

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

MANAGERIAL RESPONSE TO AMBITIOUS EMPLOYEES

By

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Master of Business Administration**

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DECLARATION

I, Amrishlal Sewraj declare that

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DEDICATIONS

I dedicate this work to my beloved parents Mr Brijlal Sewraj and Mrs Radha Sewraj, who would have been proud of this achievement.

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore the extent to which managers supported ambitious employees. The research endeavoured to establish relationships among key variables of gender, age, mentoring and ambition. This allowed for the determination of the more supportive gender as well as the age category of the most supportive managers. It also determined the extent to which workplace jealousy existed from a managerial perspective towards ambitious employees. This study was conducted using a questionnaire methodology and within this context of field research, respondents were made up of 100 managers selected through snowball sampling from diverse sectors of the economy. A quantitative research design was employed using a realism paradigm.

The main research findings indicate that managers themselves were highly ambitious by nature and were most likely to support ambitious employees. In particular, male managers demonstrated marginally more support towards ambitious employees. The relationship between age and ambition showed that older managers were more supportive of ambitious employees. Finally, the link between lack of support and managerial jealousy was established to a very limited extent through the findings of this study.

Further research to extend the current investigation can be achieved through the insight of employees who could be included as potential respondents. This study is biased towards the manager, where only manager's responses towards ambitious employees were solicited. Future avenues of research involving both employees and managers would allow for a more articulated discussion on managerial response to ambitious employees. The study is unique since it will contribute to a better understanding of the dynamics of managerial attitude to ambitious employees and is based on empirical research findings using the opinions of practicing managers from various sectors of the economy.

ACRONYMS AND DEFINITIONS

GSB	Graduate School of Business
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

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CHAPTER ONE

RESEARCH OVERVIEW

1.1 Introduction

This research study focused on the attitudes of managers towards ambitious employees. Given that ambition has spillover effects on overall job satisfaction, if managers fail to encourage and nurture the ambition of employees, then employees may lack the desire to advance in the organization. In any organizational setting, there are employees who possess a strong desire for advancement and managers have a critical role to play in enhancing the career of ambitious employees.

The converse is also true, where managers that are unsupportive of ambitious employees may also be equally responsible for moderating or limiting the career pathways of ambitious employees. This negative managerial attitude to ambitious employees may have dysfunctional consequences for employees such as demotivation, reduced performance, stress, negative emotions such as workplace jealousy and overall job dissatisfaction. “Thus ambition is a double-edged sword. It can make an important contribution to the well-lived life by providing direction and meaning, by making possible the goods of achievement and the satisfactions that can accompany them. It can introduce the richness of the moral life by supplying a normative framework that encourages creativity, industry, discipline and perseverance,” (Pettigrove 2007, p. 67).

This chapter serves as a window to the study that broadly encapsulates the framework of the study. Since ambition is a multidimensional concept, the necessity to define and set out the parameters that will govern the study becomes imperative. This focus allows for the examination of pertinent variables relevant to the aim and objectives of the study. The study explores manager’s own view of ambition and how they react to ambitious employees. The problem statement will outline the issue that warrants attention and will be justified through a motivation section. Lastly, given that research is an imperfect science, an acknowledgement of its limitations is necessary. Given that research is cyclic in nature, these limitations provide a platform for future studies which would illuminate the topic even further.

1.2 Motivation for the Study

There are instances in every organization when people are antagonistic towards each other, either overtly or covertly for a myriad of reasons. When these workplace conflicts become persistent and if it involves a manager and an ambitious employee, it can be detrimental to the business world. If one of the conflicting parties is a manager, one can have a positive or negative effect on the tension this may result in. “People want leaders who are enthusiastic about leading (i.e. ambitious leaders); however they want positively ambitious leaders,” (Larrimer, Hannagan & Smith 2007). As a result it is important for managers to understand the significant impact that managers have on nurturing and grooming ambitious employees. The manner in which managers react towards highly ambitious employees has various consequences and implications for employee growth and advancement.

This study is among the first attempts to empirically examine the response of managers towards ambitious employees. Although much previous research has explored the concept of ambition, there has been very little research undertaken to establish a relationship between ambitious employees and managerial response to employees that display high levels of ambition. Most research on ambition has been anecdotal, finding correlations between gender, age and ambition. There has been limited research (if any), to determine the extent to which managers support ambitious employees and which gender is more supportive. The study will also further an understanding of the concept of ambition and how it is viewed from a managerial perspective.

This research also lends itself to concepts of workplace jealousy which has been relatively unstudied in relation to ambition. Since “there is a lack of sensitivity about how people feel - a taboo subject in the workplace, there is also a lack of awareness of the impact of jealousy and envy,” (Nebenzahl 2006). Given that jealousy is an innate quality it would be interesting to determine the extent to which managers harbour feelings of jealousy towards ambitious employees. The outcomes of this research would benefit a diverse array of managers that are involved in recruiting, training and development, workplace mentors, academics, career educators, counselors and ambitious employees. The study seeks to raise awareness or create a better understanding between managers and ambitious employees. This awareness should

assist employees in making informed decisions regarding the management of their own careers. Finally, given the connective structure of the workplace, it serves to improve on the interpersonal relationships between managers and ambitious employees for a more harmonious work environment.

1.3 Focus of the Study

The concept of ambition is a wide phenomenon hence only key aspects of ambition that have not been adequately explored in the literature will be magnified. The salient themes concerning managerial attitudes and response to ambitious employees will be confined to key variables of gender, age, mentoring and workplace jealousy. Broad-based supporting themes of goals, talent, job satisfaction, education and interpersonal relationships will be examined. One of the reasons for the lack of managerial support could be managerial jealousy but there are other factors that may prevent managers from supporting ambitious employees. Due to time constraints, lack of resources, managerial incentives among other intervening variables, managers may not have the desire to mentor or support ambitious employees. These variables of time, incentives or lack of resources will not be investigated.

The inter-relationship between managers and ambitious employees will be explored since the type of relationship may indicate the extent to which managers provide support to ambitious employees. The study will determine whether managerial jealousy exists towards ambitious employees. Other supporting themes of ambition will also be investigated in context of manager's perceptions of ambition. The age category that is most supportive of ambitious employees will also be determined. The supporting concepts of ambition include skills, goals, talent, job satisfaction, mentorship, interpersonal relationships and education.

This study should extend existing knowledge as previous studies have shown that females were more supportive as a mentor but it was not looked at in the context of ambition. In this study other variables such as ability, money, training and employment sectors are considered less significant for the purpose of this research. The study will also uncover how managers react to ambitious employees and will determine whether the relationship is positive or

otherwise. Based on the results of the study, mentorship and support of employees may be allocated to the more supportive gender and age category.

1.4 Problem Statement of the Study

Does the gender and age of managers affect their response to ambitious employees and to what extent can a lack of managerial support be attributed to managerial jealousy?

A manager's interpersonal relationship with employees has a critical role to play in either enhancing or moderating the ambition of employees. The manner in which a manager reacts to ambitious employees will determine the degree of mobility of employees within the organizational hierarchy. The research problem that warrants this study is that not all managers react to ambitious employees in the same manner. The gender and age of managers are important variables to correlate against ambition which should reveal the more supportive gender. There is also a need to determine whether older or younger managers are more supportive of ambitious employees.

The lack of or diminished levels of managerial support to ambitious employees may be as a result of various factors or variables. Since qualities of jealousy or envy are innate and universal across all population groups, there is a need to establish a link between managerial jealousy and lack of support. The concept of ambition is universal, topical and applicable to any organizational setting. "Overly ambitious employees are often seen as difficult to manage; however, with a bit of flexibility on the part of the manager, they can be of tremendous value to the organization," (Jared 2009). A manager's attitude and reaction to ambitious employees may have diverse effects and consequences on ambitious employees. The problem may continue into the future if managers are consciously unaware of the impact and the implications of moderating employee careers. This increased understanding may lead to better work relations between managers and employees.

1.5 Aim

The aim of the research is to determine how managers react towards ambitious employees and their effect on moderating or enhancing the career pathways of ambitious employees.

1.6 Research Objectives

The research seeks to determine:

- 1.6.1 How managers view the concept of ambition.
- 1.6.2 The nature and extent of managerial support towards ambitious employees.
- 1.6.3 The link between a lack of support and managerial jealousy.
- 1.6.4 The influence of gender in supporting ambitious employees.
- 1.6.5 What age category of managers is most supportive of ambitious employees.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

The limitations of the study include:

- Ambition was defined in the context of a few variables of mainly age, gender, talent, goals, mentoring and jealousy. Ambition is multidimensional in that workers may have ambition for additional training and development, ambition for lateral transfers and ambition for more pay, which has not been examined.
- Ambition has not been linked to incentives or related to various life domains such as satisfaction with home life and leisure.
- In this exploratory investigation, the non-probability sample method of snowballing and purposive technique was used. Since the initial respondents comprised of managers that were Master of Business Administration (MBA) students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), a potential of bias existed. These managers increased the sample size by referrals. As a result of this purposive method, conclusions must be drawn with caution since generalisability becomes a limitation.
- Further extensive research surveying managers across the whole country/province would lead to more reliable findings. Furthermore, the findings of this sample may not be applied to other samples since the sample comprised of managers from the private sector only. Hence scope exists to extend this research to both the public and private sector.

- Finally, the sample was relatively small and given the low response rate of 19.57%, the representativeness is a concern. From a total of 511 surveys issued to managers via e-mail and a face to face method of data collection, 100 usable surveys were received.

1.8 Structure of the Study

The dissertation is comprised of the following chapters:

Chapter one – Research Overview

This chapter consists of the introduction and background to the study. It encompasses the motivation for the study, specific focus of the study, statement of the problem, aim and objectives, research questions, structure and limitations of the study.

Chapter Two – Perspectives of Ambition

In this chapter a detailed review of previous relevant literature on ambition is explored. Key concepts of ambition are magnified and contextualized in relation to age, gender, managerial jealousy, mentorship, goals, talent, job satisfaction, education and interpersonal relationships.

Chapter Three – Research Methodology

The research design and methodology of the study will be outlined which will explain how the research was conducted. The aim and objectives will be highlighted, pertinent concepts of the sampling framework, the rationale for the measuring instrument, validity and reliability will be described. In addition, the choice and justification of statistical tests for the analysis of data will be explained.

Chapter Four – Presentation of Results

This chapter presents the results using frequency statistics which will include a variety of figures such as bar and pie graphs. The inferential statistics will be presented as frequency tables, crosstabulations, contingency tables, correlations and multiple regression.

Chapter Five – Discussion of Results

This chapter discusses the research findings in the context of literature from previous research and is a unique contribution to understanding overall managerial-employee relationships. The results will be interpreted in context of the aim and objectives of the study. This section would make parallels and explore differences with other studies. It will address whether the aim and objectives of the study have been satisfied and explain any contradictions. Finally, it discusses the weaknesses of the study through a sub-section of limitations.

Chapter Six – Recommendations and Conclusion

This chapter discusses the implication of the research by highlighting the stakeholders who may benefit from this study. On the basis of the limitations, it provides recommendations for future studies. Also suggestions are made to improve the results by exploring variables that have been excluded from this study. Finally, the conclusion outlines the extent to which the research objectives have been satisfied to answer the problem statement.

1.9 Conclusion

This chapter introduced the overall structure and focus of the study. It defined the research problem, outlined the various objectives and research questions which further illuminated the problems that were canvassed in the study. These focus areas set out the parameters of the study and provided a theoretical framework for the study. This chapter also provides a motivation for the study justifying the necessity of exploring the concept of managerial response to ambitious employees. It also described the limitations of the study and confined the variables to be studied. Finally, the introductory concepts of this chapter represented the building blocks of the study which will be magnified in the literature review, Perspectives of Ambition in Chapter 2.

CHAPTER TWO

PERSPECTIVES OF AMBITION

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of the literature review is to critically analyze existing literature to provide a platform on which this study is based. To justify this study, it will be necessary to examine core concepts of ambition and identify an area of research that has not been explored in great depth. This study aims to cement the void in the literature and extend existing knowledge by viewing ambitious employees from a managerial perspective. According to Judge & Locke (1993) ambitious people are fundamentally dissatisfied with where they are and constantly want to improve the conditions of their job in some significant way. As a result ambitious employees often set higher goals for themselves and constantly strive for higher levels of achievement. However, “the fact that some individuals have a general tendency to achieve does not necessarily mean that these people will be ambitious in the work environment,” (Judge, Johnson, Kennedy & Washington 1994). Indeed, there is experimental evidence supporting the claim that human beings are innately bound to be power hungry or dominant leaders. Managerial dominance of ambitious employees could have a moderating effect by curbing the ambition levels of employees. Conversely, managers could also play a significant role in developing, nurturing and sustaining the ambition of employees.

This study focuses on managers interpretations of ambition and it explores managerial attitude towards ambitious employees. It solicits information regarding ambition, specifically contextualizing the concept of ambition in relation to gender, age, managerial jealousy and interpersonal relationships. Previous research has demonstrated a negative relationship between ambition, or the desire to get ahead and job satisfaction. This negative relationship is more apparent for older employees than for younger employees. The qualities and attributes of a manager are interrogated to establish a link between managerial characteristics and the support or lack of to ambitious employees. Managerial attitude towards ambitious employees will be the overarching theme that will weave together a diverse array literature to construct and justify this study.

2.2 What is Ambition?

“Ambition reflects the drive needed to attain one’s career goals, it is a similar concept to need for achievement which reflects a strong goal orientation,” (Judge *et al.* 1994). Howard & Bray (1988) defines ambition as a motivational state whereas (McClelland 1961) defines the need for achievement as a personality trait. This desire for achievement can be confirmed by Pettigrove (2007, p. 57) where “there is always another goal beyond each achievement to which ambition’s gaze is already directed, because these accomplishments are stages in a never-ending progression”. This continuous search for higher levels of achievement is an integral attribute of ambition. Ambition can be clearly differentiated from wishful thinking where ambition must not only be desired but actively pursued, often in the face of adversity or challenging circumstances.

“Many of the objects of ambition have a competitive quality,” (Pettigrove 2007, p. 56). The amount of money or power that someone has in comparison to others can be a sign of greater ambition. In the quest to advance, irrespective of the material wealth attained, there is always an insatiable desire for more and this quality is accompanied by industriousness. Individuals who have a competitive nature may be viewed as possessing one of the attributes of ambition. Competition with others is what ignites ambitions efforts and aspirations. The nature of rivalry must be carefully monitored since the advancement of one need may not necessarily diminish the advancement of another but the spirit in which one is involved in the competition may involve that dynamic (Pettigrove 2007).

Pettigrove elaborates on four features of ambition. The first is that it requires a self-disciplined commitment or a form of determination to achieve an objective. The second characteristic is that the commitment and desire for ambition must be translated into action. The third attribute of ambition is that it is not acquired quickly; it is achieved over time and usually requires a plan of action. Lastly the commitment and desire to achieve ambition is difficult to achieve (Pettigrove 2007, p. 55). Schlesinger (1966, pp. 9-10) uses the analogy of a politician to explain three types of ambition. Discrete ambition relates to the politician who seeks an office for one term and then seeks neither re-election nor another office. Static ambition relates to the politician who seeks an office with the intent of attempting to retain it

for as long as possible. Progressive ambition relates to the politician who holds office and attempts to gain another which is regarded as being more attractive. This group of people is more active than others in the pursuit of ambition (Francis & Kenny 1996; Herrick & Moore 1993; Hibbing 1986; Soule 1969).

According to Schlesinger, “the central assumption of ambition theory is that a politician’s behaviour is a response to his office goals,” (Schlesinger 1966). To apply the theory to employees, one can deduce that employees may exhibit qualities of ambition as a result of a personal goal to reach the top of the corporate ladder. The link between ambition and career success is fully consistent with the goal setting theory, which has demonstrated that high goals lead to higher levels of motivation and performance (Locke, Shaw, Saari & Latham 1981; Mento, Steele & Karren 1987). Higher levels of motivation can be explained when employees that are ambitious for wealth, desires more money. This prevents one from experiencing the difficulties of a life of poverty or it could assist in obtaining the respect and admiration of people that one seeks approval from (Pettigrove 2007). Although money is one of the variables that affect ambition, for the purpose of this study, it will not be examined.

Another view of ambition is that “Ambition requires an imagined future that can be worked toward the development of skills and expertise,” (Fels 2004, p. 7). The desire for mastery is undoubtedly a key component of ambition (Fels 2004, p. 8). As noted previously, ambitions are about goals that require work and the acquisition of skills. It is precisely for such mastery that one desires to be recognized (Fels 2004, p. 10). If one is to actively pursue ambition, one must be highly persistent with ones goals to reach a desired end point. Persistence of managers is one of the variables of this study that will be measured and the level of persistence may give some indication as to the extent of manager’s level of ambition.

Hibbing (1993) suggests that one should measure opportunity and not ambition since opportunity itself can be a key factor in determining the extent to which employee’s progress. However, there are instances where people possess and display high levels of ambition but may not have much opportunity. Rohde (1979) political solution is to assume that all members of a party have ambition, in the sense that all members would take a higher position if offered to them and to examine the decision to run for a position. These offered solutions

are not completely satisfying since while all members may take a higher office if offered, members may still differ in their desire for a higher position.

The political analogy can be applied to employees in an organizational setting where some employees work to advance while others do not. While opportunity to advance may affect behavior, if members are not prepared to advance when the opportunity is present, they will not be able to take advantage of it. Thus the behaviour of members who are ambitious may be affected before the opportunity to advance is present (Herrick 2001). “Women are far more likely than men to run for Congress when ambition and opportunity combine,” (Fulton, Maestas, Maisel & Stone 2006, p. 235). This aspect of ambition combined with opportunity will not be considered in this study.

Ambition is multidimensional, where employees may be ambitious for more resources, a promotion or status. These objectives and goals to achieve require fulfillment. Ambitious people may often play organizational politics to benefit their department, colleagues or themselves. Further, ambitious employees may use organizational politics to accomplish their own objectives by forming coalitions with their bosses to impress them. “Ambitious people who are seeking to get ahead are most eager to play politics, to be successful either in their own interest or in the interest of the organizational unit,” (Schmidt 1991, p. 50). Ambitious employees are able to achieve this because of their high confidence levels and display of immense organizational energy.

For the purpose of this study ambition is conceptualized and defined as the desire to advance in the organizational hierarchy. As a result the role, relationship and effect of managerial age, gender and attitude towards ambitious employees is separately investigated. Additional supporting concepts to be explored include the effect of skills and talent on ambition, goals and job satisfaction, ambition and mentoring, managerial interpersonal relationships with ambitious employees as well as managerial jealousy.

2.3. Goals, Skills, Talent and Job Satisfaction

Research has suggested that ambition is a dynamic predictor of career attainment (Judge, Cable, Boudreau & Bretz 1994). Cox & Cooper (1989) have found that successful British executives demonstrated a high level of personal ambition. Howard & Bray (1988) found that the best predictor of advancement for managers was represented by an individual managers desire to get ahead. Through the definition of ambitious employees, it can be suggested that ambitious individuals set high goals for their career attainment. Hence, there is a strong link between ambition and career success, in which the goal setting theory shows that high goals will lead to higher levels of motivation and performance (Locke *et al.* 1981; Mento *et al.* 1987). It can thus be suggested that being ambitious is a positive quality to possess and can be regarded as important constituent of success.

Ambition is a positive attribute to have in a work environment although the negative aspect can also be simultaneously present. A study by Judge & Locke (1993) reveals that ambitious people are essentially dissatisfied with where they are in their current position and constantly seek to significantly improve the conditions of their current job. “Ambition drives these individuals to set higher standards for self-satisfaction. As a result, ambitious people must achieve more to be satisfied than those with less ambition. This is what drives them to excel and improve,” (Judge, Erez, Johnson, Kennedy & Washington 1994, p. 4). This implies that individuals that have set high goals for themselves are constantly dissatisfied with their careers. The reason is that ambitious individuals are constantly searching for higher levels of achievement and perhaps continuously moving the goal post by setting higher goals each time.

From the social cognitive and control theory perspective, it can be suggested that employees who have set high goals for themselves are more difficult to satisfy than those with low goals (Mento, Locke & Klein 1992). The level to which a skill is developed has a strong direct correlation to the satisfaction it produces. The motivation to learn a skill or to pursue a goal, which includes ambition, is based on two factors. “The energy and persistence with which an enterprise is engaged depends on how valued the expected rewards are and how certain the person is that he or she will be able to attain the desired goal,” (Fels 2004, p. 143). One must

evaluate the rewards of a particular effort and the probability of achieving these rewards. “For each potential opportunity we evaluate the desirability of the outcome (factoring in the possible losses it could entail) and our chances of achieving it. Are we capable of mastering the skills involved, and is the reward worth the effort?” (Fels 2004, p. 143).

This motivational paradigm was accurately described by a learning theorist through assessing potential rewards. “Past experiences create certain expectations that certain actions will bring valued benefits, that others will have not appreciable benefits, and that still others will avert future trouble. By representing foreseeable outcomes symbolically, people can convert future consequences into current motivators of behaviour,” (Fels 2004, p. 144). To master a skill requires a consistent prolonged effort. In the pursuit of ambition “if you don’t think the chances are great that you will reach a career goal, you won’t attempt to reach it - even if the rewards are highly desirable,” (Fels 2004, p. 145).

The theory of locus of control states that everyone has an internal model that predicts whether a person’s actions will produce a desired result. “Some individuals are confident that they have the power to determine the outcomes for many aspects of their lives; these people are said to have an internal locus of control,” (Fels 2004, p. 145). People with an internal locus of control are optimistic, determined and competent, where they are more likely to attain their ambitions. Further, those that maintain an internal locus of control are more in control of their lives and are not threatened or undermined by people that are more driven or ambitious. Possessing locus of control allows one to dissipate negative feelings toward ambitious employees. Having complete control of one’s emotions would allow one to develop a positive attitude toward ambitious employees as one has the complete confidence in one’s own ability.

However, there are individuals who feel that external factors determine the success of one’s endeavours and these people are categorized as having “external locus of control,” (Fels 2004, p. 145). These people attribute success to factors such as luck and attribute failure to lack of ability. The concept of self-efficacy which refers to a belief of one’s ability to perform a particular task in a particular situation is relevant. “The notion of self-efficacy emphasizes that a person’s sense of capability in one context is not necessarily generalized to other areas,”

(Fels 2004, p. 147). The research on locus of control and self-efficacy has revealed valuable information into women's reduced sense of capability and ambition when faced with certain tasks.

Two qualities, ambition and talent are related but are not necessarily one and the same thing. One can be talented and not ambitious and vice versa where both qualities affect a person's productivity. According to Koztsegei (2002), "ambitious people derive more happiness than their less ambitious counterparts from any given level of success". The author further highlights a theory called the ambition-proving incentive. The theory has two forms whereby more ambitious agents are expected to work harder. Since more ambitious agents are expected to work harder, a high output can signal one's ambition, which in turn translates into expectations about harder work in the future and increases effort, which is called forward attribution (Kotsegi 2002). If however, one is ambitious because of past levels of output, then this reflects more toil than effort and this backward attribution decreases effort (Kotsegi 2002).

