' changing structure and processes for acting in accordance with the professional standards generated by the environment, and adapting the innovations put forward by the professional organizations [2].

**The Relationship Between Organizational and Isomorphism Organizational Structure**

This study, which aims to determine organizational isomorphism level of the stone quarry enterprises operating in the cement sector in Konya and to examine the relationship between organizational structure and organizational isomorphism, is based on survey method. The data collected through convenience sampling has been evaluated by means of the SPSS 16.0 programme. The aim of the study is to determine organizational structure and organizational isomorphism levels of the stone quarry enterprises operating in the cement sector in Konya, and to examine the relationship between organizational structure and organizational isomorphism. Stone quarry enterprises operating in the cement sector in Konya is the sample of the study. It was determined that there are 62 companies in

this sector and 31 of them were reached. Hypotheses developed for this purpose are listed below. Hypotheses developed for this purpose are listed below.

H<sub>1</sub>: Organizational isomorphism levels of the enterprises vary according to their organizational structure.

H<sub>2</sub>: There is a significant relationship between organizational structure and organizational isomorphism levels of the enterprises.

H<sub>3</sub>: Organizational structures of enterprises can be explained by their organizational isomorphism levels.

In the research; in order to determine the organizational structure of enterprises "Organizational Structure Scale", which was developed by Covin and Slevin (1989) used and finally formed by Pınar (1994); in order to determine the organizational isomorphism of the enterprises, "Organizational isomorphism Scale", which was created taking Türker (2006) and Tümer's (2008) studies as a basis, were used.

**Table 1.** Demographical Characteristics of the Sample

Characteristics	F	%	Characteristics	F	%
<b>Gender</b>			<b>Employment time</b>		
Male	30	96,8	2-4 years	5	16,1
Female	1	3,2	5-10 years	7	22,6
<b>Age</b>			10-20 years	15	48,4
Between 30-35	6	19,8	20 years & over	4	12,9
Between 35-40	10	32,3	<b>Position</b>		
Between 40-45	7	22,6	General	8	25,8
46 & over	8	25,8	Manager	13	4,9
<b>Education</b>			Manager	2	6,5
Primary	3	9,7	Sub Manager	8	25,8
Secondary	8	25,8			
Associate degree	8	25,8			
Bachelor's degree	12	38,7			
<b>Total</b>	31	100	<b>Total</b>	31	100

Note: n=31

As a result of analysis, it was observed that the majority of the managers surveyed were male (96.3%), were 35-40 years old (32.3%), had graduate-level education (38.7%), had been working for 10-20 years in the sector (48.4%) and were general manager positioned (25.8%). to measure the internal consistency of the scale used in this study, internal consistency of both scales and their sub-dimensions have been calculated and shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Internal Consistency Analysis Results of the Scale Factors

Scale Factor	Dimensions	Number of Statements	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
<b>Organizational Isomorphism</b>	Mimetic Isomorphism	3	0,748
	Normative Isomorphism	2	0,691
	Coercive Isomorphism	3	0,664
<b>Organizational Structure</b>		10	0,838

It has been concluded that reliabilities of organizational isomorphism scale used in the study (0.697), mimetic isomorphism scale (0.748), normative isomorphism scale (0.691), coercive isomorphism scale (0.664), which are the sub-dimensions of organizational isomorphism and organizational structure scale (0.838), are significantly high ( $0.60 > \alpha > 0.80$ ).

**Table 3.** Exploratory Factor Analysis Results for Organizational Structure Scale

Items	Factor Load
There are written job descriptions, orders and rules for the activities carried out in our company.	0,892
In our company, policies related to each sub-section are carefully checked by the upper stages before they are implemented.	0,885
In our company, employees have the right to talk about changing the job descriptions and regulations.	0,864
In our company, employees know who their superiors are and the relationships between them are very clearly organized.	0,841
Job descriptions are very clearly defined in our company. All department members know very well, what is expected as work from them.	0,802
Business groups created by bringing members of the company together are temporary and they permanently change over time.	0,757
All decisions taken in our company are reviewed by a higher authority.	0,688
Efforts to adapt to environmental changes are very important and constant activities in our company.	0,525
All work carried out in our company consists of small parts that require a high degree of expertise.	0,544
In our company, standard works are very well defined and each employee knows very well, what job is done after the job he/she does.	0,522
<b>KMO Value</b>	0,817
<b>Total Explained Variance</b>	75,190

To examine the construct validity of the organizational structure scale of the study, data have been subjected to exploratory factor analysis. As a result of the analysis to test the suitability of the data for factor analysis, it has been determined that the Barlett normal distribution test result is significant ( $p < 0.05$ ), and KMO (Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin) value is 0.817. In addition, items of the organization structure, scale used in the study, were determined to be collected under the load of one single factor.