"Ambitious people plan to stay in their current careers for a long time, whereas unambitious ones intend to switch jobs or quit the labour market altogether," (Kotsegi 2002). Employee's ambition may become known at a later stage in life which may be as a result of change in circumstance or needs. When the most ambitious employees work hardest, a firm induces everybody to try to prove that they are ambitious. "This increases effort earlier in the career even before the explicit incentives kick in," (Kotsetgi 2002). Employees who are successful earlier in the career are carefully mentored and monitored. While in the up-or-out system, the firm promotes or fires the employee after a certain period of time. Both of these systems discourage less successful employees (Kanter 1977). "If ambitious people are expected to distinguish themselves from others, observers will take good performance to be a sign of ambition, and this motivates even the less ambitious to work even hard. However, if the best performing agents in the economy are not expected to lead in this way, everybody will work less hard," (Kozsegi 2002).

Studies by (Erez 1994; Judge Locke 1993; Judge *et al.* 1994) have found that there is a negative relationship between ambition and job satisfaction. In these studies, the dissatisfaction was as a result of employees being in a lower position in the organizational hierarchy. (Mento *et al.* 1992) explained the negative relationship between the level of goals attained and satisfaction levels using Bandura's (1988) principle of motivation. This principle suggests that personal satisfaction is derived when one attains established goals. Hence, "those who perform below their desired goal level should be dissatisfied, while those who just meet or surpass their desired performance level should be relatively satisfied," (Judge *et al.* 1994).

For ambitious individuals who set high goals, exceeding goal levels can be difficult. Ambitious employees are very likely to fail or just attain goal levels, which as a result leads to lower levels of satisfaction (Judge *et al.* 1994). The negative relationship between ambition and job satisfaction is further demonstrated by the multiple discrepancy theory (Michalos 1985). This theory explains satisfaction in different domains of life by different aspirational gaps. Gap theorists have shown that job satisfaction depends on the discrepancy between what an individual achieves and what one would like to achieve (Judge *et al.* 1994). In a similar manner, the goal achievement gap theory finds the gap between what an individual has and what one hopes to have.

The conclusion that Michalos (1985) has arrived at, is ambitious individuals are constantly trying to bridge the gap between where they are currently and where they expect to be in the future. This is known as the gap theory where if there is a gap the discrepancy theory predicts dissatisfaction (Michalos 1985). Finally, ambition has an effect on job satisfaction, whereby if employees are dissatisfied with their current position in the organizational hierarchy, they are more likely to exhibit higher levels of ambition as they believe they are capable of performing (Judge *et al.* 1994). The research by (Judge *et al.* 1994; Michalos 1985) on ambition and job satisfaction is controversial where if an employee is driven by ambition then a negative relationship with job satisfaction occurs.

Ambitious employees may often be dissatisfied with their job conditions and constantly search for improvements. Guided by ambition, individuals use their goals as standards of self-satisfaction. Hence they are not easily satisfied. Given a constant level of performance, the consequence is a negative relation with satisfaction. It is therefore more difficult to satisfy individuals with high aspirations (Mento *et al.* 1992). Being constrained by job conditions to perform below the level makes workers dissatisfied. As they meet or surpass the desired performance levels, they should be relatively satisfied. Of course, if highly motivated by ambition, as soon as they reach the desired level, new higher goals will be set and again dissatisfaction would prevail. By contrast, when goals are not conditioned by ambition, then it is more likely that workers will judge themselves satisfied with the job they have.

2.4 The relationship of Age and Ambition

In a study by Michalos (1985), employee age represents one of the variables that demonstrates the concepts of the discrepancy theory. It was hypothesized that older individuals had a lower discrepancy level between what they wanted and what they had. Also there was a lower discrepancy between what they had and expected to have in the future. In terms of career goals, this suggested that older individuals are less ambitious and hence expressed more satisfaction of their position in the organizational hierarchy (Judge *et al.* 1994). Michalos (1985) was unable to confirm this proposition. Also, the desire of ambitious individuals to be promoted is viewed as a mechanism to close the gap between where an individual is presently in their career to where one wants to be in the future. Hence, if older employees are less ambitious then they should seek fewer promotional opportunities (Judge *et al.* 1994).

There are contrasting views of the relationship between ambition and age. Research by (Chinoy 1955; Sofer 1970) confirmed that individuals maintain their expectations of promotions at a much later stage in their careers. However, a study by (Erez 1994; Judge *et al.* 1993; Judge & Locke 1993) has found a negative relationship between ambition and age. The study found that as employees age, employees decrease their expectations and become more realistic and accepting to what is available. A study by Rhodes (1983) suggested that promotional opportunities vests in the control of organizations and thus organizational policies play a significant role in enhancing or moderating employee ambition. Hence, it can

be deduced that older employees may not necessarily be less ambitious but may only be able to display high levels of ambition in organizations that support promotion. Organizational support to encourage ambition will not be examined in this study.

Knox (1977) explained that for ambitious older individuals that have not achieved their goals, it can be a frustrating and depressing feeling. The reason is that older individuals become preoccupied with comparing the achievement of individuals of the same age. For younger individuals this is not a concern as younger individuals have more time to achieve their ambitions. Another reason for the dissatisfaction effect of ambition on older workers is that older workers were led to believe that promotional opportunities were available to them throughout their careers. However, this is no longer relevant where “downsizing and the flattening of the organizational hierarchy may reduce employee’s chances for upward advancement,” (Goddard 1989). As a result of this trend, older employees are more susceptible to thwarted ambition levels as they become more dissatisfied at the prospect of reduced career mobility.

From the study by (Judge *et al.* 1994), it was concluded that older workers with high ambition were more dissatisfied than younger workers with equal levels of ambition. These results were obtained from three different samples which all confirmed the same results. Also the correlation analysis approach of age and ambition showed that ambition and older employees were more negative than for younger employees (Judge *et al.* 1994). The study also confirmed that ambitious older individuals have a greater dissatisfaction because they have diminished expectations of career advancement in the future. This perception may be based on the reality which exists in many organizations where promotions come relatively quickly early in the career stages but tend to slow in later stages (Hall 1986; Rosenbaum 1984). The study by (Judge *et al.* 1994) showed that older workers have a lower expectation of career advancement.

In many organizations there is a misconception that one can continually advance along a career path but this is regarded as a myth (Rosenbaum 1979 & Driver 1985). The study by Judge *et al.* (1994) has its limitations since process variables were not measured in any of the

studies. The relationship has been significant but there is no model to explain the causes of the interactions. Again it must be emphasized that ambition is a multidimensional concept and cannot be simply explained by isolated concepts. Hence, this study explores ambition in relation to various variables, the pertinent ones being age, gender, skills, talent, education, persistence, competition, confidence and mentoring.

Driver (1985) differentiated between four categories of employees, namely: linear, expert, transitory and spiral. Driver suggested that employees with linear career prospects are concerned with upward mobility in the organizational hierarchy. It is therefore very frustrating for older employees who strive for upward mobility to be hindered in their desire to advance by organizational structures (Judge *et al.* 1994). Driver also suggested three non-linear career paths whereby the expert path refers to individuals who choose a life-long job so as to become masters of their field of work. The transitory path refers to the ability of individuals to transfer from one unrelated job to the next. The spiral path is characteristic of a change of career every five to ten years. This career change may be a major shift from a current field but it may be related somehow (Judge *et al.* 1994). This ensures the acquisition of new skills which is based on previous skills thus increasing the chances for new career opportunities.

All three career paths is a better alternative to the frustrating linear path but it is the spiral path that is a more beneficial path as it offers the opportunity for lateral growth (Judge *et al.* 1994). It is this spiral path approach that offers a good alternative to older employees who are frustrated and have decreased ambition levels. Stanwyck (1983) explored other factors such as stress and its effect on the self-esteem of older employees. Driver (1985) stressed the importance of being motivated throughout their career. “Individuals who are flexible enough to embrace non-linear career alternatives such as the spiral and expert options may have a higher likelihood of remaining motivated and satisfied as their careers progress in the newly designed (reengineered) organizations of today and tomorrow,” (Judge *et al.* 1994, p 21).

Bardwick (1986) suggests that individuals do not give up on their ambitions but rather rechannel their drive into other achievable endeavours. “These refocusing efforts may be particularly important for older employees who are more likely to be plateaued in their present job assignments, and by ambitious employees, who are likely to be particularly frustrated by plateauing,” (Judge *et al.* 1994, p. 22). As previously mentioned, the fact that older employees are higher up in the organizational hierarchy, by implication this means that there are fewer levels to which they can be promoted. There may be other reasons, for example, “age discrimination in promotion practices, where research has found that when age is perceived to be a factor in promotion decisions, negative attitudes in older workers result,” (Judge *et al.* 1994, p. 22). This age discrimination may be a reason for dissatisfaction among older ambitious employees. Lawrence (1988) suggested that age norms place considerable pressure on older employees where an increase in employee age corresponds with a reduction of expectations.

A contrasting viewpoint is evident in *Ambition and Politics* where Schlesinger “hypothesizes that the older a politician is the less chance he has for promotion and the less likely he is to harbour ambitions to advance,” (Hain 1979, p. 265). The study which looked at political ambitions of state legislators found that the rate of political ambition decreases as age increases (Hain 1979, p. 268). For example, those that are in their forties or early fifties are regarded as middle-age and are unlikely to progress significantly in terms of ambition. In a political environment it appears that age is a significant variable that affects a politician’s level of ambition. Politicians also exhibit the discrepancy theory whereby there is a hiatus between the position a politician currently occupies to a position where one would desire to be in.

In politics “as politicians reach the late 40s or early 50s a middle-age crisis is likely set in as they begin to realize that because of limitations on their abilities or on political opportunities they are not likely to rise as far as they once dreamed. As a consequence, they lower their aspirations and decide not to run for office, or alternatively, to settle for a lesser office,” (Hain 1974). According to Nabi (1999) there is a negative relationship between ambition and career success which relates to age. The reason is that employees who are at the same age who had

not attained a successful career, may display higher levels of ambition to progress further up the corporate ladder than those who have already achieved career success.

The study by Hain (1979) supported the view that the older a person gets, the lower the probability of advancing. “While the age-related patterns of expressed ambitions and subsequent careers are similar in that both decline as age increases, some important differences exist,” (Hain 1979, p. 271). The study revealed that the average age of progressive ambitious people decreases from shown levels of ambition to the expended efforts to progress (Hain 1979, pp. 271-272). According to Driver (1988) “ambition is frustrating to older employees whose ideal career concept is one of upward advancement, advancement that is blocked in contemporary organizational structures”. One of the explanations is that ambitious older employees are more dissatisfied because they have a lower expectation of advancing into the future. This perception is based on the fact that in many organizations, promotions occur relatively early but tends to slow down in later stages (Hall 1986). This has resulted in reduced promotional opportunities, particularly for older employees (Saveri, 1991).

In a study by Stanwyck (1983) it was suggested that older workers have less career opportunities available to them as there are fewer levels to transcend in the hierarchy of promotions. Since older workers may have already been promoted from a younger age, older individuals have not only less chances of promotion but less time to achieve it. Ambition for older individuals may thus be moderated by their age and it also thus becomes more frustrating for older employees to achieve their goals with a high expectation of success. Stanwyck (1983) further suggested that as individual’s age, they set more realistic and achievable goals than the goals set in the younger years.

Research showing age interaction with ambition has found that older workers are more satisfied with their position in the organizational hierarchy. Older workers are aware of their life successes and what opportunities are available for higher goals to be achieved. Hence if they are still working it is most likely that they will leave aside ambition. With an increase in age they are aware of what is available to them and reduce their expectations for satisfying work (Wright & Hamilton 1978). The relation of age and ambition in this study seeks to

determine whether older or younger managers are more supportive of ambitious employees. This will be achieved by selecting managers from various age categories and measuring their willingness to mentor ambitious employees.

2.5 The relationship of Gender, Education and Ambition

The nature of ambition between men and women are different. A woman's ambition is different from a man in the degree of ambition, the goal itself and the means to reaching the goal. It is also different because women simultaneously pursue different ambitions which may be unrelated to each other (Turner 1964). There is research to suggest that the gender of the respondent is important since male and females think differently and will respond differently. "Carlson and Carlson observed that twenty-two out of thirty two studies in the Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology from 1958 to 1960 showed significant differences in response for males and females," (Turner 1964, p. 272).

It is known that education influences future behaviour and lifestyle. The increasing standards and cost of living is one of the reasons that managers are becoming dissatisfied with careers and is probably the reason for increasing trends of mobility. "It has been argued that higher levels of education, higher standards of living, and increased work force mobility result in higher work force expectations which organizations are unable to meet," (Smith, Scott & Hullin 1977). A high school qualification or undergraduate degree is insufficient for entry and advancement in many career pathways.

In a study of students, Schneider & Stevenson (2001) discuss two different branches of ambition, namely aligned and misaligned ambitions. People with aligned ambitions have educational expectations that are consistent with occupational goals. While in misaligned ambition, students expect more or less education than required to work in a chosen occupation. The study concluded that people with aligned ambitions are more likely to reach their occupational goals. Also, females are reported to have a lower unemployment rate than males. Females are also more likely to complete a degree than male students (Schneider & Stevenson 2001, p. 25). The analogy from the study is that like parents, guardians and educators that shape students ambitions, at the workplace managers can have a similar effect

on employee ambition. The manner in which managers respond to ambitious employees could be either positive or negative, each with different consequences for both manager and employee.

It is not simplistic to say though, that women aspire more than men. The reason is that men and women may use different approaches to pursue similar goals (Turner 1964, p. 273). “Despite the fact that women are currently more career orientated than at any time in history – and often more clearly ambitious – there is something about the concept that makes them distinctly uncomfortable,” (Fels 2004, p. 5). Forming relationships in areas where the recognition is based on a talent or skill or hard work is the essence of ambition (Fels 2004). For men, work attitude outside the home was not only a financial necessity but the cornerstone of identity and self-worth to which many studies of ambition in men have confirmed. “Women on the other hand, were defined by their role (or lack of role) as an adjunct to a provider for others within the private sphere,” (Fels 2004, p. 16).

Women have achieved good representation in many careers but still remain underrepresented at the top. Women achieve equal levels of advancement when objective criteria such as test scores are used. However, when subjective criteria like personal connections at work and family are concerned, women do not advance as fast (Fels 2004). “Recognition in all its forms - admiration from peers, mentoring, institutional rewards, societal approval – creates our ambitions and modulates our efforts to fulfill them,” (Fels 2004, p. 135).

In Kanter’s (1977) *Men and Women of the Corporation*, the author describes what happens to managers (male and female) when career opportunities for advancement are blocked. “Their self-esteem drops, they lower their aspirations, and they become critical of those who are more successful,” (Fels 2004, p. 135). Kanter (1977) also found that when managers no longer have career advancement, they reorganize their lives to seek new sources of recognition (Fels 2004, p. 135). One of the ways of seeking recognition is by studying but often what one studies may not be required by an employer. In this study the desire to pursue postgraduate studies may be some indication of manager’s ambition, persistence and satisfaction.

Are people with more education more ambitious? The literature suggests that the exact opposite may be true. “Those with less education may be more aggressive in pursuing their careers because of their educational handicap,” (Cannings & Montmarquette 1991, p. 218). The study also concluded that those with the least education have the lowest ambition since they do not believe that there is any way to get ahead. However, the individuals that are most highly educated have invested a significant number of additional years for studying hence those innate traits of the desire to study may be linked to ambition, which may be carried into the workplace. (Cannings & Montmarquette 1991, p. 218). People are generally more ambitious at the outset of their careers or employment with a particular company than they are later on.

This decrease in ambition level later in one’s career is called managerial momentum. “Managerial momentum represents a continuous process of upward mobility within the organization, and the careers of those managerial employees who lack such momentum have, in effect stalled,” (Cannings & Montmarquette 1991). According to the authors, managerial momentum arises from having greater performance, ambition, motivation and ability. If performance was kept constant, those that achieve promotions are regarded as being more ambitious and represents a measure of ambitiousness (Cannings & Montmarquette 1991, p. 213). Ambition and performance cannot be separated though, since “ambition can influence performance because those employees who are most ambitious may work harder at achieving their goals. Performance can influence ambition because those employees who are most competent may believe that they can be less aggressive about bidding for promotion,” (Cannings & Montmarquette 1991, pp. 213-214). However, those that are more competent may become more ambitious because of increased expectations of success.

Research shows that progressive ambition is one of the predictors of both objective and subjective career success (Nabi 1999). Hamel and Prahalad (1989) coined the expression of strategic intent which is applicable to ambitious employees where “it can be likened to an ambition, a mentality, wanting to be the best. It is an entrepreneurial mentality with specific will to survive and win. Strategic intent involves the definition of an ambitious future and the will to bridge the gap between the present situation and the view of the future,”

(Bergenhengouwen, Horn & Mooijman 1996, pp. 29-30). This means that individuals must continually set new challenges to renew oneself. This can be achieved by constantly evaluating one's life at various stages and redirecting goals to a specific target. This demonstrates ambitions fluid nature which can accelerate after a dormant period of time.

In a study by Hibbing & Alford (2004, p. 72) it was found that people respond negatively to decision makers that are viewed as being power hungry. Van Vugt, Jepson & De Cremer (2004) have found that people are more likely to leave a group with an autocratic leader as compared to a group with a democratic leader. Hence, the manner in which manager's react and respond to employees has an effect on employee well-being. Managers can display positive ambition which is associated with competence and a desire to carry out multiple responsibilities and serve communal goals. Negative ambition is associated with craving for power. It is suggested that males are more competitive, physically aggressive, dominant, risk-tolerant and status oriented (Eagly 1995). In all probability a leader with negative ambition is most likely to be stereotypically male.

The negative ambition has gender implications but this has not been empirically explored. Knauft (1994) states that women tend to be less concerned with rivalry and status. What has not been explored as yet is how people respond to ambitious females who show negative ambition (Larimer, Hannagan & Smith 2007). Negative ambition has been described to be a male behavioural stereotype and gender stereotypes are used to evaluate the traits of political decision makers (Alexander & Anderson 1993). There is evidence of gender differences in behaviour as leaders, responses to style of leadership and in various other aspects of authoritative decision making (Kennedy 2003, Rosenthal 1998). "Yet we are aware of no empirical studies that directly assess gender differences in the context of ambition or that test the behavioural implications of such differences," (Larimer *et al.* 2007). This study will determine the gender that is more supportive of ambitious employees and will be related to the positive or negative view of managers on ambitious employees.

Negative ambition is regarded as a male trait and the reaction to ambitious employees may be related to gender. If an individual of each gender displays strong negative ambition, the female decision maker has an advantage as negative ambition is viewed as being stereotypically male. Empirical results from a study by (Witt, Paget & Mathews 1995, p. 214) show that people may be more sensitive to negative ambition in a male decision maker as compared to a female. Based on research from anthropology and work on gender stereotypes, the leader that best embodies characteristics of positive ambition are ambitious females. The reason for this is that females benefit from having high ambition levels as it acts as a counter balance to high ambition in males (Larrimer *et al.* 2007). This suggests that females are at an advantage whereby they may be more positive towards ambitious employees.

If employees associate ambition with self-serving behaviour, then employees are likely to perceive the decision making process as unfair, given a highly ambitious decision maker (Larrimer *et al.* 2007). “People associate ambition with male and self-interested behaviour and that people will seek to offset ambitious decision makers they perceive to be less ambitious and less likely to be self serving,” (Larrimer *et al.* 2007). People are likely to assume that decision makers are male which is associated with high desire for power. Also people tend to associate ambition with self-serving behaviour. The study confirmed that high levels of ambition tend to be associated with unfair, self-interested and male behavior. It reveals that both ambitious and unambitious males are more likely to resort to self-serving behaviour. However, unambitious females are considered less likely to have self-serving behaviour as compared to ambitious females (Larrimer *et al.* 2007).

Since women are perceived to be more compassionate than men (Huddy & Terkildsen 1993), an ambitious female decision maker may be an appropriate counter to an ambitious male decision maker. People tend to associate self-serving behaviour with males and would hence prefer a female to offset this self-interested male behaviour. They do not prefer just any female, though, but a female that is as ambitious as the male counterparts. The study shows that people have greater expectations for fairer behaviour from ambitious females than males. Also given a highly ambitious decision maker, there is a greater probability of selecting a highly ambitious female to offset ambitious male behaviour.

In Fels (2004, p. 152) it was argued that individuals in subordinate roles “need to be aware of the feelings, thoughts, and responses of their superiors to respond to their superiors needs and acquire their favour”. This suggests that if employees would like to be in a favourable position with their managers, employees must perhaps interpret the response of managers to their ambition. In employer-employee interaction, the style and level of an employer’s influence from the top of the hierarchy is greater than the employees beneath (Fels 2004, p. 153). However, female employees often occupy a lower status and female subordinates that are perceived to be more forceful and direct to influence managerial behavior is often disregarded.

In comparing the ambition of men and women, there are females who have the same ambition as males. Some have occupational goals that are not as important as other goals and there are those that set goals that can only be achieved through their husbands (Turner 1964). The study by Turner (1964) revealed that “women’s ambition is lower than men in two respects which are directly comparable (education and material level)”. The fundamental difference between men’s and women’s ambition, is that men pursue the entire range of ambition options. Educational and occupational ambition for men is related to material ambition but a women’s educational and career aspirations does not show a significant relationship to material expectations (Turner 1964, p. 284). “The general pattern which emerges is one in which educational ambition becomes more preponderantly a vehicle for the pursuit of intrinsic reward in women than in men,” (Turner 1964, p. 284).

In discussing gender and ambition, there also exists gender bias and stereotypes, where ambitious women may be regarded as being pushy and ambitious men as up and coming (Cannings & Montmarquette 1991). This suggests that for any level of ambition women are always viewed as less competent than men. Negative work experiences such as the presence of the glass ceiling make women less ambitious and less desire to be promoted up the managerial hierarchy exists. (Cannings & Montmarquette 1991). In this study the link between gender and ambition seeks to determine which gender is more supportive of ambitious employees.

2.6 Managerial and Employee Interpersonal Relationships

A manager's ability to influence people is an important characteristic of managerial effectiveness. The Four Face model proposed by Keys and Bell (1982) provides a framework for managerial influence (Gupta & Case 1999). One of the directions of influence is downwards on subordinates which this study will examine. Only a limited number of studies have examined managerial response to ambitious employees. According to Kaufman (1973, p. 2) the reasons that subordinates do not comply with management instructions is that subordinates are ignorant of management expectations, subordinates cannot execute what superiors want or subordinates simply refuse to do what superiors want them to do. In large organizations, subordinates receive contradictory information from the management above. However, if a subordinate is certain on what is required, sometimes due to lack of skill, experience or knowledge one may be unable to perform a directive from a superior. In this situation an employee may handle the situation according to one's own policies.

A differing view is that "subordinates may know precisely what is expected of them, be perfectly capable of doing it, and still not do it," (Kaufman 1973, p. 3). Subordinates obey superiors because of "employee's sense of legitimacy (the feeling he ought to obey), of identification (the feeling of loyalty to an organization and to his superiors), and of confidence (the feeling that another person knows more)," (Kaufman 1973, p. 5). Undesirable subordinate behaviour may have to be corrected and redirected. One of the ways of achieving this is by improving training and providing greater incentives for improved performance.

In every organization, even the most decentralized ones, subordinate input and action is not highly valued unless approved by a manager (Kaufman 1973, p. 6). Managers may often not monitor subordinate behaviour because there may be far more important activities to be concerned about. "Subordinates noncompliance with the wishes of leaders in large organizations is virtually inevitable. Instructions from above are only one of many conflicting set of factors that influence the behaviour of subordinates," (Kaufman 1973, p. 67). Subordinates are sometimes not completely compliant with management orders either because they subscribe to values and perceptions that contradict with the orders, or they belong to

groups whose interest would be comprised by compliance (Kaufman 1973, p. 67). Sometimes employees find it impossible to execute a manager's order and hence follow their own instinct.

“Superiors have responsibility for overseeing subordinates and usually have the authority to make binding decisions. Control is basic to management and many managers are committed to the control of subordinates,” (Tjosvold 1983). The control of subordinates and the decision making process may not be compatible. Decisions must take subordinates interests into consideration and subordinates are more likely to implement decisions that they have been involved in. Superiors who like to be in control may discourage opinions of subordinates and may not incorporate subordinates views and contributions in decisions.

Overly ambitious employees are the ones that challenge directions, policies and procedures and can increase the severity of simple matters. When this behaviour involves a subordinate, it is difficult to manage and control (Jared 2009). Managers may be tempted to regard this type of behaviour as a form of disturbance but really ambitious employees act in this manner when they lack stimulation and challenge. However, although the perception is that ambitious employees may be difficult to manage, if managers are responsive and flexible to the needs of ambitious employees, these employees may be of considerable benefit to an organization (Jared 2009).

There are several ways that managers can effectively handle ambitious employees. The first is to be flexible. Managers must realize that there may be value in an employee's opinion and different frame of thought. The second method is to set performance and behavioural goals as well as the parameters in which to work. Employees must be involved to a minor extent in goal setting so it gives a sense of independence. Mentoring and feedback is essential to keep employees within their parameters, so employees are aware of work and behaviour expectations.

One must recognise that every employee needs to be managed in a unique way based on their skills, personality traits and motivators. Managers can begin the process of adjusting their style to meet the needs of their employees. In the case of overly ambitious employees, managers will have to recognise and acknowledge that these employees are not troubled underperformers; rather they need to be given structured parameters and goals, and then be given the freedom to operate within these boundaries while being held accountable for their own achievements and failures (Jared 2009). Excessively ambitious employees may have a mindset of self-gain where their own interests will be placed ahead of the interest of the company.

In evaluating the type of relationship between a manager and an employee, the concept of emotion should also be considered. Expressing positive emotions at the workplace has favourable consequences where “people with positive emotion are more successful at influencing others,” (Staw, Sutton & Pelled 1994, p. 52). Hence managers that react positively towards employees directly influence performance at the workplace. The literature on social influence suggests that people are more eager to assist people they like than people they dislike. The implication for this study suggests that managers who like fellow employees or subordinates are more likely to mentor or support these employees and enjoy a positive relationship. A study by Organ (1988) found that job satisfaction is one of the most dynamic indicators of organizational behaviour. George & Brief (1993) supported a positive work atmosphere stating that there would be greater peer and supervisor support. When employees use their ambition productively, managers may be more supportive of employee actions.

The value of positive emotion is that it not only increases work performance but increases persistence, perseverance and optimism (Staw *et al.* 1994, p. 53). Since perseverance is one of the many qualities of ambition, the impact of a manager’s emotion directly affects employee ambition. The effect of positive emotion from employee to employee may possibly have the same effects from manager to employee. The effects described by Staw *et al.* (1994) is that employees are more interpersonally attractive, employees with positive emotion have more desirable qualities or traits and people that are liked have a greater social influence on other people. This pattern suggests that managers may have a similar effect on employees if

managers display positive emotion on ambitious employees. Those that are more emotionally positive can be regarded as more personally attractive.

In a study by Vinokur, Schul & Caplan (1987), it was found that people that had a negative view on life, lacked self esteem and resented others, were less likely to support other people and were also less likely to receive support from their own spouses or friends. The impact of managerial attitudes towards subordinates is important since it may affect the type of employee performance evaluation which may not be an objective review of an employee's performance. A correlational study by Alexander & Wilkins (1982) found that the strength of a manager's likeability of an employee was a better indicator of the type of employee performance evaluation received. The implication for this study is that if managers do not like ambitious employees, this could impact negatively on an employee's performance evaluation.

There are studies that have explored supervisor-subordinate relationships but none have explored the relationship in context of ambition. Existing literature have explored disagreement between subordinates and supervisors (Baird & Debolt 1976), subordinates job related problems (Graen & Schiemann 1978) and supervisor-subordinate communication (Hatfield & Huseman 1982). There is very little research on the moderating effect of managers on subordinates. The study by Wilhelm, Herd & Steiner (1993) examined the extent to which subordinates support management decisions and whether subordinates view managers favourably. This study examines the reciprocal behaviour which is the extent of management support towards ambitious employees.

In examining interpersonal relationships, emotions of employees and managers requires some measure of investigation since the concept of jealousy may stem from negative emotions. A study by (Staw *et al.* 1994), stresses the importance of positive emotions as it affects ones persistence and relationship with others. Pfeffer (1978) & Salancik (1977) assessed the manner in which employees respond to managers attitudes in social contexts that shape behaviour. This study determines the attitude of managers toward ambitious employees in a business context. "Ambitious employees use a variety of tactics for influencing others. A

successful career depends on building relationships and using organizational politics in addition to technical competence,” (Schmidt 1991, p. 48). This further supports the notion that ambitious employees use their qualities to influence managers for promotions. In a similar manner managers can use ambitious employees to their advantage for building the organization. A growing body of literature argues that influencing subordinates is an important component of managerial work, and the study of managerial roles may provide a more detailed analysis of the influence process.

One of the ways that managers can achieve much success at the workplace is by their ability to influence others. How a manager exercises this influence is critical to the type of interpersonal relationship between manager and employee. According to Brim (2006) the best way to positively influence people is to understand and utilize ones talent optimally. The researcher also claimed that “ambitious employees seek to influence the managers who can help them ascend the corporate ladder,” (Brim 2006).

Subordinate employees may attempt to influence managers in ways that can make managers feel pressured. For managers to influence subordinates emotional intelligence may be required, where one of the aspects is social intelligence, which is the ability to understand and relate to people (Johnson & Indvik 1999, p. 84). According to McGarvey (1997), possessing emotional intelligence equips one with four skills. Firstly one has the ability to persist and stay motivated, secondly is the ability to control impulses, thirdly the ability to control emotions and lastly the ability to empathize with others. “Individuals tend to compare themselves to co-workers in comparisons concerning their careers. Individuals compare themselves to co-workers in positions above and below them in the hierarchy as a basis for assessing their own performance,” (Eddleston 2008).

“Managers career attitudes may be closely tied to how well they feel they are progressing in comparison to their co-workers,” (Eddleston 2008). Ambitious employees may enact aspirations to achieve managerial advancement (Eddleston 2008). The purpose of exploring managerial response to ambitious employees is to determine whether the relationship and attitude is positive or otherwise. If the relationship is found to be negative, then is there a link

between negative managerial attitude and jealousy. Further, apart from jealousy, managers may react negatively towards ambitious employees as they may represent a threat to their own careers.

2.7 Ambition and mentoring

“In the USA mentors are generally defined as individuals with advanced experience and knowledge who are committed to providing upward mobility and career support to their mentees – often called protégés,” (Kram 1986). In the United Kingdom the mentor is seen as a guide, counselor and coach. Klasen & Clutterback (2002), argues that the American mentoring model assumes the mentor to have more seniority and power than the mentee whereas the United Kingdom model describes that the mentor have relevant experience that is valuable to the mentee and that the mentee takes responsibility for one’s own learning (Poulsten 2000, p. 252). Mentoring can also be defined as “the facilitation of an individual’s learning process, enabling the individual to take ownership of his or her development,” (Galvao 2007).

One must understand the relationship between managers and subordinates. Building this relationship is an exchange process that involves both parties but usually involves the managers to a greater extent. The more important, influential and well-known the mentor is, the more this reflects on the mentee, in the sense that “if this person (mentor) will spend his (most often a man) time and efforts helping this other person (mentee), then this other person must be worth it and have some special talents,” (Poulsen 2006, p. 252). This study will evaluate the gender that is more willing to act as a mentor for ambitious employees. Mentoring employees is a great way to foster meaningful relationships in the workplace. This is achieved by pairing experienced employees with those that require direction or guidance. It provides a platform to empower both mentor and mentee to grow within their careers.

“Mentors, individuals in comparatively high-level positions who take a particular interest in someone more junior, often become crucial,” (Fels 2004, p. 122). The greater the number of mentors or supporters, the greater the possibility for an employee to realize ones ambition. Of the various sources of recognition that continuously reshape and energize ambition, mentors are perhaps the most studied. The impact of such support has demonstrated a significant

practical component where mentors will often provide teaching, special career opportunities and guidance. Research has shown that mentors not only provide relational support but offer significant emotional support, appraisal support such as feedback and confirmation, listening and concern for employees (Fels 2004, p. 123). The positive impact of this has been documented in areas such as job satisfaction, motivation, and advancement.

Mentees enjoy more positive career experience, where there is greater career satisfaction, commitment, expectations and job satisfaction (Emmerik, Baugh & Eurwema 2005). The other benefits include increased chances of promotion, higher salaries and better job performance. Most research outlines the value of mentoring to mentees. However, since resources such as time and effort must be contributed by the mentor, a reciprocal benefit must exist for a harmonious mentor-mentee relationship. This literature review will examine the benefits of mentoring which has not been extensively examined. Mentoring is a voluntary activity and reaches beyond the mentor's formal job requirements (Emmerik *et al.* 2005, p. 312).

Mentorship for men, has been described by Levinson (1978), in *The Seasons of a Man's Life*, and was based on interviews with forty men. For men, mentorship encourages self-belief and "mentoring for men and women is crucial for the evolution of ambitions," (Fels 2004, p. 124). It is also proposed that ambition levels increases and decreases depending on the availability of encouraging mentors (Fels 2004, p. 125). The effect of a mentor can be a considerable source of inspiration and may be responsible for employee mobility. When there is a lack of mentorship, then new innovative sources of affirmation must be established to ensure people are continually encouraged to yield their best (Fels 2004, p. 126).

There are other support structures available from the organization itself or from other colleagues that employees have at their disposal. "Although individual mentors are an important support system for ambitions, they represent only one of many possible social configurations that provide essential recognition," (Fels 2004, p. 126). A longitudinal study compared the impact of individual mentors with a range of supporting figures and the results revealed that these supporting figures played a far more significant role in enhancing career

development (Fels 2004). For long term career success it is this range of developmental encounters that adds value to a managerial-employee relationship.

“Supervisor support is the extent to which an employee receives emotional and tangible assistance from his or her immediate supervisor,” (Staw *et al.* 1994, p. 60). A study of law school students in the 1990’s found that female students received less attention from the faculty in class and less individual follow-up after class. The professors were more likely to mentor male students and despite the fact that the male and female students had identical law school entry credentials, by the end of the first year the men were three times more likely than the women to be at the top of their class (Fels 2004, p. 128). The relevance of this in a work situation is that managers may choose which gender to mentor and the one that receives greater support will demonstrate higher levels of ambition. In a study by Hennig & Jardim (2004) in *The Managerial Women*, the women that were interviewed mentioned that a good employer was a good supporter, encourager and source of strength in the company (Fels 2004, p. 135).

“Mentoring is one of the activities often designed and encouraged by management to develop its personnel and ensure that they remain a prime source of competitive advantage,” (Okurame 2008, p. 560). The relationship is generally between an older and more experienced manager and a younger inexperienced subordinate. The advantages of mentoring to develop employees in all aspects have been studied by (Levinson *et al.* 1978; Kram 1985). Mentoring allows for the acquisition of skills, leads to career growth, improved chances of promotion and higher incomes (Dreher & Ash 1990; Whitley, Dougherty & Dreher 1991; Cox & Cooper 1989; Turban & Dougherty 1994; Allen, Poteet, Eby, Lentz & Lima 2004). The benefits of a good mentor include the optimal utilization of knowledge and skills by passing on valuable attributes from mentor to mentee. Apart from the skills and expertise that mentors provide, mentors are trusted guides and advisers (Stephen 1996). Mentoring is an interpersonal relationship and can take the form of a formal or informal relationship (Okurame 2008, p. 521).

In a study by Allen & Eby (2004) gender plays a significant role in the type of mentoring function provided by male and female mentors. A survey of 391 mentors revealed that career development functions are usually from males while females are characterized by psychosocial functions. Male mentors provide more career development functions because of their power position and control in organizations relative to women (Okurame 2008, pp. 522-523). Globally, with most companies striving for gender equity, the previous male domination stronghold may possibly be changing. The study does not specify the gender preference to mentor an employee and is a hiatus that will be exploited in this study where the most supportive gender will be determined.

The organizational benefits of mentoring manifests itself as greater productivity, profitability, improved communication, increased morale and reduced staff turnover. Coaching and mentoring plays a critical role in the development and upward mobility of employees. A study on coaching and mentoring revealed that 66% of staff were dissatisfied with the mentoring received. Seventy five percent of staff from various sectors received no mentoring and 80% of staff believed that mentoring would accelerate their careers (Galvao 2007). Research has confirmed that employees who have received coaching are more likely to be promoted. The extent to which managers are willing to mentor employees will determine the extent to which managers feel some sense of threat or jealousy towards ambitious employees.

The literature by (Fels 2004) suggests that ambition never becomes fixed but continuously changes, is moulded and reshaped. "Powerful mentors, opportunities for learning new skills, promotions, admiring peers who provide collegial support, institutional recognition, and broad cultural trends all continuously mold ambitions," (Fels 2004, p. 134). A longitudinal study involved following the ambitions of sixty four working women for fourteen years. The study found that as a group, their motivation to achieve increased over the time period. The women were then divided into two groups where one group was placed in a working environment that was conducive for advancement. The other group was placed in an organizational setting that did not promote or encourage career mobility. The results showed that only the women in the first group displayed higher levels of motivation and ambition (Fels 2004, p. 135).

There are a growing number of females as mentors and males as protégés (Gupta & Case 1999), although this study does not examine managerial gender preference to mentor. A manager and mentor can be differentiated from each other, where a mentor is concerned with ones career development, a manager is focused on specific tasks at hand. Sometimes a manager may go beyond the parameters of a formal job responsibility but may not be compelled to do so (Gupta & Case 1999). The study also suggested that a manager is not as closely linked to the subordinate as a mentor is to a protégé. A manager is perceived as more task oriented and less flexible than a mentor. “A mentor is committed to the long term development of the protégé, a manager deals with here and now. A mentor has a deeper personal relationship with a protégé than does a manager,” (Gupta & Case 1999)

In the study by Gupta & Case (1999), the participants agreed that they were mentored differently by the manager but it was not as a result of gender but because of their own developmental needs. However, a manager may have a gender preference in mentoring a subordinate. The study explained several reasons for managers not willing to mentor subordinates. Some of the reasons explained were that it is time-consuming and risky since the mentee may be inappropriate and may not live up to the expected potential. Hence, in this study the lack of enthusiasm to mentor an employee may not be attributed to managerial jealousy but may stem from a combination of other variables such as a lack of time.

“Supervisor support is the extent to which an employee receives emotional and tangible assistance from his or her immediate supervisor,” (Staw *et al.* 1994, p. 60). Managers are key to providing pathways or barriers for ambitious employees. If the support is positive, then employees may enjoy growth and advancement. When managers do not support employees there could be various reasons such as lack of time or other resources. (Evered & Selman 1989, pp. 2-3) advocates that coaching is not a subset of managerial activity but the heart of management. This study aims to explore the extent to which managers are willing to support or mentor ambitious employees. It will further determine whether male or female managers are more supportive.

2.8 Ambition and Jealousy

Managers may harbour some feelings of jealousy over ambitious subordinates and could be as a result of feeling threatened by ambitious employees. The Greek philosopher Antisthenes summed up jealousy when he commented “iron is eaten by rust so are the envious consumed by envy”. Vecchio (2000), a management professor at Notre Dame, found that people who envy others at work were associated with lower self-esteem and higher levels of Machiavellian behaviour (Culp 2007). Topchik (2001) explains that anger and envy can result in decreased productivity and poor quality of work. Displaying jealousy has numerous dysfunctional consequences, one of which is that it hinders the chances of being promoted.

The other school of thought is that if a certain degree of jealousy encourages one to strive harder to improve performance then a dose of jealousy may not necessarily be counterproductive. A study by Schaubroek & Lam (2007), demonstrated that the employees who were most jealous of another colleague displayed higher job performances than those that did not exhibit jealousy. However, if the scenario was reversed, with management displaying jealousy of a subordinate, then one must not underestimate the power that a manager can yield in curbing a subordinate’s ambition. Anyone who has just been promoted would require a constant change in attitude and response to co-workers in order to keep jealous attacks at bay (Culp 2007). When colleagues have similar qualifications and one is promoted over the other then it is only natural for feelings of resentment and jealousy to be felt.

Conversely, jealousy can stimulate competition among employees but it must be moderated. Extreme jealousy can be counterproductive to the work environment. It is the responsibility of managers to monitor the workplace and deal with jealousy as it arises but managing jealousy can be a difficult task if it is applicable to a manager itself. According to Culp (2007) jealousy arises as a result of misconceptions and due to poor communication where the problem does not get the attention it deserves. Employees need to be told why an individual was promoted so that employees understand what talents the organization may have been looking for.

According to Vecchio (2000) jealousy at the workplace arises as a result of who gets promotions or who gets the most desirable jobs. Instead of handling jealousy by talking about it, employees react by withholding their contributions. As a result of the sensitive nature of jealousy and if it stems from the manager itself, managers may not communicate these feelings explicitly. In a study of 100 first-level supervisors, “Vecchio found that lack of consideration from a supervisor fuelled more jealousy and envy among subordinates than did bosses who were perceived as nurturing,” (Nebenzahl 2006).

The gender difference is that while women express more jealousy, men express more envy at the workplace. The reason is that “men are more attuned to threats to competitive standing, while women seem to care more about threats to social relationships,” (Nebenzahl 2006). The author further explains that those with higher self-esteem are less likely to harbour qualities of envy and jealousy. The approach to minimize these attributes is to increase ones self-esteem. Vecchio (2000) advocates that in a workplace setting, managers should create a shared purpose where employees are involved in decision making. To avoid jealousy, one should explain the reasons for certain decisions. Of course this type of approach will be unwarranted for some types of decisions.

According to Quinn (2008), harbouring jealousy towards co-workers may have a positive impact in attaining faster career advancement. Topchik (2001) has shown that negative emotions can be key determinants of success. He argues that jealousy can be productive if it motivates one to perform better in one’s own career. Observing a promotion of a co-worker allows one to become more conscious of one’s own advancement (Quinn 2008). However, continuous competition may result in increased stress levels and negative interpersonal relations. Given a highly ambitious employee, it is possible that an average middle manager can be overlooked for a promotion. Hence, for the sake of a manager’s further advancement, managers may view ambitious employees as a threat to further career mobility.

Competition among colleagues can result in jealousy or envy. The distinction between jealousy and envy is explained as, “envy is about wanting what someone else has got and it can be a positive motivator if handled appropriately. Jealousy is a far more destructive force, and is associated with low self-esteem,” (Quinn 2008). The author confirms that if one has an envious eye on a colleague’s achievement which is linked to high ambition levels, then one is on the right emotional track for sustainable success. Managers must be aware that when employees are promoted, jealousy can erupt. However, this study is not going to look at employee jealousy but the extent of managerial jealousy towards the employee. Managers need to understand the root cause of jealousy as promotees may be subject to workplace jealousy (Miner 1990). Miner suggests that a neutral facilitator may be able to resolve the issue among the three people, the jealous employee, the person who gave the benefit and the receiver of the benefit.

According to (Ambition: why some... 2005) “two of the biggest influences on your level of ambition are the family that produced you and the culture that produced your family”. Research has shown that parents who set high but achievable goals, applaud successes and are easy on failures produce offspring with the greatest self confidence. Studies suggest that the upper middle class produces the greatest proportion of ambitious people. The reason for this is that the upper middle class experience a phenomenon called status anxiety and are therefore most anxious about losing material status. Hence, employees from middle-class backgrounds are more ambitious by nature and have to continually strive for higher achievement.

According to Crabtree (2004), “there are numerous workplaces in which employee relations are often characterized by utter indifference – or, worse, jealousy, mistrust and outright animosity”. It is this negative workplace relation that is responsible for decreased morale, productivity and ambition. When managers do not fully support the ambition of employees, employees may lack the enthusiasm and drive to move the organization forward (Crabtree 2004). In this study by Crabtree (2004), respondents were asked relationship questions regarding a manager and a colleague. It was found that employees who were passionate and had a sense of connection with the company enjoyed a close relationship with their manager. The three different types of employees discussed were engaged: those employees who work

with passion, feels a strong commitment to the company, they drive innovation and moves the organization forward. The “not-engaged” employees are described as “sleep-walking employees”, those that are present, but lack enthusiasm, passion and energy for the jobs they perform. Lastly the “actively disengaged” are employees who act out their dissatisfaction and unhappiness by undermining what colleagues achieve. These negative workplace relationships can be detrimental to an organizations efficient functioning. In a Global Management Journal survey, it was found that “engaged employees perceive an element of selflessness in their best and closest partnerships, particularly those with their managers” (Crabtree 2004).

The comments from the surveyed employees attributed the success of employees to managerial encouragement and support. “Managers who want to boost workgroup engagement levels – and help not-engaged employees become engaged – might benefit from developing trusting and supportive relationships with their employees,” (Crabtree 2004). The study found that when employees were asked to evaluate the relationship with their managers, there were significant differences between the engaged and dis-engaged employees perceptions. Sixteen percent of the engaged employees felt a strong personal relationship with the manager, 4% of the not-engaged employees and 1% of actively dis-engaged employees felt a strong relationship with the manager (Crabtree 2004). Employees that lack managerial support feel disconnected to managers whereas in contrast the engaged employees regarded their relationship with the manager as being important to their success (Crabtree 1994).

The most significant themes of age, gender, interpersonal relationships and jealousy will be applied to managers in Durban. The study will highlight and debate the extent to which these concepts of ambition appears to apply to managers and employees in Durban. The literature provides a foundation and a backdrop to specifically view the relationship of managers and employees to ascertain the reaction of managers to employees in their own organizations.