To examine the construct validity of the organizational isomorphism scale data of this study have been subjected to exploratory factor analysis. As a result of the analysis to test the suitability of the data for factor analysis, it has been determined that the Barlett normal distribution test result is

significant ( $p < 0.05$ ), and KMO (Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin) value is 0.615. In addition, when the results of the factor analysis have been evaluated, it has been determined that items of the scale with Eigen values greater than 1 have been collected under three factors: coercive, normative and mimetic isomorphism. This structure is compatible with the structure, which was put forward by DiMaggio and Powell (1983).

When the results of analysis are evaluated, it can be said that in general isomorphism of the sector is a high levelled (3.79), and enterprises in the sector have organic organizational structure (3.90). Additionally, when sub-dimensions of organizational isomorphism is evaluated, it can be said that coercive isomorphism of the sector is high levelled (4.14), and normative isomorphism (3.82), and mimetic isomorphism (3.42) levels of the sector are also high, following this dimension.

In general, no significant differences could be determined, in terms of the organizational structure variables, on the level of organizational isomorphism. However, statistically significant differences have been determined for the enterprises, which are organic in the mimetic isomorphism dimension of organizational isomorphism. As a result of evaluation of the analysis results, it has been determined that mimetic isomorphism (3.53) levels of the enterprises having organic organizational structure are higher than mimetic isomorphism (1.83) levels of the enterprises, having mechanical organizational structure. Accordingly,  $H_1$  hypothesis which was developed as "Organizational isomorphism levels of the enterprises vary according to their organizational structure." has been partially accepted.

According to the results of the correlation analysis a positive and significant relationship has been determined between organizational isomorphism and organizational structure ( $r = 0.654$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Moreover, a positive and significant relationship has been determined between mimetic isomorphism and organizational structure ( $r = 0.668$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). However, according to the results of analysis, a significant relationship could not be determined between coercive and normative isomorphism levels, and organizational structure. Accordingly,  $H_2$  hypothesis which was developed as "There is a significant relationship between organizational structure and organizational isomorphism levels of the enterprises." has been partially accepted.

When results of the regression analysis were evaluated, as a result it has been observed that, sub-dimensions of organizational isomorphism: coercive, normative and mimetic isomorphism is affective on organizational structure and isomorphism levels explain the variance on organizational structure with the rate of 54.1%. Furthermore, it has been concluded that, the proposed model is statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ), organizational isomorphism and its sub-dimensions positively effects organizational structure variable ( $R^2 = 0.541$ ), the factor, which has the most impact on organizational structure is mimetic isomorphism ( $B = 0.706$ ). In this context  $H_3$  hypothesis, which was developed as "Organizational structures of enterprises can be explained by their organizational isomorphism levels." has been accepted.

**Table 4.** Exploratory Factor Analysis Results for Organizational Isomorphism Scale

Items	Coercive Isomorphism	Normative Isomorphism	Mimetic Isomorphism
Our company's activities are affected by practices of the state.	0,748		
Our company adopt practices such as certificates of quality or environmentally-friendly production practices issued by accreditation bodies, to its own structure.	0,697		
Our company implements policies such as accounting system or performance appraisal system that are required by the organizations in which our company is consisted.	0,543		
Our company follows up the policy of employing the staff, who has national or international reputation in the field of business.		0,868	
For our company some specific criteria (expertise, experience and a certain level of education, etc..) are in the foreground about the selection of personnel.		0,827	
Our company adapts new applications to its structure, without questioning them.			0,836
Our company imitate, structure, practices of national or international enterprises operating in this area, and adapts them to its own structures and practices.			0,809
Our company adapts new management models of the competitor enterprises to its own structures.			0,759
<b>Total Eigen Values</b>	1,087	1,320	2,690
<b>Explained Variance</b>	14,837	16,277	33,620
<b>KMO Value</b>	0,615		
<b>Total Explained Variance</b>	74,734		