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter defined ambition and explored key concepts of ambition, related in context to the aim and objectives of the study. The relationship of managerial age, gender, education, talent, job satisfaction, mentoring, jealousy and ambition was discussed. Since this represents an attitudinal study, interpersonal relationships between manager and employee was examined. While there has been considerable research on age and gender of ambition, few studies have focused on managerial age and gender as determinants to mentor or support ambitious employees. Furthermore, research on a lack of mentorship and managerial jealousy has been explored to a very limited extent. The following chapter will focus on the research design, data collection methods, the research instrument, and statistical analysis of data.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Research methodology “refers to the overall approach to the research process, from the theoretical underpinnings to the collection and analysis of the data,” (Collis & Hussey 2003, p. 55). The previous chapter examined the literature to contextualize this study in relation to broad themes of ambition. This chapter will outline the aim and objectives, justify the choice of methodology to be employed, discuss the sampling process and detail the research instrument to be used. It will also address important methodology topics such as validity, reliability and various research tools for the statistical analysis of data. The research paradigm will encapsulate the framework for the conducted research. The paradigm that will be utilized is realism, where the approach involves finding causes of social occurrences, with minimal consideration to the subjective nature of an individual (Collis & Hussey 2003, p. 52).

3.2 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to determine how managers react towards ambitious employees and their effect on moderating or enhancing the career pathways of ambitious employees.

The research objectives to be addressed are:

- 3.2.1** How do managers view the concept of ambition.
- 3.2.2** The nature and extent of managerial support towards ambitious employees.
- 3.2.3** The link between a lack of support and managerial jealousy.
- 3.2.4** The influence of gender in supporting ambitious employees.
- 3.2.5** What age category of managers is most supportive of ambitious employees.

3.3. The Realism Paradigm

The primary purpose of research is to pursue knowledge and to seek principles that have universal application (Hadebe 2006, p. 39). Researchers are often concerned between the choice of a quantitative or qualitative methodology. This study employs a realist approach where in realism, the real world that requires discovering is external to the researchers mind (Thompson & Perry 2004, p. 406). The realism paradigm which represents an overall conceptual framework of this study can be regarded as the “basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator,” (Guba & Lincoln 1994, p. 105).

The purpose of any paradigm is to create knowledge and to generalize the findings to various situations (Sobh & Perry 2005, p. 1194). In realism, the findings of the study are “extended by analytical generalizations that shows how the empirical findings of a research project nestle within theories,” (Sobh & Perry 2005). In other words, the aim of the realism paradigm is to generalize to theoretical propositions and not to populations (Yin 1989, p. 21). The realism paradigm has a philosophical view that reality exists independently of the researchers mind and there is an external reality to explain a phenomenon (Bhaskar 1979).

Realism has two features with positivism. There is a belief that the natural and social sciences should apply the same approach to collecting data. There is also the view that there is an external reality to which scientists direct their attention. Empirical realism involves the appropriate use of certain methods to explain reality. It fails to recognize that there are structures and events underlying and producing observable phenomena.

Critical realism recognizes the natural order and events and discourses of the social world and advocates that one will only be able to understand and so change the world if one identifies structures at work that generate those events and discourses. The structures are not spontaneously apparent in the observable pattern of events but can be identified through the practical and social world of science. Critical realism implies two things: positivists take the view that the scientist’s conceptualization of reality actually directly reflects that reality. Realists argue that the scientist’s conceptualization is simply a way of knowing that reality.

3.4 Sampling Technique and Description of the sample

In a realist study, which is a nonprobability sampling technique, a purposive sampling method was used. “A sample is made up of some of the members of a population” (Collis & Hussey 2003, p. 155) whereas a population “is a group of individuals that have one or more characteristics in common that are of interest to the researcher (Dooley 1995, p. 133). A subcategory of the purposive sampling method involved the use of snowball sampling which involved a specific group with a defined purpose in mind. A non-probability sample is a sample that has not been selected using a random selection method. Essentially this implies that some units in the population are more likely to be selected than others (Bryman & Bell 2007, p. 182).

The inclusion of participants by this purposive or snowball sample introduces bias. A biased sample is one that does not represent the population from which the sample was selected. The snowball sampling method is a form of convenience sample where the MBA students at the Graduate School of Business (GSB) who are in management positions were used as the initial sample. The problem with this sampling method is that the findings may be difficult to generalize as one does not know what population this sample is representative of. The fact that these managers are part of the MBA degree programme, makes them different from managers in general.

In the snowball sampling method one identifies initial participants who meet specific criteria and in this study included managers from Durban employed in various sectors of the economy. The initial sample was made up of managers that came from a data base from the GSB at UKZN. These managers were then asked to recommend other participants who are also managers and formed part of their social networks or acquaintances. These referrals from a small sample set are used to generate additional participants and grows like a snowball. Since the technique of snowball sampling was employed, there is a degree of bias on the selection of the sample since the sample was purposely selected with a defined purpose.

Given that snowball sampling is a form of convenience sampling, the sampling technique introduced bias and reduced the likelihood of the sample being representative of the entire

cross section of population. Since the sample members were not selected from a sampling frame, the snowball bias had to be reduced through several means. Firstly the respondents were selected from various sectors of the economy. Secondly, the referrals from the initial participants were asked to nominate people who shared opposing views on the topic. Lastly, a concerted effort was undertaken to ensure that the snowball chain recruited different people from a wide range of social groups. For example, the initial respondents comprised of managers from the MBA database from a four year period. There were also referrals of managers from friends and family obtained through social networking.

3.4.1 The Sample Size

A choice of sample size would depend on three factors:

1. The desired confidence level
2. The margin of error tolerated by the researcher
3. The variability of the studied population

(Lind, Marchal & Wathen 2005, p. 301)

The confidence level for the selected sample would be 90 percent, which corresponds to a z value of 1.65. The reason that a 90 percent confidence level is selected is that the higher the confidence level, the larger the sample size has to be. The second important consideration is the allowable error, designated as E which refers to the amount of error a researcher will tolerate and accept. The third factor required to determine the sample size is the population standard deviation. If the population is widely distributed the sample has to be larger and vice versa (Lind *et al.* 2005). Since the respondents for this study will be managers concentrated in Durban, the required sample size will be smaller.

The formula to estimate the sample size is:

$$n = p(1 - p)(z/E)^2$$

Where: n is the size of the sample

z is the standard normal value corresponding to the desired level of confidence

p is the population standard deviation

E is the maximum allowable error

(Lind *et al.* 2005, p. 303)

If the standard deviation estimate is available from a pilot study or some other source, it may be used otherwise the standard deviation value of 0.50 can be used (Lind *et al.* 2005, p. 303). Since no pilot study was conducted there is no estimate of the population proportion hence a standard deviation value of 0.5 will be used as suggested by (Lind *et al.* 2005, p. 303).

At 90% confidence level, the corresponding z value is 1.65. By personal choice, the estimate of the population proportion is to be within 0.10, so $E = 0.10$. Hence, by substituting in the sample size formula the sample size (n) is as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}n &= p(1 - p)(z/E)^2 \\n &= 0.5(1 - 0.5)(1.65/0.10)^2 \\&= 68.0625 \\&= 68 \text{ respondents}\end{aligned}$$

Therefore, 68 respondents will be required to yield 90% confidence level with a maximum allowable error (E) of 0.1. Since this study consisted of 100 managers as the sample, the minimum requirement for the sample size has been satisfied.

3.5 The Research Instrument

3.5.1 Description and Purpose

A research instrument refers to a method of data collection usually through the use of a questionnaire. The use of a questionnaire has been tested in other studies and can be adopted by other researchers (Collis & Hussey 2003, p. 365). To solicit information from respondents, the data collection method chosen was a self-administered questionnaire. In this quantitative study the purpose of a research instrument was to collect data variables under the study. Further justification of a questionnaire as a research tool is that original data known as primary data could be collected at the source (Collis & Hussey 2003, p. 160).

Additional benefits of using a questionnaire include having greater access to respondents through e-mail and face-to-face interactions. Through the use of the Internet, the service provider SurveyBob allowed respondents to respond to the questionnaire at their own time and convenience. The limitation of using the Internet as a data collection tool is the low response rate. From 438 questionnaires that were sent to respondents, only 43 were

completed and returned. This represents a response rate of 9.59% which is considerably low. Hence, to counteract this limitation face-to-face interviews with 57 respondents were also conducted and the combined final response rate was 19.57%.

3.5.1.1 Construction of the Instrument

Instrument design can be defined as the formal construction of a data collection device to obtain relevant information required to solve a research problem (Davis 2005, p. 222). Since this study was based on realism, most appropriate research tool used to gather information was a questionnaire. The objective of the questionnaire was to solicit responses from a sample of managers regarding their own view of ambition, their reaction to ambitious employees, their willingness to mentor ambitious employees and the extent of managerial jealousy towards ambitious employees. “A questionnaire is a list of carefully structured questions, chosen after considerable testing, with a view to eliciting reliable responses from a chosen sample. The aim is to find out what a selected group of participants do, think or feel,” (Collis & Hussey 2003, p. 173).

The objective of research design is to reduce the chances of nonsampling errors. “Nonsampling errors are errors that result from the survey process. They are due to the nonresponse of individuals selected to be in the survey, to inaccurate responses, to poorly worded questions, to bias in the selection of individuals to be given the survey,” (Sullivan 2005, p. 26). For the generation of quality data, the research instrument must be of a high quality. Several considerations were undertaken in constructing the questionnaire. The form, structure and wording of the questionnaire were designed according to the research questions outlined. Ultimately, the choice and type of questions and statements had to ensure that it met the requirements of the objectives of the study. The decision to include and exclude questions followed a checklist below.

<p>1. Does the question measure one or more of the research questions?</p> <p>2. Does it provide more information about a relevant variable?</p> <p>(If NO to both 1 and 2, drop the question; if YES to one or both retain)</p>
<p>3. Will the majority of respondents understand the question in the same way?</p> <p>(If NO, revise or drop; if YES, retain)</p>
<p>4. Will most respondents have the information to answer the question?</p> <p>(If NO, drop; If YES retain)</p>
<p>5. Will most respondents be willing to answer the question?</p> <p>(If NO, drop; If YES, retain)</p>
<p>6. Will any other information be required to interpret the question?</p> <p>(If NO, retain; If YES, retain only if that information can be made available or be obtained)</p>
<p>7. Can the question be asked to all respondents or only a subset?</p> <p>(If ALL, retain; If only a subset, retain only if the subset is identifiable in advance)</p>

Table 3.1 Checklist for Eliminating Questions

Adapted from Czaja, R. & Blair, J. 1996. **Designing Surveys: A guide to Decisions and Procedures**. Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press. p. 61.

The first consideration of the questionnaire design was to decide between open or closed questions (Sullivan 2005, p. 28). The open question is one where respondents are at liberty to give their own responses whereas in closed questions the respondents have to choose a response from a predetermined list of options (Sullivan 2005, p. 28). Since this study used a realist approach and realism shares some features with positivism, closed questions were used in the questionnaire as evident in Appendix B. The advantage of closed questions is that it limits choices of responses, it is easier to show relationships between variables, it is easier for respondents to complete and for a researcher to code, compute and analyse.

The disadvantage however, is that there is less flexibility where respondents are limited to the fixed answers suggested. With closed questions all possible answers are not explored. Closed questions may also be frustrating to respondents if respondents do not find an applicable category. Despite the disadvantages of closed questions, the justification for the choice of closed questions in this study was that relationships between variables were easier to establish. Furthermore, responses were easier to analyse since choice of answers was limited according to the questionnaire in Appendix B. Other considerations of the questionnaire design were to avoid jargon, ambiguous, vague, long-loaded and offensive questions. The questions began with a general, broad nature then delved into specific probe type questions. The inclusion of similar questions was used as a cross-check for other responses. The vocabulary of the questionnaire is important to reduce the possibility of misrepresentation and vagueness. The simple choice of words ensured clear understanding and interpretation of questions.

3.5.1.2 Unpacking the Questionnaire

In this study a total of 29 questions captured the variables of interest, where the questionnaire in Appendix B consisted of 2 sections: Section A with 4 demographic questions and section B which consisted of 25 opinion type questions. The questionnaire was designed to collect relevant information to measure several objectives of the study.

SECTION A

Section A consisted of classification questions that gathered demographic information on the respondents of the sample. Only relevant demographic information was captured, which comprised of 4 independent variables.

1. Gender
2. Age
3. Length of employment
4. Sector of employment

Gender and Age were critical variables in this section as it was required to answer the research questions of the study. Multiple choice answers was utilized since “multiple-choice

answers are those where the participants is asked a closed question and selects his or her answer from a list of predetermined responses or categories,” (Collis & Hussey 2003, p. 181).

SECTION B

This section comprises of questions and statements which were carefully considered to ensure that the aim and objectives of the study were satisfied. The use of a Likert Scale, which is an attitudinal response scale, allocates a numerical value to a question or statement. The justification of using the Likert Scale, directly corresponds with the objective of the research study which is managerial attitudes and response to ambitious employees. The Likert Scale is specifically used in questionnaires to determine the attitude and response of respondents in a field of enquiry. The Likert Scale consists of a range of answers from complete agreement on one side to complete disagreement on the other extreme and no opinion in the centre (Collis & Hussey 2003).

The Likert Scale used was a five point scale where the following numerical values were assigned:

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Undecided
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Strongly Agree.

The Likert scale is regarded as being bipolar where positive and negative responses are measured. The Likert Scale “turns the question into a statement and asks the respondent to indicate their level of agreement with the statement by ticking a box or circling a response,” (Collis & Hussey 2003, p. 184). The respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with each statement. As per the Questionnaire in Appendix B, the advantage of the Likert scale is that the questions can be listed without utilizing much space; it is easy for the respondent to complete and simplifies the process of coding.

The questions in this section focused on two perspectives of ambition. Question 1 to Question 11, focused on the manager's view on ambition, whereas Question 12 to Question 25 explored managerial response to ambitious employees. Question 1 to Question 11 explored the qualities and characteristics of managerial ambition. Ambition concepts that are explored in these questions include: desire to pursue postgraduate studies, skills and ability, job satisfaction, competitive nature, persistence, confidence, training, company influence on ambition and money as a motivator. Question 12 to Question 25 focused on the managerial response to ambitious employees. These are attitudinal questions and include concepts of: positive attitudes, managerial jealousy, mentorship, role models, promotion of junior employees, involvement of subordinates for decision making, favourability of ambitious employees.

3.5.2 Pretesting and Validation

After the research instrument is completed as a draft, it is important to pretest the instrument on a few respondents. "Ideally, a pretest should be conducted on a set of respondents who are similar to the final study respondents," (Davis 2005, p. 219). Pretesting refers to the process whereby a pilot study is conducted with a few participants before data collection occurs. The pretest allows for the following:

- Identification of wording problems
- The clarity of the questions/statements
- The unambiguous interpretation and understanding of the questions
- The time required to complete the questionnaire. In the pilot test, the questionnaire took 9 minutes to complete.

The pretest for this study was conducted with two participants, who constructively criticized the questionnaire. The recommendations by the two participants were taken into consideration and the questionnaire was amended accordingly. The participants offered valuable insight and contribution to the validity of the instrument. Finally, as with any pilot study the two participants were excluded from further participation in the study.

“Validity is the extent to which the research findings accurately represent what is really happening in the situation,” (Collis & Hussey 2003, p. 58). The purpose of validity is to limit research errors so that results are accurate and useable (Davis 2005, p. 149). A test can be regarded as being valid if the instrument accurately measures what it intended to measure (Coolican 1992, p. 35). In this quantitative study, the accuracy of the measurement of variables is critical as it must fulfill the research objectives. There are various methods to test the validity of the instrument.

The appropriate test to be utilized will be internal face validity since the phenomenon of ambition is not directly observable (Collis & Hussey 2003, p. 59). The internal validity refers to the manner of conducting the study, such as design, the meticulous consideration when measuring, decisions to decide on what was and was not measured and if there are other explanations for a causal relationship between the variables. The major variables measured against ambition were gender, age, managerial jealousy and support. Conditions of face validity have been satisfied by evaluating the appearance of the measuring instrument. The questionnaire was a reasonable tool that was used to gather information from respondents. The questionnaire has been designed with care and its reliability is acceptable since the reliability coefficient is 0.764 using the Cronbach Alpha method.

The research must also satisfy external validity. External validity refers to the generalizability of the study. Generalizability can be defined as “the extent to which you can come to conclusions about one thing (often a population) based on information about another (often sample)” (Vogt 1993, p. 99). Since snowball sampling was used there is a limited degree of confidence that the sample chosen will be representative of the entire population of managers in Durban.

3.5.2.1 Reliability Tests

“Reliability is concerned with the findings of the research and is one aspect of the credibility of the findings,” (Collis & Hussey 2003, p. 58). This would allow for consistency of results if the research is carried out by any other researcher. If the research is repeated and the findings of the results are the same, the research instrument can be regarded as reliable (Collis &

Hussey 2003, p. 58). In this realist study the concept of reliability is an important concept since it is possible that certain questions may be ambiguous or contain other errors. In a study using attitudinal scales, (Likert scale), the reliability test would ensure that respondents views are consistently and accurately measured (Collis & Hussey 2003, p. 186).

In the internal consistency method every item is correlated with every other item in the entire sample and the average inter-item correlation yields the index of reliability. This reliability index will be calculated using the Cronbach-Alpha. The Cronbach-Alpha test finds the mean reliability coefficient of all the various possible ways that the items on the scale can be split in half and this method is regarded as one of the best techniques to determine reliability. Using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), the reliability results are as follows:

		N	%
Cases	Valid	96	96.0
	Excluded	4	4.0
	Total	100	100.0
Cronbach's Alpha		No. of Items	
0.764		25	

Table 3.2 Reliability Statistics

The Cronbach-Alpha coefficient was calculated using 25 variable items on the questionnaire. The reliability coefficient of this study is $0.764 \approx 0.8$.

The coefficient of reliability is a value that ranges from 0 to 1. Where the numerical values represent the following:



Figure 3.1 Reliability Range

Adapted from Davis, D. 2005. **Business Research**. 6th ed. Canada: Thompson Brooks.

It is very rare to have a perfectly reliable score of 1, however it is suggested that a reliable questionnaire for an exploratory study should have a reliability coefficient of 0.7 (Davis 2005, p. 189). A further confirmation of a reliable questionnaire is confirmed by Santos (1999) where it is suggested that the coefficient should be ≥ 0.7 . Since the Cronbach-Alpha

reliability coefficient is $0.764 \approx 0.8$, it implies the questionnaire is very reliable. The decision to exclude the four variables of gender, age, sector and length of employment are independent variables of the study and will have a negligible impact on the reliability of the questionnaire.

3.5.3 Administration of the Questionnaire

Prior to the data collection process, ethical clearance was granted from the University of KwaZulu-Natal Ethical Clearance Committee as evident in Appendix C. This ensured that all ethical principles have been adhered to such as maintaining respondent anonymity and confidentiality. Respondents were informed that participation was voluntary and no monetary benefits would be derived. Respondents also completed an informed consent document for their participation as shown in Appendix A. The data for the study was obtained from managers employed in various sectors of the economy. A snowball sample of 100 employees was drawn from a large population of 511 managers from various sectors of the economy.

438 Questionnaires were e-mailed to respondents and only 42 managers responded. This represents a 9.59% response rate. The disadvantage of e-mailed questionnaires is that the response rate is low since managers are presumably busy professionals who may not have the time to complete a questionnaire. The additional respondents were obtained through purposive or snowball sampling from the referrals of the initial group of respondents. Through this purposive sampling method 73 face-to-face interviews were conducted.

The advantage of this method is that there is a much higher response rate (79.45%) since 15 questionnaires were not returned and is referred to as the questionnaire non-response. Item non-response occurs if all questions were not answered. In this study 4 non-response items occurred. Combining the questionnaires from the two data collection methods used, a total of 511 questionnaires were distributed of which 100 usable surveys were obtained. This represents an overall response rate of 19.57%.

3.6 Statistical Analysis of the Data

Regardless of the quality of data collected, if the analysis of the data is not carefully executed, the results of this study may be of diminished value. “Data becomes meaningful only after analysis has provided a set of descriptions, relationships, and differences that are of use in decision making” (Davis 2005, p. 352). Irrespective of the measurement and data collection process, if the data is incomplete or inconsistent, results will be unreliable. Ultimately, the manner in which the data is analyzed sets the parameters on how the results can be generalized and used for decision making.

Prior to analyzing the data, the data must be coded. Coding simply involves the allocation of a numerical value to items on the questionnaire. Coding allows for the transfer of variable information to a computer program as a numerical value for analysis. The codes have been allocated to all items as per the questionnaire in Appendix B. Since this study is quantitative in nature, there were no open-ended questions. This facilitates the process of coding as all questions are closed-ended with specific categorized response options. The preparation of this data for computer analysis involves finding the frequency of occurrence of all the items in the questionnaire. This is achieved using a tally table, where the response to every question (29 Questions) is tallied according to the frequency of the code. Although SPSS was used for data analysis, the cumulative frequency of occurrence of the items must be known for computer data entry and analysis purposes, since SPSS only processes numerical data.

Since this study is a realist study, exploratory data analysis as well as confirmatory data analysis techniques will be used. “Exploratory data analysis is both an analytical approach to gain insight into the nature of the data and the mechanisms to bring meaning to the data at hand” (Davis 2005, p. 360). The justification for exploratory analysis is that data can be summarized, presented in tables, charts, graphs and other graphic forms, which allows for patterns and relationships to be determined. Also frequency tables, bar charts and histograms demonstrate trends and associations between the variables.

This technique is apt since relationships between the following variables will be determined:

- a) Ambitious employees and Age of managers
- b) Ambitious employees and Gender of managers
- c) Ambitious employees and Managerial Mentorship
- d) Ambitious employees and Managerial jealousy

3.6.1 Frequency Tables

A frequency table provides the number of respondents and the percentage belonging to each of the categories for the variables in the questionnaire. It was used in relation to all the different types of variables. The advantage of a frequency table is that it shows cumulative frequencies, missing values where respondents have not answered a particular question and thus makes comprehension of data easier to understand.

3.6.2 Contingency Tables

In order to understand whether two variables are related, bivariate analysis will be conducted. A contingency table is one of the easiest and most flexible methods of simultaneously analyzing a relationship between two variables (Bryman & Bell 2007, p. 361). The contingency table consists of percentages of occurrences for the pair of variables for easier comparison and interpretation of the association.

3.6.3 Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis which is “a group of techniques to measure the association between two variables” (Lind *et al.* 2005, p. 430). The Spearman’s correlation technique will be used since the Spearman’s rho (ρ) method does not assume that the data is normally distributed and is explicitly used for this non-parametric study where the variables are ordinal or interval in nature. Non-parametric or distribution-free tests do not make assumptions about the precise form of the distribution of the sample. Further, non-parametric tests can be used for skewed data (Bryman & Cramer 2006). The coefficient of correlation describes the strength and direction of a linear relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

The key features of this method are as follows:

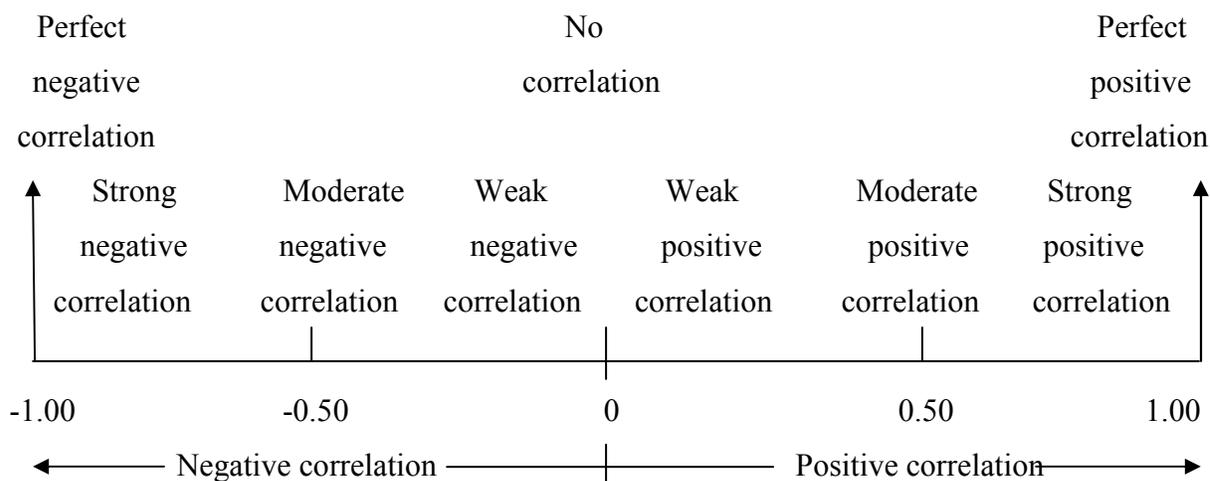


Figure 3.2 Coefficient of Correlation

Adapted from Lind, D.A., Marchal, W.G., Wathen, S.A. 2005. **Statistical Techniques in Business & Economics**. 12th ed. Boston: McGraw-Hill/Irwin. p. 433.

3.6.4 Regression Analysis

In regression analysis an equation to express the relationship between two variables is determined. In this study hierarchical multiple regression is the most appropriate regression method since the technique will determine whether a quantitative variable has a moderating effect on the relationship between two other quantitative variables (Baron & Kenny 1986). Since the problem statement encompasses the effect and extent of managerial jealousy on moderating the careers of ambitious employees, this hierarchical model is very apt. The strength and direction of the relationship is shown by the standardized partial regression coefficient beta which is a value between +1 and - 1. The beta is the weight that can be attributed to predictors in multiple regression analysis which accounts for the relationship between variables. The higher the beta regression coefficient, the stronger the relationship between the variables.

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter the framework of conducting research was outlined. The method of data collection using the questionnaire as a research instrument was described in significant detail. Methods to test the reliability and validity of the questionnaire have been discussed. Only the most appropriate statistical analysis techniques and procedures to be used for this quantitative study have been described. This chapter of data analysis leads to the presentation of results to be found in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapter the parameters and choice of statistical framework of the study were outlined. This chapter will use and present the data gathered through the questionnaire which was used as the research instrument. The questionnaire consisted of two sections. Section A gathered demographic information of the respondents and Section B consisted of attitudinal statements of managers regarding their own ambition and their reaction to ambitious employees.

4.2 SECTION A

4.2.1 Demographic Results (Variables 1 to 4)

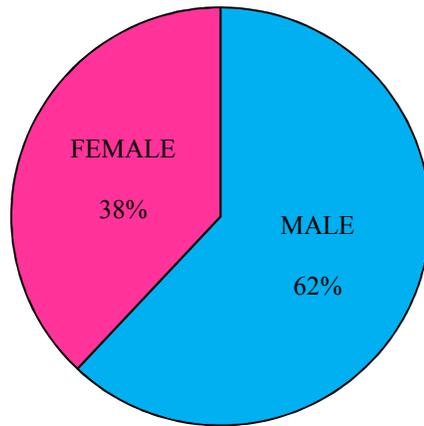


Figure 4.1 Gender of Respondents

The respondents differentiated by gender showed that 62 % of respondents were male and 38 % were female. Since male managers had a larger representation, this gender bias must be taken into account when interpreting the results.

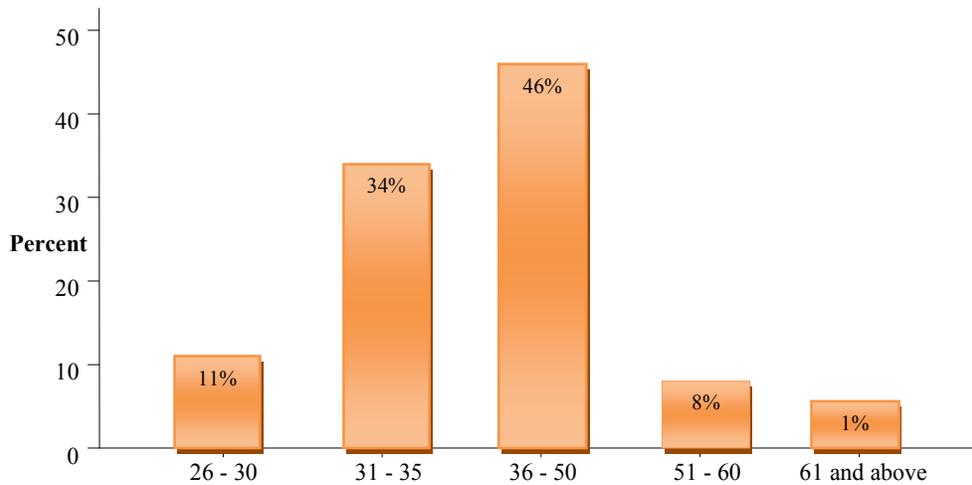


Figure 4.2 Age Category of Respondents

The majority of respondents (46%) were in the 36-50 year age category. Eleven percent of respondents were 26-30 years old, 34% of respondents represent fairly young managers in the 31-35 year category, 8% were between 51 and 60 years old, whereas only 1% was in the 61 and above age category.

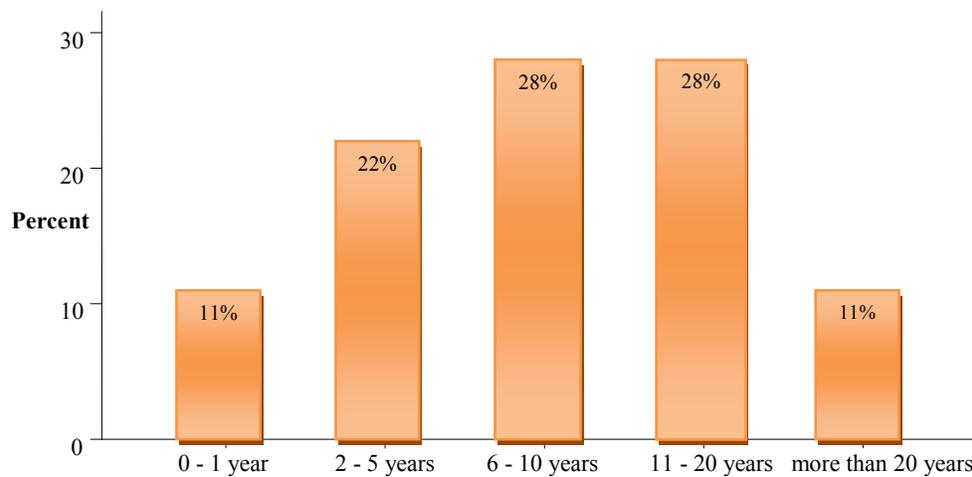


Figure 4.3 Length of Employment

The managers that have responded were employed for a considerable period of time. This is depicted above by 28% of respondents having been employed in their current position for both 6-10 years and 11-20 years. Eleven percent of the respondents have been employed for

0-1 year and more than 20 years. Twenty two percent of respondents were employed for 2-5 years. This suggests that most managers (67%) are experienced managers since they have been employed for a considerable length of time. Hence, the response from this knowledgeable sample added to the quality of the data in the study.

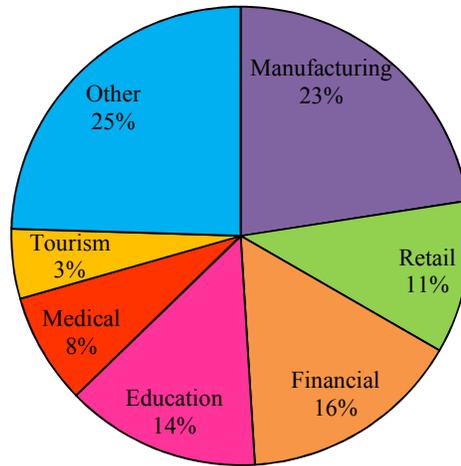


Figure 4.4 Sectors of Employment

The frequency of response indicated that the majority of the respondents were from the other sector which was 25%. The manufacturing sector also made up a large portion of the respondents with 23% representation. The tourism sector had the smallest representation, which consisted of only 3% of the respondents. The retail sector accounted for 11%, education made up 14% and the medical sector consisted of 8% of the respondents.

4.3 SECTION B

4.3.1 Managerial View of ambition (Variables 5 to 15)

The significance of these variables demonstrates the qualities and attributes of managers which provide an understanding of how managers view the concept of ambition.

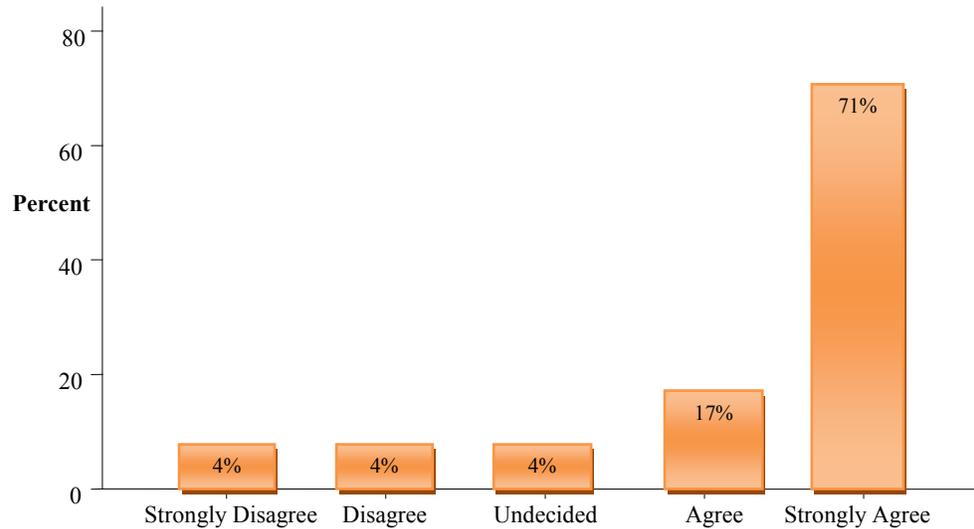


Figure 4.5 Postgraduate Studies

The desire to pursue postgraduate studies represents 71% of the respondents. Seventeen percent agreed with pursuing postgraduate education, while 4% strongly disagreed, disagreed and were undecided about furthering their educational level.

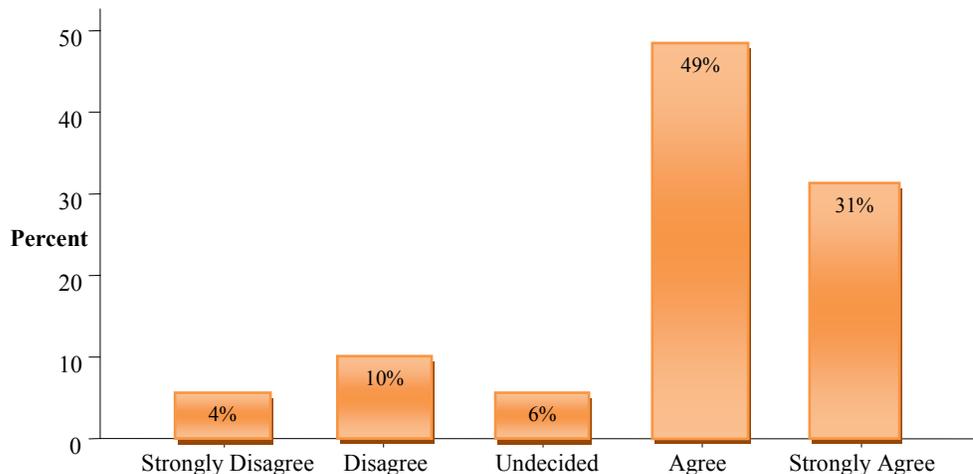


Figure 4.6 Job Challenge and Stimulation

The majority of respondents found their jobs challenging and stimulating, where 49% agreed with the statement and 31% who strongly agreed. Four percent strongly disagreed, 10% disagreed and 6% were undecided.

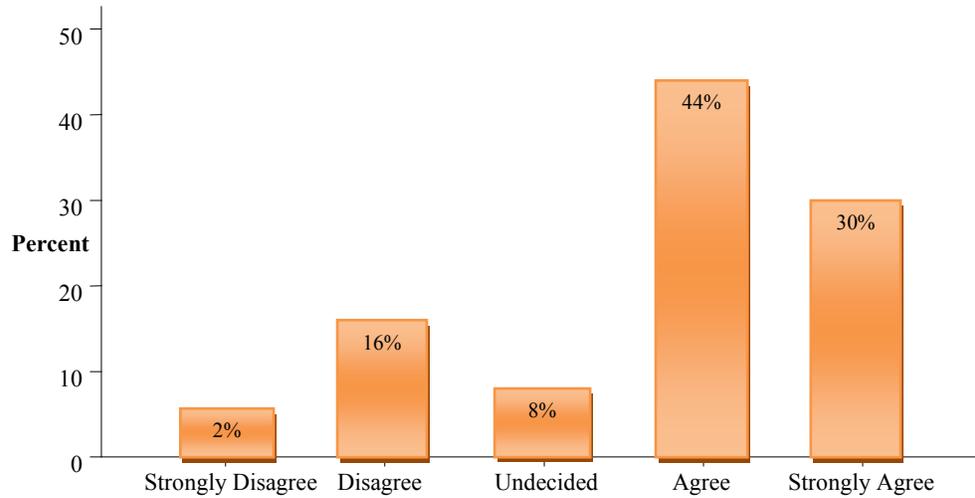


Figure 4.7 Skills and Ability

According to the results above, 44% agreed with the statement that their jobs make good use of their skills and ability. Thirty percent strongly agreed, 2% strongly disagreed, 16% disagreed and 8% were undecided.

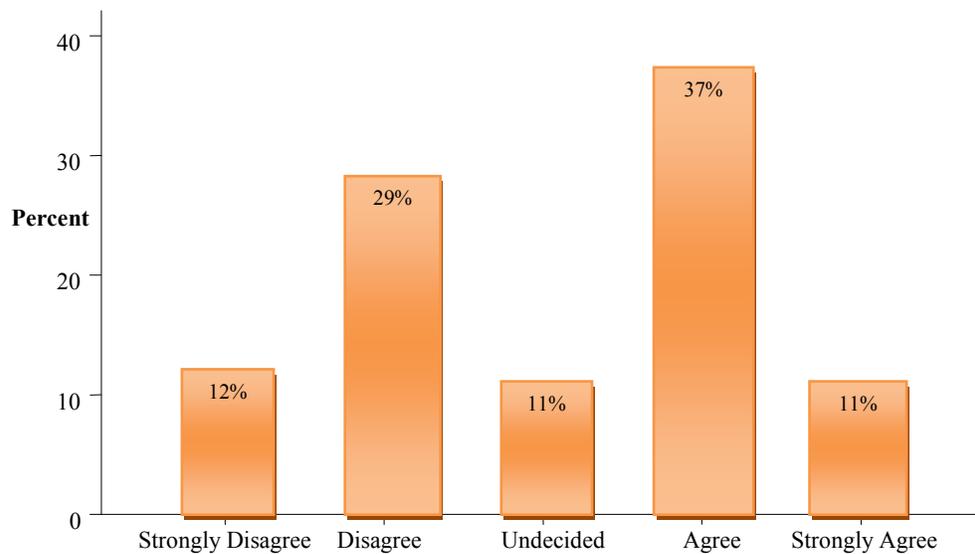


Figure 4.8 Current Job Satisfaction

The majority of the respondents (37%) were satisfied with their current jobs. Eleven percent strongly agreed with having job satisfaction, 12% strongly disagreed, 29% disagreed and 11% were undecided about their current levels of job satisfaction.

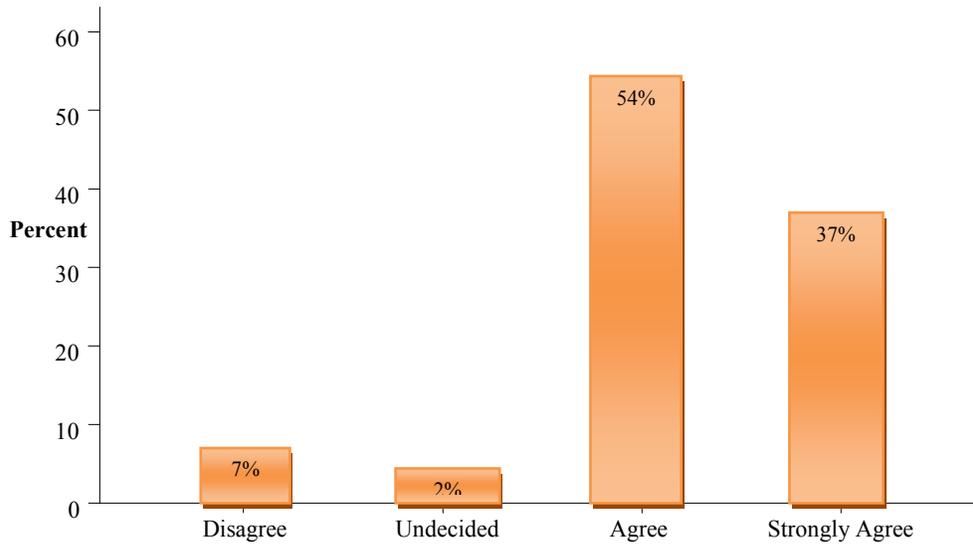


Figure 4.9 Competitive Business Nature

The majority of respondents (54%) expressed having a competitive business nature, 37% strongly agreed with the statement, 7% disagreed and 2% were undecided.

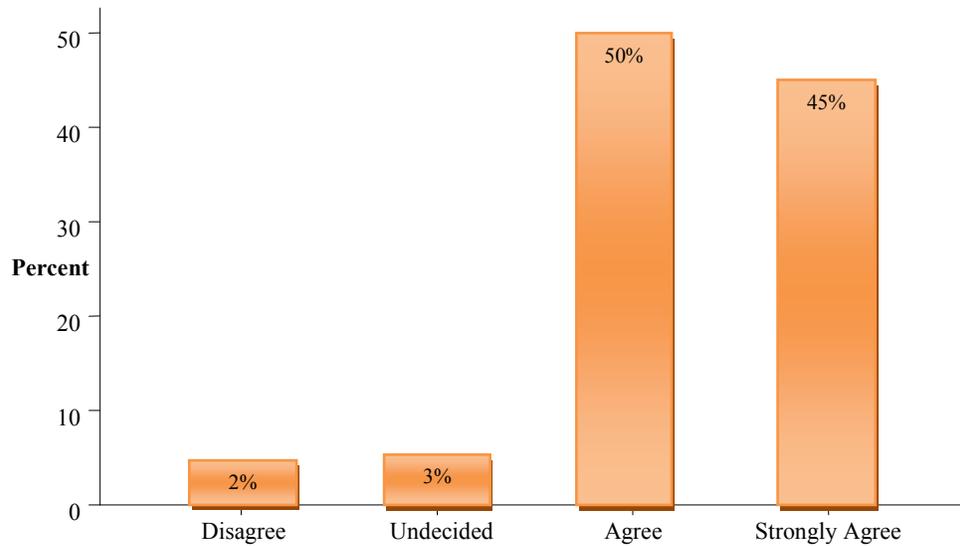


Figure 4.10 Persistence

The results revealed that most managers have a persistent nature where 50% agreed with statement and 45% strongly agreed. A marginal 2% disagreed and 3% were undecided about their nature of persistence.

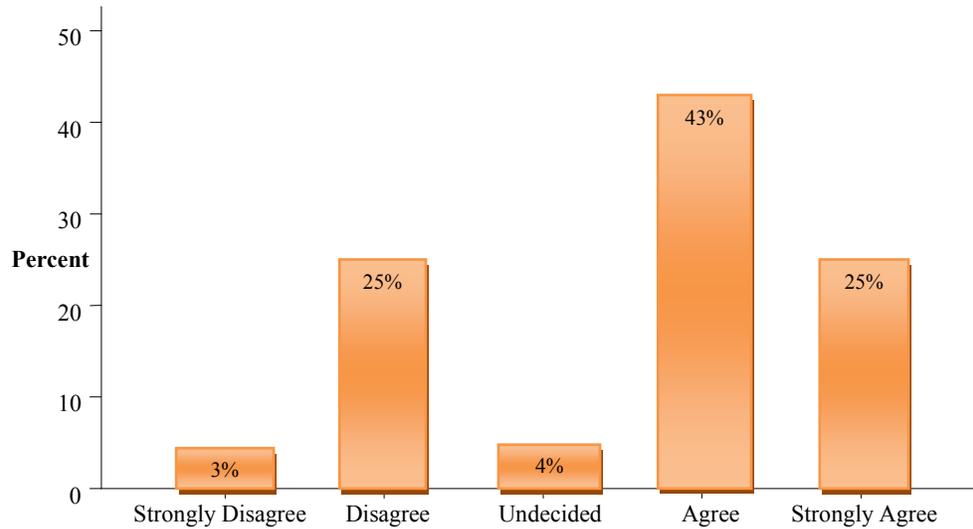


Figure 4.11 Money as a Key Motivator

Money was a key motivator for most of the managers where 43% agreed with the statement, 25% strongly agreed, 3% strongly disagreed, 25% disagreed and 4% were undecided.

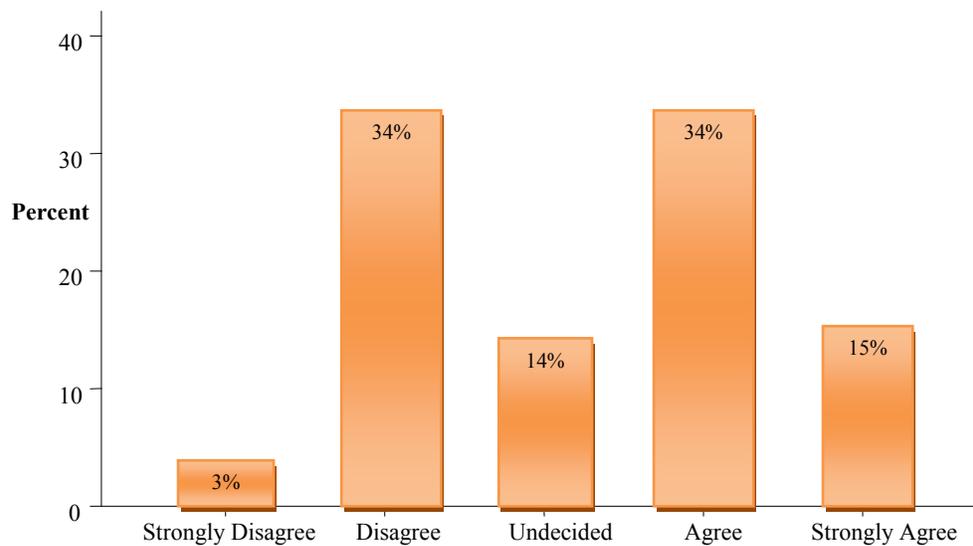


Figure 4.12 Company Promotion of Ambition

The results revealed that there was no consensus when it came to the effect of a company in promoting ambition. Thirty four percent agreed while 34% disagreed with the statement that companies promote ambition. Those responses were balanced when 15% strongly agreed and 14% were undecided and 3% strongly disagreed with the statement.