**Table 5.** Descriptive Statistics of the Sample

Scale Factor	Dimensions	Mean	St. Deviation	General Mean	General St. Deviation
<b>Organizational Isomorphism</b>	Mimetic Isomorphism	4,14	0,65	3,79	0,61
	Normative Isomorphism	3,82	0,99		
	Coercive Isomorphism	3,42	0,91		
<b>Organizational Structure</b>				3,90	0,65

**Notes:** (i) n=31, (ii) Numbers in table are median responses to a five point scale with (1)=strongly disagree, (2)=moderately disagree, (3)=neither agree nor disagree, (4)=moderately agree, and (5)=strongly agree. (iii) According to Friedman test ( $\chi^2= 17,454$ ;  $p<0,001$ ) results are statistically significant.

**Table 6.** Comparison of Organizational Isomorphism in Terms of Organizational Structure

Isomorphism	Organizational Structure	Mean	Std. Deviation	$\chi^2$	p
<b>Coercive Isomorphism</b>	Mechanic	4,33	0,47	0,106	>0,05
	Organic	4,13	0,67		
<b>Normative Isomorphism</b>	Mechanic	3,50	0,71	0,333	>0,05
	Organic	3,84	1,01		
<b>Mimetic Isomorphism</b>	Mechanic	1,83	1,18	4,380	<0,05
	Organic	3,53	0,80		
<b>Organizational Isomorphism</b>	Mechanic	3,19	0,44	1,453	>0,05
	Organic	3,83	1,60		

**Table 7.** Correlation Analysis Between Organizational Isomorphism and Organizational Structure

	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Coercive Isomorphism (1)</b>	1	0,254	0,399(*)	0,696(**)	0,430
<b>Normative Isomorphism (2)</b>		1	0,232	0,639(**)	0,317
<b>Mimetic Isomorphism (3)</b>			1	0,800(**)	0,668(**)
<b>Organizational Isomorphism (4)</b>				1	0,654(**)
<b>Organizational Structure (5)</b>					1

Note: \*p<.05, \*\*p<.01.

**Table 8.** Relationship Between Organizational Isomorphism and Organizational Structure

Independent Variable	R <sup>2</sup>	Independent Variable	B	Std. Error	t	F
<b>Organizational Structure</b>	0,541	Constant Term		0,581	3,479**	10,614**
		Coercive Isomorphism	0,306	0,140	1,256**	
		Normative Isomorphism	0,127	0,090	1,918*	
		Mimetic Isomorphism	0,706	0,099	2,049**	

Note: \*\*p<.05, \*p<.01.

## CONCLUSION

In this study, organizational structures and organizational isomorphism levels of stone quarry companies operating in cement industry in Konya, has been determined, and the relationships between organizational structure and organizational isomorphism has been examined. Considering the results of the study, these enterprises are generally organic structured and coercive isomorphism levels of them are higher than normative and mimetic isomorphism in adapting to their environment. In terms of organizational structure, it has been concluded that, mimetic isomorphism levels of organic structured enterprises are higher than that of mechanic structured enterprises. In addition, while generally a positive and significant relationship has been determined between organizational isomorphism and organizational structure, only mimetic isomorphism level of organizational isomorphism has been determined to have a positive and significant relationship with organizational structure. It has been concluded that, organizational isomorphism levels have importance in explaining the organizational structure of the enterprises.

Just because the sample of this study is composed of the companies operating in a specific sector in Konya, generalization power of the results of this study is weak. In this respect, larger samples can be re-worked in the future research. It should be taken into account that the data of the study have been evaluated only for a certain period of time. Due to the fact that this research was made only in Konya, it can be beneficial to study similar samples in different cities or different sectors in Konya. Additionally, owing to the certain time constraint, when the questions to answer and hypotheses put forward are considered, it can be suggested that realizing a periodic study can be a more suitable approach as data collection.

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