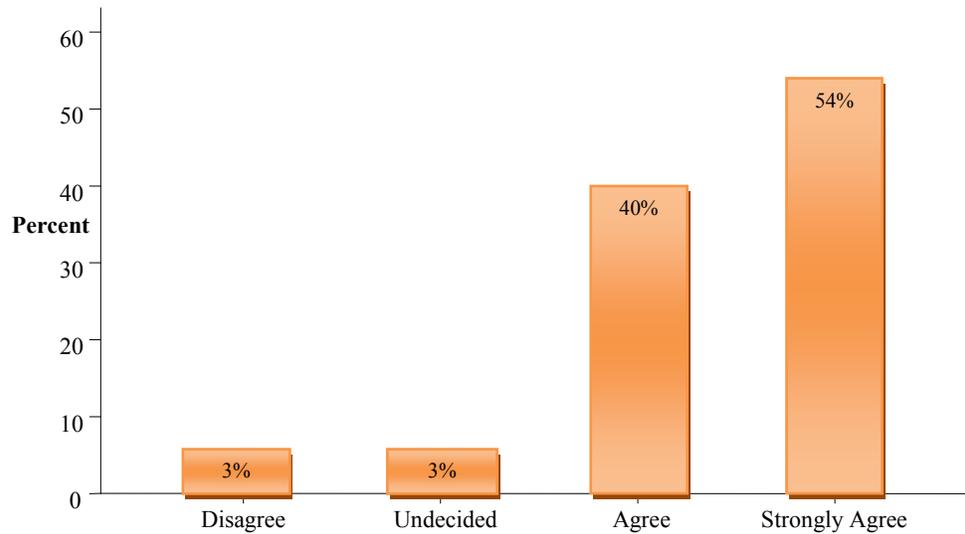


Figure 4.13 Managers Being Ambitious

Most managers in this study (54% and 40%) were ambitious by nature where 54% strongly agreed and 40% agreed with the statement. Three percent disagreed and 3% were undecided.

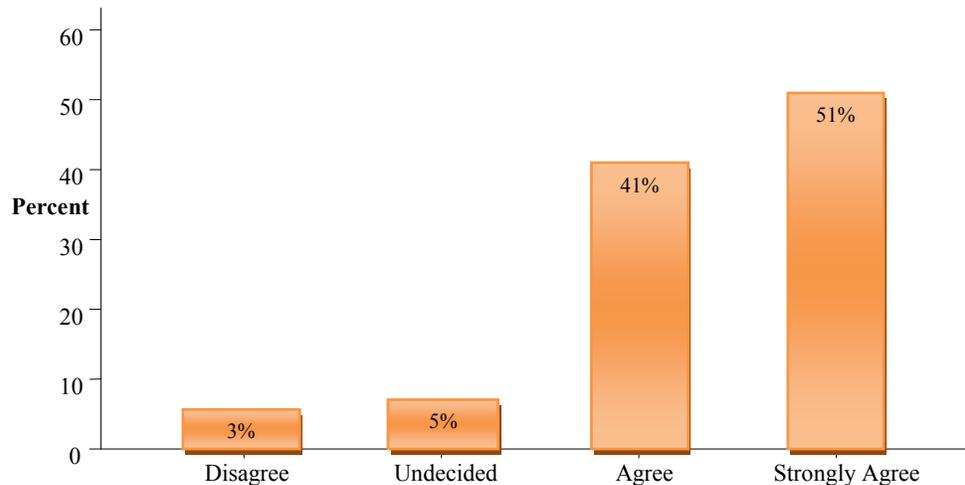


Figure 4.14 Training to Improve Ambition

The results showed that 51% believed that training would improve their level of ambition, 41% agreed, 5% were undecided and 3% disagreed. There were no respondents that strongly disagreed.

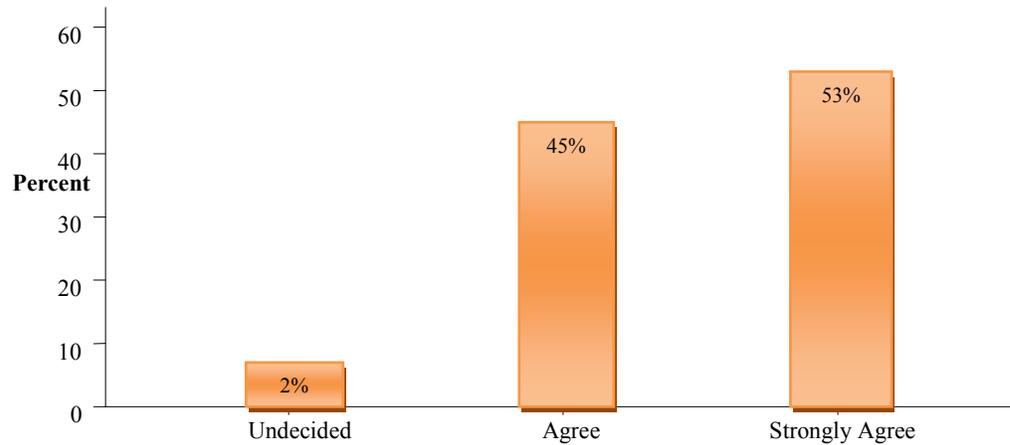


Figure 4.15 Confidence

Fifty three percent strongly agreed about being confident about themselves, 45% agreed, and 2% were undecided.

4.3.2 Managerial Reaction Towards Ambitious Employees (Variables 16 to 29)

These variables are attitudinal in nature, giving valuable insight of managerial response and treatment to ambitious employees. This section serves as a window to the feelings and perceptions of managers on ambitious employees.

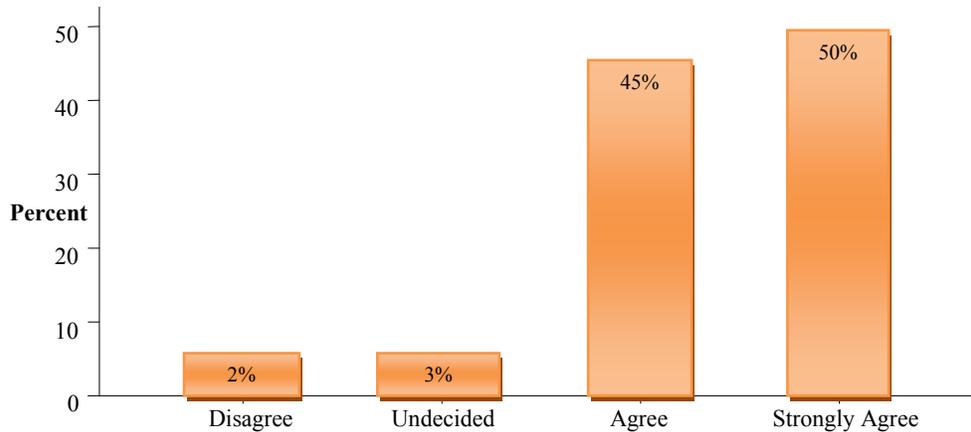


Figure 4.16 Managerial Liking of Ambitious People

Fifty percent of managers strongly agreed to liking ambitious people, 45% agreed, 2% disagreed and 3% were undecided respectively.

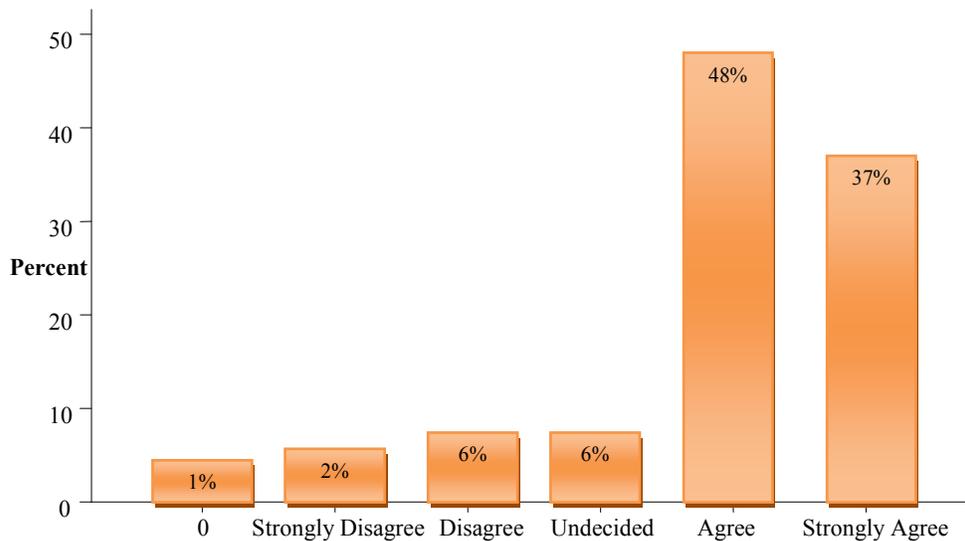


Figure 4.17 Managerial Liking of Competitive Employees

The respondents were favourable towards competitive employees where 48% agreed and 37% strongly agreed with the statement. One respondent did not respond to the question, 2% strongly disagreed, 6% disagreed and 6% were undecided.

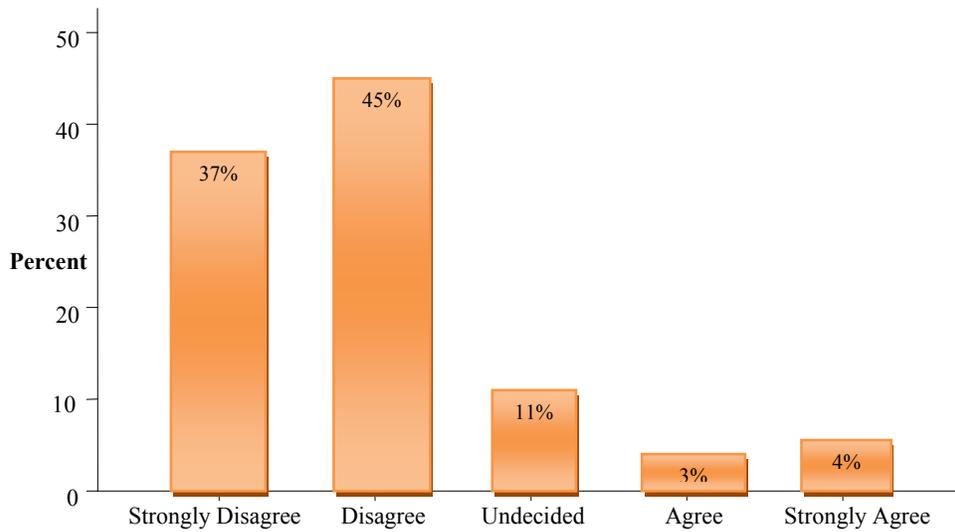


Figure 4.18 Threat by Ambitious Employees

The majority of the respondents did not regard ambitious employees as being a threat in any way. Thirty seven percent strongly disagreed with the statement, 45% disagreed, 11% were undecided, 3% agreed and 4% strongly agreed.

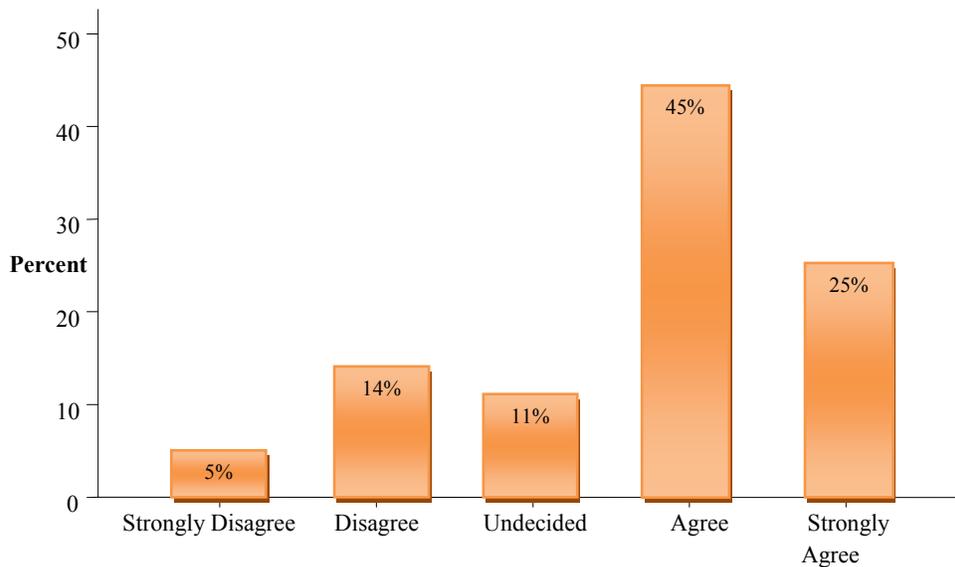


Figure 4.19 Comfort in the Presence of Ambitious Employees

Most respondents (45% and 25%) were comfortable in the presence of ambitious employees. However, 5% strongly disagreed, 14% disagreed and 11% were undecided.

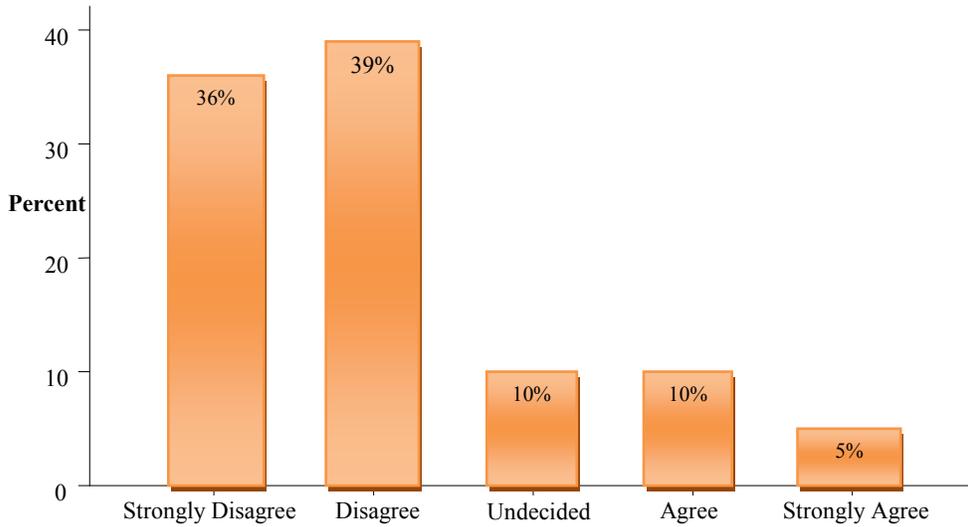


Figure 4.20 Jealousy of Ambitious Employees

Thirty six percent of respondents strongly disagreed to having feelings of jealousy towards ambitious employees. Thirty nine percent disagreed, 10% were undecided, 10% agreed and 5% strongly agreed.

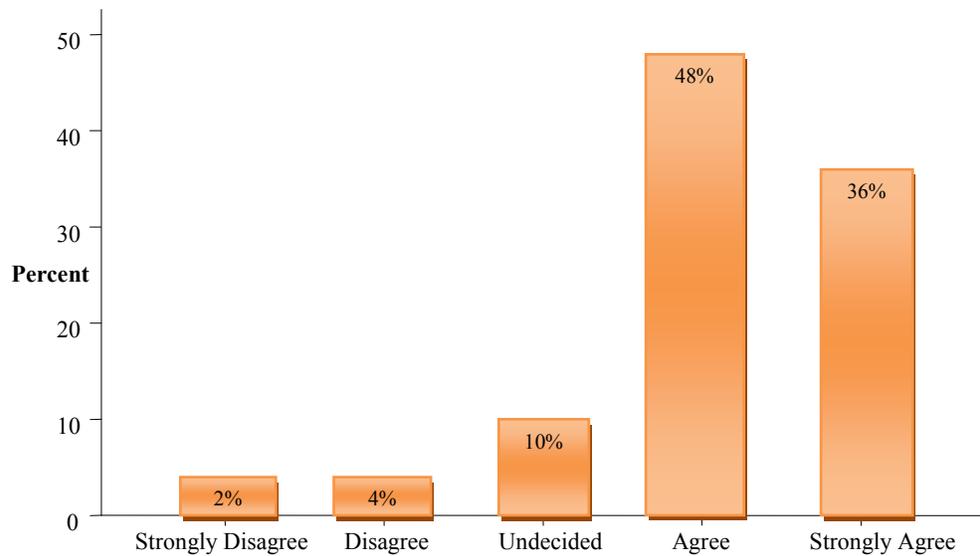


Figure 4.21 Led by Ambitious Employees

Two percent strongly disagreed with being led by ambitious employees. Four percent disagreed, 10% were undecided. The majority of respondents would like to be led by ambitious employees where 48% agreed and 36% strongly agreed with the statement.

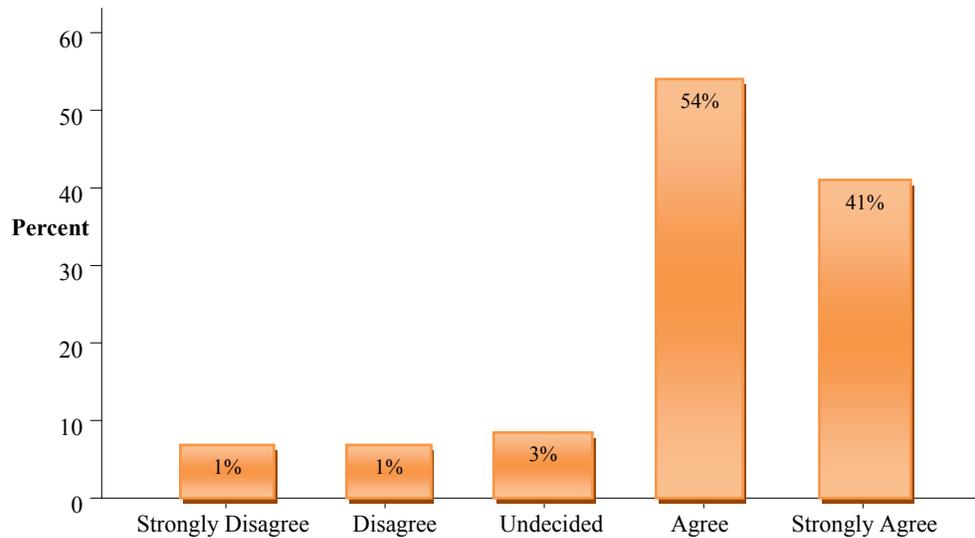


Figure 4.22 Response to Ambitious Employees

Most respondents were positive towards ambitious employees, where 54% agreed and 41% strongly agreed. Only a marginal percentage of respondents had a negative attitude towards ambitious employees, where 1% strongly disagreed, 1% disagreed and 3% were undecided.

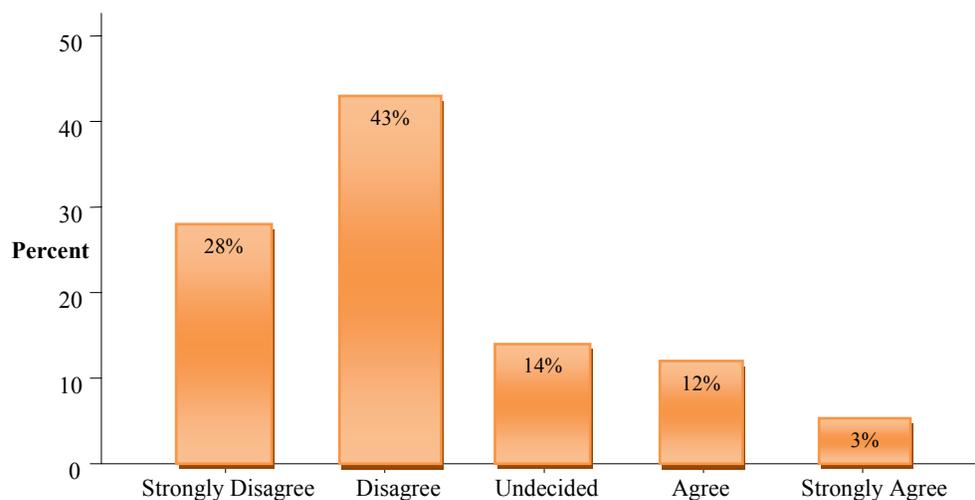


Figure 4.23 Confines of Job Description

Twenty eight percent strongly disagreed and 43% disagreed with the statement that employees should work within the confines of a job description. Fourteen percent were undecided, 12% agreed and 3% strongly agreed with the statement of employees working within the confines of a job description.

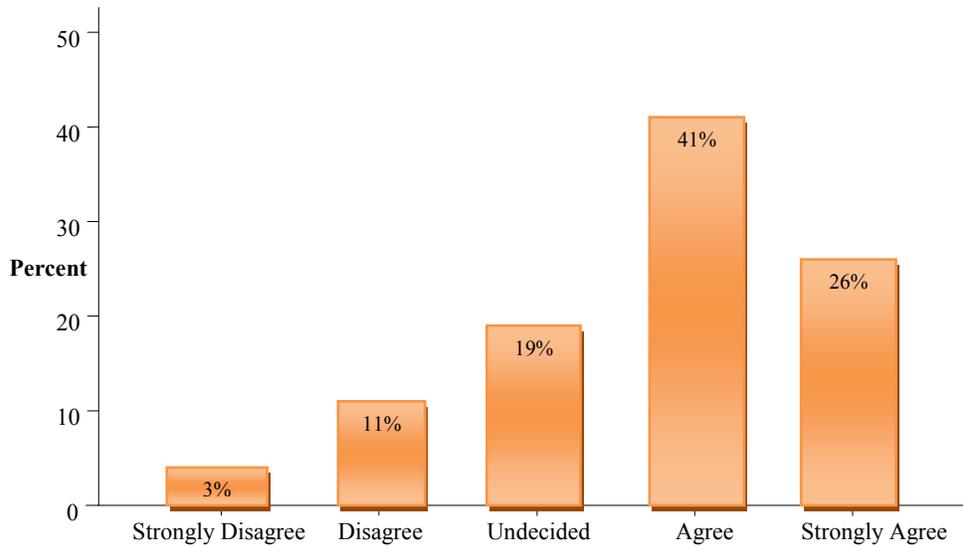


Figure 4.24 Promotion of Ambitious Employees

The majority of managers would promote ambitious employees, where 41% agreed and 26% strongly agreed with the statement. Nineteen percent were undecided, 3% strongly disagreed and 11% disagreed.

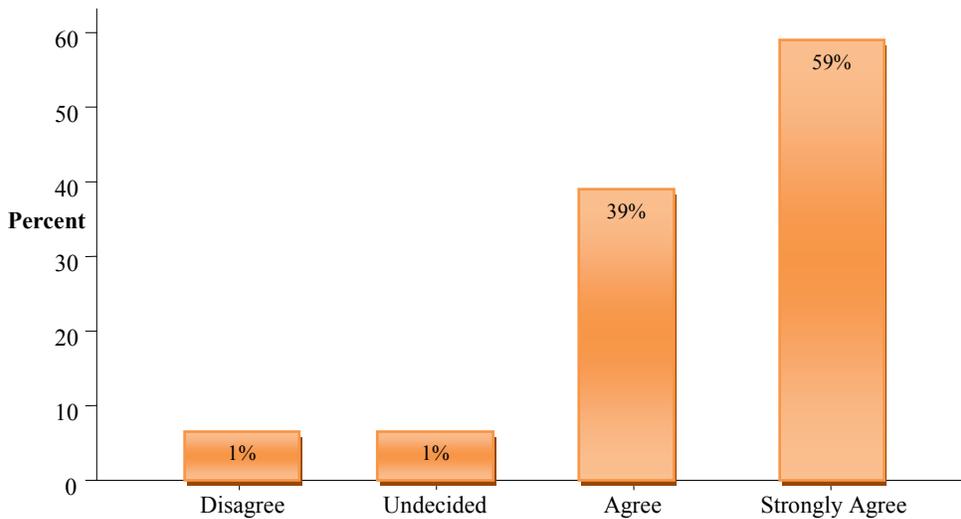


Figure 4.25 Mentorship of Ambitious Employees

There were an overwhelming number of managers that were willing to mentor ambitious employees (59% and 39%). Only 1% of respondents either disagreed or was undecided about mentorship. This value is quite insignificant.

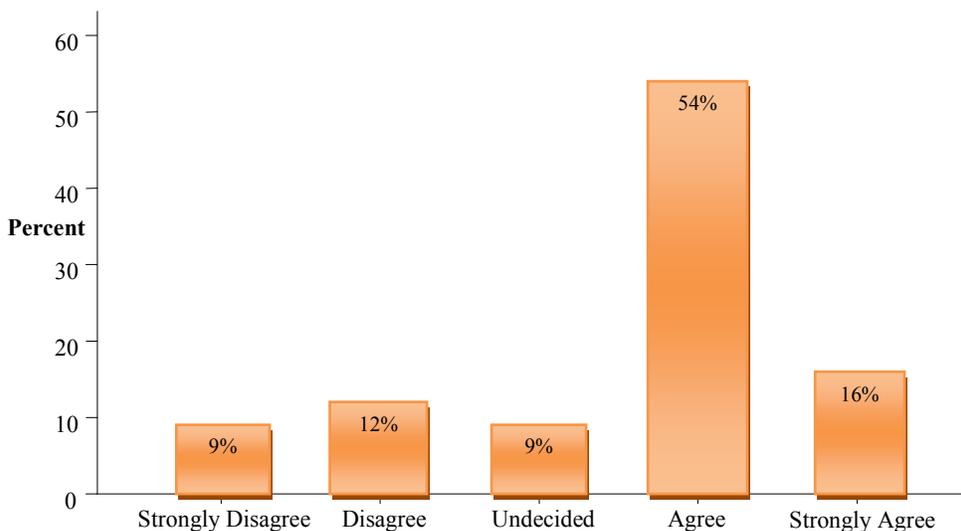


Figure 4.26 Managers Desiring Qualities of Ambitious Employees

The majority of managers viewed ambitious employees favourably where 54% agreed with desiring the qualities of ambitious employees. Sixteen percent strongly agreed with the statement. Nine percent strongly disagreed, 12% disagreed and 9% were undecided.

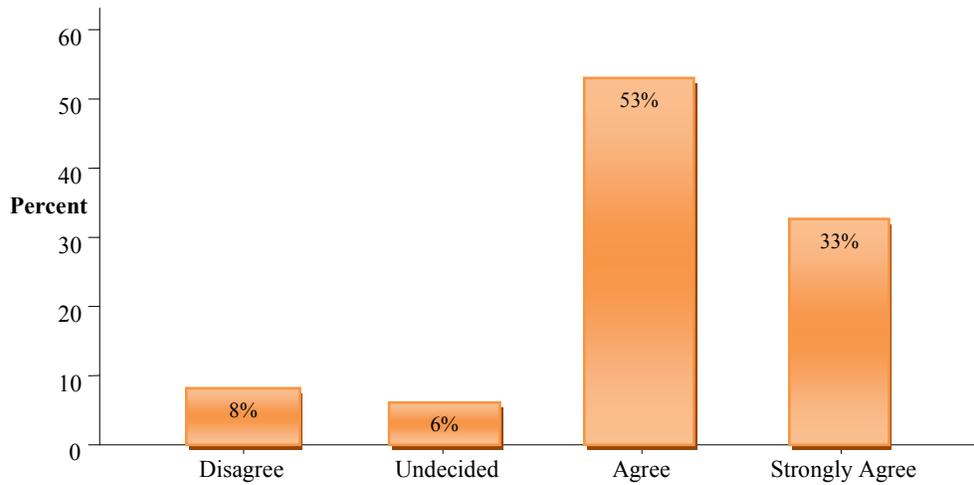


Figure 4.27 Subordinates Involved in Decision Making

The results revealed that 53% of respondents agreed and 33% strongly agreed that subordinates should be involved in decision making. Eight percent disagreed and 6% were undecided.

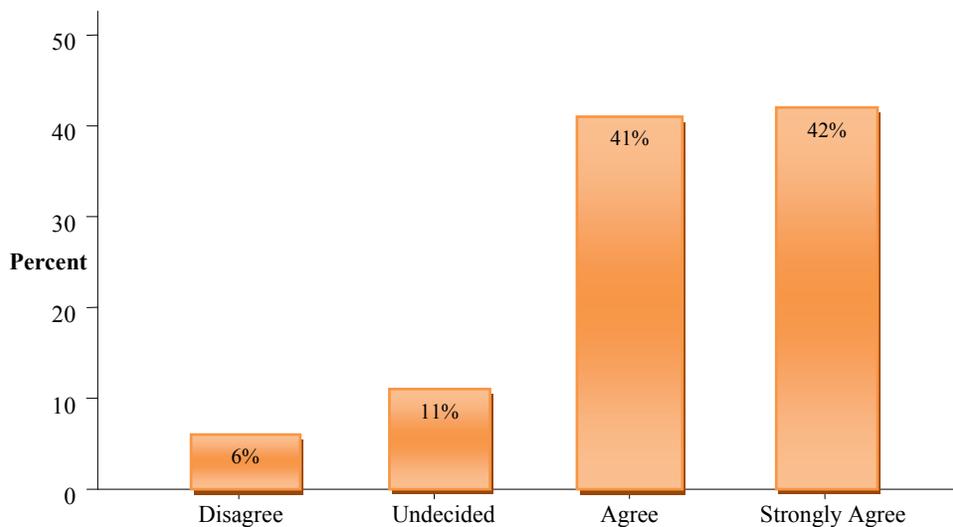


Figure 4.28 Ambitious Employees as Role Models

The majority of respondents viewed ambitious employees as role models where 41% agreed and 42% strongly agreed with the statement. Six percent disagreed and 11% were undecided.

		Are you ambitious				Total	
		Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree		
Gender	Male	% within Gender	0%	5%	42%	53%	100%
		% within Are you ambitious	0%	100%	65%	61%	62%
	Female	% within Gender	8%	0%	37%	55%	100%
		% within Are you ambitious	100%	0%	35%	39%	38%
Total		% within Gender	3%	3%	40%	54%	100%
		% within Are you ambitious	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 4.1 Crosstabulation Between Gender and Level of Ambition

These results revealed that females are marginally more ambitious than males with 55% of females and 53% of males that strongly agreed with being ambitious. However, the cumulative percentage of males being more ambitious was confirmed by 95% of males being ambitious and 92% of females being ambitious.

		Current Job Satisfaction					Total	
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree		
Gender	Male	% within Gender	15%	16%	12%	43%	15%	100%
		% within Current Job Satisfaction	75%	36%	64%	70%	82%	62%
	Female	% within Gender	8%	47.4%	11%	29%	5%	100.0%
		% within Current Job Satisfaction	25%	64%	36%	30%	18%	38%
Total		% within Gender	12%	28%	11%	38%	11%	100%
		% within Current Job Satisfaction	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 4.2 Crosstabulation of Gender and Job Satisfaction

The results tabulated in Table 4.2 indicate that men are more satisfied with their current jobs. A total of 15% strongly agreed and 43% agreed with having job satisfaction. In comparison females experienced less job satisfaction, where 5% strongly agreed and 29% agreed with experiencing job satisfaction.

		Do you like ambitious people				Total
		Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Gender	Male					
	% within Gender	0%	2%	46%	53%	100.0%
	% within Do you like ambitious people	0%	33%	62%	65%	62%
	Female					
	% within Gender	5%	5%	45%	45%	100%
	% within Do you like ambitious people	100%	67%	38%	35%	38%
Total	% within Gender	2%	3%	46%	50%	100%
	% within Do you like ambitious people	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 4.3 Crosstabulation between Gender and Liking of Ambitious Employees

The results tabulated in Table 4.3 showed that 53% of males and 45% of females strongly agreed with liking ambitious employees. Only a negligible number of 5% of females disagreed with liking ambitious employees.

			Jealousy of Ambitious Employees					Total
			Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Gender	Male	% within Gender	40%	34%	11%	8%	7%	100%
		% within Jealousy of Ambitious Employees	69%	54%	70%	50%	80%	62%
	Female	% within Gender	29%	47%	8%	13%	3%	100%
		% within Jealousy of Ambitious Employees	31%	46%	30%	50%	20%	38%
Total		% within Gender	36%	39%	10%	10%	5%	100%
		% within Jealousy of Ambitious Employees	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 4.4 Crosstabulation between Gender and Managerial Jealousy

The results depicted in Table 4.4 show that the respondents in general do not experience jealousy to a significant extent towards ambitious employees. This is evident by the fact that 40% of males and 29% of females strongly disagreed with the statement of feeling jealousy towards ambitious employees. Also 74% of males do not experience jealousy towards ambitious employees. For females the cumulative percentage is slightly higher where 76% do not feel jealousy over ambitious employees.

			Envy of Ambitious Employees	Support of Ambitious Employees
Spearman's rho	Envy of Ambitious Employees	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	- 0.212(*)
		Sig. (2-tailed)		0.034
		N	100	100
	Support of Ambitious Employees	Correlation Coefficient	- 0.212(*)	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.034	
		N	100	100

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.5 Correlation between Jealousy and Support of Ambitious Employees

In Table 4.6 the correlation coefficient is – 0.212, which is a weak negative relationship.

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients
		B	Std. Error	Beta
1	(Constant)	4.745	0.057	
	Envy of Ambitious Employees	- 0.095	0.024	- 0.184
2	(Constant)	1.830	0.191	
	Envy of Ambitious Employees	- 0.001	0.020	- 0.003
	Attitude Toward Ambitious Employees	0.618	0.039	0.616
3	(Constant)	1.797	0.191	
	Envy of Ambitious Employees	0.001	0.020	0.001
	Attitude Toward Ambitious Employees	0.674	0.050	0.673
	Liking of Competitive Employees	- 0.053	0.029	- 0.087

Dependent Variable: Support of Ambitious Employees

Table 4.6 Regression analysis between Jealousy and Support of Ambitious Employees

In table 4.6, hierarchical multiple regression is depicted where the moderating effect of managerial envy is represented by multiplying the support score which is the dependent variable to the managerial envy score. This yields a regression beta coefficient which conveys the strength of the interaction between managerial jealousy and support. The higher the beta coefficient the stronger the relationship between the variables. The beta regression coefficients, envy of ambitious employees and attitude towards ambitious employees is significant to the objectives of the study and will be discussed in Chapter 5.

			Support of Ambitious Employees				Total	
			Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree		Strongly Agree
Gender	Male	% within Gender	0%	0%	0%	48%	52%	100%
		% within Support of Ambitious Employees	0%	0%	0%	70%	62%	62%
	Female	% within Gender	3%	3%	8%	34%	53%	100%
		% within Support of Ambitious Employees	100%	100%	100%	30%	39%	38%
Total		% within Gender	1%	1%	3%	43%	52%	100%
		% within Support of Ambitious Employees	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 4.7 Crosstabulation between Gender and Support of Ambitious Employees

The results tabulated in Table 4.7 showed that 52% of males and 53% of females strongly agreed with supporting ambitious employees. Forty eight percent of males agreed and 34% of females agreed with supporting ambitious employees. A cumulative percentage 5% of females would not support ambitious employees, while men showed no negative or undecided responses.

			Are you ambitious	Support of Ambitious Employees
Spearman's rho	Are you ambitious	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	0.646(**)
		Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
		N	100	100
	Support of Ambitious Employees	Correlation Coefficient	0.646(**)	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
		N	100	100

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.8 Correlation of Managerial Ambition and Support of Ambitious Employees

The correlation coefficient is 0.646, which is a medium positive correlation.

		Mentorship of Ambitious Employees				Total	
		Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree		
Gender	Male	% within Gender	0%	0%	39%	61%	100%
		% within Mentorship of Ambitious Employees	0%	0%	62%	64%	62%
	Female	% within Gender	3%	3%	40%	55%	100%
		% within Mentorship of Ambitious Employees	100%	100%	39%	36%	38%
Total		% within Gender	1%	1%	39%	59%	100%
		% within Mentorship of Ambitious Employees	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 4.9 Crosstabulation between Gender and Mentorship

The results of mentorship depicted in Table 4.9 show that 61% of males and 55% of females strongly agree with mentoring employees. Thirty nine percent of male and 40% of females agree with mentoring employees. Three percent of females disagree with mentoring employees while males exhibited no negative response to mentorship.

		Promotion of Ambitious Employees					Total	
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree		
Gender	Male	% within Gender	5%	13%	24%	37%	21%	100%
		% within Promotion of Ambitious Employees	100%	73%	79%	56%	50%	62%
	Female	% within Gender	0%	8%	11%	47%	34%	100%
		% within Promotion of Ambitious Employees	0%	27%	21%	44%	50%	38%
Total		% within Gender	3%	11%	19%	41%	26%	100%
		% within Promotion of Ambitious Employees	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 4.10 Crosstabulation between Gender and Promotion of Ambitious Employees

The results tabulated in Table 4.10 showed that 21% of males and 34% of females strongly agreed with promoting ambitious employees, 37% of males and 47% of females agreed with promoting ambitious employees. A cumulative percentage of 18% of males will not promote ambitious employees, while only 8% of females will not promote ambitious employees.

		Response to Ambitious Employees					Total	
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree		
Gender	Male	% within Gender	0%	0%	2%	61%	37%	100%
		% within Attitude Toward Ambitious Employees	0%	0%	33%	70%	56%	62%
	Female	% within Gender	3%	3%	5%	42%	47%	100%
		% within Attitude Toward Ambitious Employees	100%	100%	67%	30%	44%	38%
Total		% within Gender	1%	1%	3%	54%	41%	100%
		% within Attitude Toward Ambitious Employees	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 4.11 Crosstabulation between Gender and Response to Ambitious Employees

The results depicted in Table 4.11 show that 37% of males and 47% of females strongly agreed with having a positive response to ambitious employees. Sixty one percent of males agreed and 42 % of females agreed with having a positive response to ambitious females. A cumulative percentage of 5% of females do not have a positive attitude towards ambitious employees, while 5% of females remained undecided on their response to ambitious employees. Males showed no negative response.

			Support of Ambitious Employees					Total
			Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Age	26 - 30	% within Age	9%	0%	0%	55%	36%	100%
		% within Support of Ambitious Employees	100%	0%	0%	14%	8%	11%
	31 - 35	% within Age	0%	0%	3%	59%	38%	100%
		% within Support of Ambitious Employees	0%	0%	33%	47%	25%	34%
	36 - 50	% within Age	0%	2%	4%	33%	61%	100%
		% within Support of Ambitious Employees	0%	100%	67%	35%	54%	46%
	51 - 60	% within Age	0%	0%	0%	12%	88%	100%
		% within Support of Ambitious Employees	0%	0%	0%	2%	14%	8%
	61 and above	% within Age	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	100%
		% within Support of Ambitious Employees	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	1%
Total		% within Age	1%	1%	3%	43%	52%	100%
		% within Support of Ambitious Employees	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 4.12 Crosstabulation between Age and Support of Ambitious Employees

The results in Table 4.12 showed that the 51-60 age category is most supportive of ambitious employees with 88% of respondents within the age category strongly agreeing with supporting employees. The other 12% of respondents agreed to support ambitious employees.

			Age	Support of Ambitious Employees
Spearman's rho	Age	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	0.253(*)
		Sig. (2-tailed)		0.011
Support of Ambitious Employees		N	100	100
		Correlation Coefficient	0.253(*)	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.011	
		N	100	100

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.13 Correlation between Age and Support of Ambitious Employees

The correlation coefficient is a weak positive value of 0.253 as depicted in Table 4.13.

			Mentorship of Ambitious Employees				Total
			Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Age	26 - 30	% within Age	9%	0%	45%	45%	100%
		% within Mentorship of Ambitious Employees	100%	0%	13%	9%	11%
	31 - 35	% within Age	0%	0%	41%	59%	100%
		% within Mentorship of Ambitious Employees	0%	0%	36%	34%	34%
	36 - 50	% within Age	0%	2%	37%	61%	100%
		% within Mentorship of Ambitious Employees	0%	100%	44%	48%	46%
	51 - 60	% within Age	0%	0%	25%	75%	100%
		% within Mentorship of Ambitious Employees	0%	0%	5%	10%	8%
	61 and above	% within Age	0%	0%	100%	0%	100%
		% within Mentorship of Ambitious Employees	0%	0%	3%	0.0%	1%
Total		% within Age	1%	1%	39%	59%	100%
		% within Mentorship of Ambitious Employees	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 4.14 Crosstabulation between Age and Mentorship of Ambitious Employees

The results Table 4.14 show that the 51-60 age category is once again the most supportive group since 75% of the respondents strongly agreed to mentor employees, while the other 25% agreed with mentorship.

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter presented the results of the study using nonparametric statistics which comprised of frequency statistics, contingency tables, crosstabulations, Spearman's correlation analysis and hierarchical multiple regression. A discussion of the results will now be explained in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss, interpret and analyse the results of the previous chapter. The research findings will be elaborated in context of the literature review in Chapter Two of this study. The discussion will directly address the research problem, the aim and objectives of the study. Where the general findings are inconsistent to what was expected, the reasons for such inconsistencies will be examined. There can be little doubt that the factors that affect managerial attitudes towards ambitious employees are indeed complex. However, this study solicited only pertinent factors that influence manager's response to ambitious employees. The inter-related salient themes to be discussed will be manager's view of ambition, the support of ambitious employees, the interpersonal relationship between manager and employee, as well as the age category and gender of the most supportive managers.

In order to answer the objectives, it would be necessary to establish a relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Regression analysis is a powerful tool that predicts the value of one variable based on another. If one is to determine whether a relationship exists then correlation analysis will be used. Correlation analysis refers to a group of techniques that are used to measure the association between two variables. The coefficient of correlation describes the strength of the linear relationship between the independent (X) and the dependent variables (Y) and is designated by r . The advantage of correlation is that it measures both the strength and direction of relationship between a pair of variables (Cramer & Bryman 2005, p. 213). Since variables are ordinal in nature, rank correlation will be used. Rank correlation is the measure of association between the dependent and independent variable. The non-parametric Spearman's rho method was used to determine the direction and strength of relationship between variables.

5.2.1 Managerial View of Ambition

This section addresses the research question which explores how managers view the concept of ambition and it determines the extent to which managers are ambitious. Several variables such as postgraduate studies, job challenge and stimulation, skills and ability, job satisfaction, competitive business nature, persistence and confidence describes the nature of managers. The statement concerning the desire to pursue postgraduate studies depicted in Figure 4.5, shows that an overwhelming majority of respondents (88%) would like to pursue postgraduate education. Considering such a high percentage, this suggests that the managers of the sample are highly ambitious themselves since the desire for educational attainment can be regarded as one of the measures of ambition. It would seem that managers view ambition favourably and would be willing to strive towards achieving a postgraduate qualification. Only a marginal number of respondents of 4% were undecided, disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement respectively.

The inference that managers are highly ambitious by nature is further supported by the results depicted in Figure 4.13, where the results show that 54% strongly agreed with being ambitious and 40% agreed with being ambitious. Only 3% were undecided and 3% disagreed with the statement. None of the respondents displayed a very strong negative attitude towards being ambitious. For those that lack ambition it is possible that they have reached the highest position that they could achieve and were therefore not ambitious about their career progression. Possessing high ambition levels is also accompanied by being confident and persistent about oneself. Figure 4.10 showed that 45% strongly agreed with being persistent and 50% agreed. This is in support of the theory examined in the literature review which discussed that being ambitious embodies qualities of persistence and confidence. Confidence data depicted in Figure 4.15 further emphasizes high ambition levels of managers with 53% strongly agreeing and 45% agreeing with being confident. Only a negligible 2% of the sample was undecided about their level of confidence.

The majority of the managers (80%) found their jobs challenging and stimulating. This is expected of such a position which is usually accompanied by an enormous amount of responsibility that requires a high level of skill and ability. Figure 4.6 depicting job challenge and stimulation, as well as Figure 4.7 depicting skills and ability are remarkably similar.

Thirty one percent strongly agree with their jobs being challenging and stimulating, while 30% strongly agree with their job making adequate use of their skills and ability. Forty nine percent agree with their job being challenging and stimulating while 44% agree with their job making good use of their skills and ability. Given the high frequency of strongly agree and agree, it can be suggested that managers are in competitive business environments. This is stimulating to managers own ambition levels and this link will be established with job satisfaction data to follow.

Job satisfaction results depicted in Figure 4.8 reveal that approximately half of the respondents are dissatisfied with their current jobs. Twelve percent strongly disagree, 29% disagree and 11% were undecided with the job satisfaction statement. While the majority find their jobs stimulating and challenging, it does not suggest their jobs may be necessarily satisfying which are two separate concepts. It is this job satisfaction that may be directly responsible for setting higher goals. This is consistent with the goal setting theory which states that ambitious people have to constantly set higher goals to achieve job satisfaction. Given that managers are highly ambitious as have been established from earlier results, it would imply that these managers would not experience high levels of job satisfaction. Less than half (48%) indicated experiencing job satisfaction. This dissatisfaction would imply that these managers would seek better and more satisfying employment. Further, it is most likely that those employees who felt that their current jobs did not utilize their skills and ability optimally would be more likely to experience job dissatisfaction.

The results from Table 4.2 show that men are generally more satisfied with their current jobs. For women, this lower job satisfaction would result in having higher levels of ambition. When a crosstabulation on ambition and gender was performed as shown in Table 4.1, it was revealed that 55% of females and 53% of males strongly agreed with being ambitious. However, a cumulative percentage of 95% of males and 92% of females are ambitious. This is not conclusive that men in totality are more ambitious since the male sample is much larger than the female sample. However, as a percentage of the sample, men are marginally more ambitious than women. Given that male managers have higher job satisfaction, this would imply that females will be more ambitious which yields contradictory results. This is

consistent with the gap theory by Michalos (1985) who suggested that those that have less satisfaction are more ambitious because of the constant need for higher achievement.

The ambitious nature of respondents is further supported by the response of their competitive nature. In Figure 4.8, it was revealed that 54% agreed and 37% strongly agreed with the statement on having a competitive business nature. Since managers are highly competitive, this would imply that they will display high levels of confidence, persistence and strive for educational qualifications for a competitive advantage over other colleagues. Confidence levels indicated by the respondents show that 53% strongly agreed, 45% agreed and only 2% were undecided about their confidence levels as shown in Figure 4.15. High confidence and persistence are qualities that can be associated with being ambitious. Persistence data shown in Figure 4.10 show very similar results where 45% strongly agreed, 50% agreed, 2% disagreed and 3% were undecided about their persistence levels. It can be concluded that managers are highly ambitious by nature. The correlation of ambitious managers supporting ambitious employees will be established in the following discussion.

5.2.2 Age, Gender, Jealousy and Support

The respondents comprised of 32% females and 68% males, which indicates that equity in the various sectors of employment have not been attained. Given that there are more males occupying managerial positions, the results of this study must be interpreted within the context of male bias. The majority of the respondents (80%) represent fairly young to middle-age managers who are between the ages of 31 and 50 inclusive. The age of respondent is a significant factor since according to (Judge *et al.* 1994) younger managers are more ambitious and more likely to mentor an employee. The results of this study depicted in Table 4.14 refutes the Judge *et al* (1994) study since the older respondents (51-60) age category are most likely to mentor ambitious employees. This is further supported by Table 4.12 where 88% of respondents in the 51-60 age category strongly agreed to supporting ambitious employees.

The Spearman correlation coefficient shown in Table 4.13 is 0.253 which represents a weak positive relationship between the variables of age and support of employees. The interpretation of this positive correlation coefficient implies that as a manager's age increases

the support and mentoring of ambitious employees also increases. Older managers being more supportive is further supported by results in Table 4.12 which showed that one manager in the 26-30 age category strongly disagreed with supporting ambitious employees. Only one manager in the 36-50 age category disagreed and 2 managers in the 36-50 age category were undecided. Given that in the 51-60 age category there were no managers that strongly disagreed, disagreed or were undecided with the statement of supporting ambitious employees, by inference it can be suggested that older managers are more supportive of ambitious employees. Also the one manager in the 61 and above category strongly agreed with supporting ambitious employees but since this represents the response of only one manager, it is not statistically significant.

Older managers being more supportive is further demonstrated in Table 4.14, which showed that 75% of the 51-60 age category of manager would mentor ambitious employees, while the remaining 25% agreed with mentorship. The reason that older managers may be more supportive of ambitious employees is that perhaps managers have realized that fewer promotional opportunities may be present. Hence, it would seem logical to support and mentor a much younger, ambitious employee would probably at some point ascend to management level. These findings are contradictory to the study by Judge *et al.* (1994) since Judge *et al.* (1994) found that older managers are less ambitious which is refuted in this study. Also since older managers are less ambitious, it is possible that they are more likely to support ambitious employees because there is no need to compete for positions or recognition.

When managers were asked if they were ambitious, 54% strongly agreed and 40% agreed with the statement as depicted in Table 4.1. Only a negligible 6% were cumulatively undecided and disagreed. Overall, the study revealed that most managers would support ambitious employees, where in Table 4.8 the correlation coefficient of managerial ambition and support was 0.646. The medium positive correlation interpretation suggests that managerial support increases with increasing managerial ambition. This suggests that ambitious managers are more likely to support ambitious employees. The reason is that all male managers agreed and strongly agreed with supporting ambitious employees. Whereas for female managers 3% strongly disagree, 3% disagree and 8% were undecided.

Male managers being more supportive of ambitious employees is further confirmed from the results of Table 4.11, where 98% of male managers react positively towards ambitious employees. While only two percent of managers remained undecided, no negative responses for male managers were recorded. In contrast, female managers showed 3% strongly disagreed, 3% disagreed and 5% were undecided. The results of mentorship depicted in Table 4.9 show that 61% of males and 55% of females strongly agreed with mentoring ambitious employees. Three percent of females disagreed with mentoring while males showed no negative reaction towards mentoring. This is further consistent with earlier results which show that males are more supportive than females.

The results from this study supported the findings from Poulsten (2000) which shows that mentoring is most likely to be male managers. The results which showed that male managers are most likely to mentor, supports the findings from the study by Allen & Eby (2004) which explained that career enhancement functions are derived from males whereas females are typically characterized by psychosocial attributes. The reason that this may be the case is that men still occupy more high power positional jobs in comparison to women.

The other variable of liking ambitious employees show a similar trend where 53% of males and 45% of females, shown in Table 4.3 strongly agreed to liking ambitious employees. Given that males are more favourable towards ambitious employees, it would stand to reason that male managers would be more willing to mentor employees. Manager's positive attitude of ambitious employees is demonstrated by their willingness to promote junior employees to management positions. However, 21% of males and 34% of females strongly agreed with promoting ambitious employees as evident in Table 4.10. Also 37% of males and 47% of females react with a positive attitude towards ambitious employees. This result is contradictory to the results where males are more supportive towards ambitious employees. One of the reasons for this contradiction could be as a result of male perception where male managers may support growth and development but may not feel the employee is ready for promotion. Hence, men may view ambitious employees as a threat to competitive standing. Otherwise, it may be possible for male managers to have some feelings of jealousy.

Given that male managers in comparison to female managers are less likely to promote junior employees and also have a decreased positive attitude towards ambitious employees, it may

be possible that managerial jealousy exists. The results from Table 4.4 show that overall the respondents do not harbour feelings of jealousy towards ambitious employees which occurs to a limited extent. This can be inferred given that 36% of managers strongly disagreed and 39% disagreed with harbouring jealous feelings, as depicted in Figure 4.20. Jealousy occurred only on a marginal level where, 10% of respondents were undecided, 10% agreed and 5% strongly agreed with possessing feelings of jealousy. However, using a comparative approach of the depicted results in Table 4.4, it was shown that 74% of males experience no jealousy, whereas females have a higher cumulative percentage of 76% that experiences no jealousy. This suggests that men experience more jealousy towards ambitious employees as compared to females.

The correlation coefficient for managerial jealousy and support is - 0.212 shown in Table 4.6. This represents a weak negative relationship between the variables and implies that as managerial jealousy increases, the support for ambitious employees decreases. This would occur since a negative correlation between the variables exists. The confident nature of managers is emphasized in Figure 4.18, where only 4% strongly agreed and 3% agreed with ambitious employees representing a threat. The majority of both male and female managers (82%) do not view employees as a threat and 11% remained undecided. Manager's further confidence and lack of managerial jealousy is evident in Figure 4.19, where 70% are comfortable in the presence of overly ambitious employees.

The relationship between lack of support and managerial jealousy is further supported by the very weak beta regression coefficient of -0.184 as shown in Table 4.6. This very small beta coefficient implies that there is no significant link between managerial jealousy and lack of support. The negative relationship suggests that as managerial jealousy increases, support to ambitious employees decreases. The same Table 4.6 shows a strong positive regression beta coefficient of 0.616 between positive attitude of managers and support. The positive coefficient suggests as attitudes become more positive or increases, management support also increases.

Further acceptance of support of ambitious employees can be inferred from the results in Figure 4.21 where 84% would not oppose being led by ambitious employees. It seems that managers because of their high confidence levels are not insecure about the presence of

ambitious employees at the workplace. Managers are broad-minded and accepting of ambitious employees. Seventy one percent of managers in Figure 4.23 feel that employees should not work within the restrictions of a job description. Manager's generally having a positive attitude towards ambitious employees is further shown in Figure 4.26 where 70% would desire qualities of ambitious employees. Given this high percentage it is obvious that managers view ambitious employees favourably and hence are supportive in the work environment.

5.3 Conclusion

The discussion of this chapter provided insight into addressing the aim and objectives of the study that involved the integration of the literature and the results. This chapter concluded that managers are ambitious by nature and are willing to support ambitious employees. There is a positive relationship between managers and employees. The comparative gender study showed that men are more supportive towards ambitious employees. Also managerial jealousy could not be established to a significant extent through this study. The chapter was not intended to provide definitive answers to the research questions, but represents a broad campaign for opening the topic to ultimately understanding the myriad of factors that affect the manner in which managers respond to ambitious employees.

CHAPTER SIX

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

This final chapter summarizes the major findings of the dissertation. It also discusses some implications of this research and addresses the limitations through recommendations for an improved study. Also since the process of research is cyclic in nature, the purpose of this chapter is to offer suggestions for future studies. This will be based on aspects that were not adequately examined in this study due to the magnitude of the variables that impact on both managers and employees. Further, in addition to the impacting variables and certain limitations, the strength of relationships between variables may not have been as significant as expected. In the quest to establish stronger associations between variables, the study will conclude with some suggestions for future avenues of research. Lastly, the extent to which the research objectives have been met to address the problem statement will be explained.

6.2 Implications of this Research

The results from this study provided a view of ambition from a managerial perspective and would benefit Human Resource Managers in recruiting talented and ambitious individuals. For ambitious employees, it serves as a window into the minds and perceptions of managers. This study will empower both ambitious employees and managers so that there is a better understanding and relationship between the two. The study will benefit any manager who is directly involved with employee training, development and mentorship. It will create awareness for managers and allow for reflection, self-actualisation on their own levels of ambition. The study will further add value by enlightening and reminding managers of the powerful role and effect they have on ambitious employees.

Based on this study, managers and ambitious employees would now be better equipped to understand managerial behaviour and the effect of managers on their own ambition levels. For ambitious employees the implications of this study means better career management through an understanding of the concepts related to ambition such as job satisfaction,

motivation, education, talent and mentorship. It would be interesting to view the implications of the theory and the data presented here by having equal representation of males and female respondents in the study. This study is a one-way attempt to examine the relationship between managers and ambitious employees. It revealed the opinion of managers only hence it would be interesting to examine employee-employer relationship from different perspectives.

6.3. Recommendations for future Research

The present study addresses the reaction of managers toward ambitious employees and extends the understanding of ambition in several ways:

- Ambition has been viewed from above with a managerial perspective and is biased since this study was based on the opinion of managers only. An avenue for future research would be to have two samples, involving both employees and managers. This two-way approach of two unrelated samples would allow for a more balanced opinion of managerial reaction towards ambitious employees. The employees could give an opposing or more honest reflection on how managers react towards their ambition. A correlation of the two samples would allow for an interesting comparative study.
- The findings of the present research should be treated with some degree of caution since one of the limitations included the possibility of both sector and gender bias. The majority of the respondents were from the financial sector and consisted of mostly male respondents. Improving the representation of having a balanced sample and including a significant number of respondents from various sectors, may yield an interesting comparative sector study, perhaps showing which sector manager's are more supportive towards ambitious employees.
- Also the sample consisted of managers from the private sector only. A future study could include managers from the public sector as well. This could be another interesting comparative study where one could investigate whether public or private sectors are most supportive towards ambitious employees. Also managers from the two sectors have different organizational structures and demands. Based on these differing factors, managers may react differently to ambitious employees.

- One of the concepts of ambition involved gender. Feminist researchers have argued that for too long the lives and experiences of women have been misrepresented (Dawson 2002, p. 18). Given that qualitative research explores attitudes, behaviour and experiences, feminist research can provide a valuable alternative framework for exploring reaction to ambitious employees through participative or qualitative inquiry. Since this study consisted of male bias (62% male respondents), feminist inquiry would allow for a more balanced approach yielding better analysis and reflection of results. Since the reaction of managers towards ambitious employees involves a relationship, participant observation would give a deeper understanding into the behaviour, motivation and attitudes of the people under the study.
- The snowball sampling method introduced bias since the initial sample was purposive in nature. Since purposive sampling is a form of convenience or selected sample, the results are generalizable only to a population possessing identical characteristics of the sample. A future study can use probability sampling, where randomly selected managers would allow for the generalizability of results to a population at large. These results would be useful to better explain, predict and generalize phenomena to a population.
- Further, since questionnaires were used to obtain measures on all the variables of the study, method variance may have occurred. At the centre of the 5 point Likert Scale is the undecided option which is difficult to interpret and adds little value to the analysis of the results.
- The concept of ambition is subjective and qualitative in nature. The study cannot be confined to a qualitative or quantitative nature. The shortcoming of this study is that the concept of ambition has been quantified using the Likert scale, where the degree of agreement is assigned a numerical value. In a study of the Social Sciences one cannot simply quantify a social phenomenon using closed questions. The weakness of this study is the use of the questionnaire methodology which used only closed questions, where there was no freedom for respondents to indicate their own subjective opinions. Since quantitative and qualitative methodologies each have its strengths and

weaknesses, to counteract this, triangulation which is a combination of the two methodologies can be used.

- A further justification of a mixed methodology approach stems from the research instrument, where Likert scale indicates the percentage of agreement with statements, but it does not reveal the reason for a respondent agreeing or disagreeing. An avenue for future study should employ a mixed methodology approach where open ended questions will allow for respondents stating their reasons for their level of agreement or disagreement. Understanding the rationale behind a respondent's response is important for making recommendations to better the study and achieve the desired results. In addition, since the concept of ambition is more qualitative in nature, the research instrument can be changed to reflect this. Instead of a questionnaire, a structured or semi-structured interview with managers and employees can be used.
- With regard to future research several directions may be pursued. Applying a different methodology such as ethnography would allow the researcher to immerse themselves in the lives of a particular group for a period of time. Since reaction to ambitious employees is a behavioural concept, future researchers can be part of a work environment that consists of ambitious managers and employees. This would allow for vital observations of managerial reaction to ambitious employees.
- A grounded theory methodology could also be used for valuable inquiry into studying ambition. The emphasis in this methodology is to formulate a theory which is grounded in the data. The method of focus groups and interviews of managers and employees could be used for data collection. When the data collection process reaches saturation and no new information is provided, a theory can be formulated. Future research could benefit from this approach since there is flexibility which allows for new issues to emerge that a researcher may not have thought of previously.
- The results from the present study do not directly examine the impact of organizational factors such as lack of resources, incentives or time to support ambitious employees.

An investigation linking financial and non-financial resources to mentorship should further illuminate the subject.

- The present study could not significantly establish a link between lack of support and managerial jealousy, perhaps because jealousy is an uncomfortable emotion to honestly reflect upon through a questionnaire. To solicit feelings or experiences on jealousy a more creative method could be employed. For example, a future study can use synectics which are creative metaphors that opens up sensitive topics for reflection and association. This is achieved by engaging respondents to relate their feelings of jealousy through drawing a picture from which parallels and associations can be achieved (Wisker 2001, p. 197). To explore managerial jealousy and obtain the desired results a control variable should be used, where other impacting variables ideally should be fixed.
- The business value of this study will be derived directly from the findings discussed in chapter 5. Given that managers are highly ambitious in nature, businesses have a greater role to play in nurturing and developing this ambition. This can be achieved by allocating a budget for leadership and development courses, which will not only increase business knowledge but further develop management skills.
- Given that approximately half of the respondents experience job dissatisfaction, employers should focus on increasing levels of satisfaction amongst both managers and subordinates. In the context of the goal setting theory, dissatisfied managers would seek better and more satisfying employment. The consequence of this is that businesses could experience a loss of talented individuals to other companies. To minimize such occurrences businesses need to be more creative in developing better employee retention strategies by being receptive to the needs of employees.
- The results also revealed that women are more dissatisfied than men. This would imply that female managers are more likely to seek better employment prospects. Hence, the retention strategy referred to earlier should be tailored specifically for women. By providing incentives that appeal to women businesses may have a competitive advantage over entities that offer broad-spectrum benefits.

- Given that people generally respond in the manner in which they are treated, businesses need to monitor manager-subordinate relationships. Since managers are judged not just on their own performance but also on the results achieved through the subordinates, a healthy work relationship is important. For managers that find it difficult to respond positively to ambitious employees, counseling on interpersonal relationships and professional development is recommended.
- For the further development of ambitious employees, older managers are recommended in mentorship activities since older managers are more willing to mentor ambitious employees. Preferably, older male managers would be better suited for mentorship activities since men responded more favourably towards ambitious employees.
- Managerial jealousy could not be established to a significant extent in this study but if it does exist in a work environment, conflict management is recommended for an improved manager-subordinate relationship.
- The manner in which managers react to ambitious employees may affect organizational performance and hinder the achievement of business results. It is recommended that employee assistant programmes included topics such as human interactions, communication, relationships, social influence and leadership. This would decrease the impact of managers negative responses (if any) to ambitious employees and improve business performance.
- Finally, if human capital is one of the greatest assets in an organization, businesses ought to invest a significant amount of time and money in developing employees. It is highly recommended that organizations provide a competitive business environment to stimulate, increase and sustain ambition levels of employees.

6.4 Conclusion

The extent to which the findings of this study are valid and reliable, the following conclusion regarding managerial reaction can be drawn. Managers of the sample embodied most of the characteristics that defines people that are highly ambitious. It was found that managers were significantly competitive, persistent and confident. Further, it was revealed that managers had a positive attitude towards ambitious employees and supported them to a significant extent. This study also found that while female managers were more ambitious, it was male managers who were most supportive. The findings also suggested a positive correlation between ambitious managers and employees, whereby ambitious managers were more likely to support ambitious employees. In addition, older managers were more supportive of ambitious employees in the workplace.

Finally, the notion of managerial jealousy towards ambitious employees was supported to a very limited extent through the findings of this study since managers reacted very positively towards ambitious employees. The extent to which the problem statement had been answered has been explored in the empirical evidence provided, where age and gender affects managerial response to ambitious employees. The research objectives were further satisfied, where it was found that ambitious managers supported ambitious employees, hence the link between lack of support and managerial jealousy could not be significantly established.

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APPENDIX A
LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT

Dear Respondent

MBA Research Project

Researcher: Mr Amrishlal Sewraj (031-262 1005)

Supervisor: Mr Martin Challenor (031-260 8104)

Research Office: Ms P Ximba (031-260 3587)

I am an MBA student, at the Graduate School of Business, of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. You are invited to participate in a research project entitled **Managerial response to ambitious employees**. The aim of this study is to understand how managers view ambition and their response to ambitious employees.

Through your participation I hope to determine the extent to which managers support ambitious employees. The study will also determine which gender is more supportive of ambitious employees. Furthermore, the result of the survey will contribute to understanding the extent to which workplace jealousy exists and its effect on moderating employee ambition.

Your participation in this project is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the project at any time with no negative consequence. There will be no monetary gain from participating in this survey. Confidentiality and anonymity of records identifying you as a participant will be maintained by the Graduate School of Business, UKZN.

If you have any questions or concerns about completing the questionnaire or about participating in this study, you may contact me or my supervisor at the numbers listed above. The survey should take you about 15-20 minutes to complete. I hope you will take the time to complete this survey.

Sincerely

Mr Amrishlal Sewraj

Investigator's signature

.....

Date

.....

MBA Research Project

Researcher: Mr Amrishlal Sewraj (031-262 1005)

Supervisor: Mr Martin Challenor (031-260 8104)

Research Office: Ms P Ximba (031-260 3587)

CONSENT

I..... (full names of participant)

hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

Participant's signature

Date

.....

.....

APPENDIX B

MANAGEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

INSTRUCTION

Please indicate with a cross [X] as applicable in the box provided.

1.1 Gender

Male	1	Female	2	V1
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1.2. Age

18 – 25	1	V2
26 – 30	2	V2
31 – 35	3	V2
36 – 50	4	V2
51 – 60	5	V2
61 and above	6	V2

1.3. What is the length of employment in your current position?

0 – 1 years	1	V3
2 – 5 years	2	V3
6 – 10 years	3	V3
11 – 20 years	4	V3
More than 20 years	5	V3

1.4 What is your sector of employment?

Manufacturing	1	V4
Retail	2	V4
Financial	3	V4
Education	4	V4
Medical	5	V4
Tourism	6	V4
Other (specify)	7	V4

SECTION B: MANAGERIAL RESPONSE TO AMBITIOUS EMPLOYEES

INSTRUCTIONS

In this section you are presented with a statement. You are required to indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each statement.

Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements by inserting a cross [X] in the applicable box, where:

5 = Strongly Agree; 4 = Agree; 3 = Undecided; 2 = Disagree; 1 = Strongly Disagree

STATEMENTS	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
1. I will pursue postgraduate studies at some stage in my life.	5	4	3	2	1	V5
2. I find my job challenging and stimulating.	5	4	3	2	1	V6
3. My job makes good use of my skills and ability.	5	4	3	2	1	V7
4. I am satisfied with my current position.	5	4	3	2	1	V8
5. I have a competitive business nature.	5	4	3	2	1	V9
6. I am persistent by nature.	5	4	3	2	1	V10
7. Is money a key motivator in your ambition.	5	4	3	2	1	V11
8. Does the company promote individual ambition.	5	4	3	2	1	V12
9. Are you ambitious.	5	4	3	2	1	V13
10. Are you confident about yourself.	5	4	3	2	1	V14
11. Will training improve your ambition.	5	4	3	2	1	V15
12. Do you like ambitious people.	5	4	3	2	1	V16

13. Will you support ambitious employees for career advancement.	5	4	3	2	1	V17
14. Do you like competitive people in the work environment.	5	4	3	2	1	V18
15. I have a positive attitude towards ambitious employees.	5	4	3	2	1	V19
16. Do you feel threatened by ambitious employees.	5	4	3	2	1	V20
17. Are you comfortable in the presence of an overly ambitious employee.	5	4	3	2	1	V21
18. Would you like to be led by an ambitious employee.	5	4	3	2	1	V22
19. Are you jealous of ambitious employees.	5	4	3	2	1	V23
20. Do you desire qualities of ambitious employees.	5	4	3	2	1	V24
21. Do you feel employees should work within the confines of a job description.	5	4	3	2	1	V25
22. Will you promote an ambitious junior employee to management level.	5	4	3	2	1	V26
23. Subordinates should be involved in the decision making process	5	4	3	2	1	V27
24. Would you mentor an employee for a managerial role.	5	4	3	2	1	V28
25. Do you think ambitious employees are role models to other colleagues.	5	4	3	2	1	V29

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

APPENDIX C
ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER



RESEARCH OFFICE (GOVAN MBEKI CENTRE)
WESTVILLE CAMPUS
TELEPHONE NO.: 031 – 2803587
EMAIL : ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

3 JULY 2009

MR. A SEWRAJ (9704735)
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

Dear Mr. Sewraj

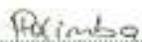
ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPROVAL NUMBER: HSS/0408/09M

I wish to confirm that ethical clearance has been granted for the following project:

"Managerial response to ambitious employees"

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years

Yours faithfully


.....
MS. PHUMELELE XIMBA
ADMINISTRATOR
HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES ETHICS COMMITTEE

cc. Supervisor (Mr. R Challenor)
cc. Mrs. C Haddon

