

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP

**The role of middle managers in the implementation of growth strategy at a South African
Company**

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I, Samkeliso T Ngozo, declare that:

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Acknowledgments

I thank the Lord Almighty for the gift of living and for my taking a breath every second; I have been able to fulfil the requirements of this degree through Him.

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To the middle management and the top management of a pulp and paper manufacturing company, thanks again for the understanding. I hope the study offers some insight and help going forward to improve the organization's strategy implementation.

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Abstract

The most critical phase of the strategic-management process in any organization is implementing strategy, which involves putting strategy into action. This qualitative exploratory study aimed to investigate the role of middle managers in implementing a growth strategy at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa. Participants in this study were middle managers who had hands-on experience between 2018 and 2020 in implementing a growth strategy. Fifteen (15) middle managers were selected from a population of sixty (60), using stratified purposive sampling. Data were collected using semi-structured, individual, and in-depth interviews.

This study found that middle managers played the roles of sense-making and sense-giving, interpersonal, informational, and decisional roles, enablers of crucial business processes, enablers of human resources and managing multi-disciplinary teams, and they were involved in strategy formulation. Middle managers contributed toward strategy implementation by performing the planning, organizing, leadership, and controlling activities. The top management team supported these managers during the strategy implementation through the availability of resources. However, they did not have sufficient empowerment and autonomy in decision-making. The study found that most of the middle managers at the pulp and paper manufacturing company were not coached in contributing towards strategy implementation.

Empowerment of the middle managers is vital as it reduces the top management team's micromanagement. The study highlights that middle management requires decision-making autonomy and rights to align employees with strategy implementation activities within an organization. This study highlights recommendations for strategy execution and future research areas.

Keywords: Strategy; roles; implementation; coaching; middle management

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to provide a background and introduction to the entire study on the role of middle managers in the implementation of growth strategy at a South African Company.

Strategy implementation is the process of transforming into results what is written or communicated as a strategy policy. In this context, strategy implementation refers to an organization's actions in achieving its goals, maintaining profitability, and competing effectively. Middle managers perform various roles to transform strategy into results.

The current study examines the role of middle managers in implementing a growth strategy at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa. In this chapter, the focus is on the background of the study, the research problem, the research objectives and questions, the research methodology, the study's significance, and the study's delimitations. Finally, the structure of the study chapters is provided before the summary of this chapter.

1.2 Background of the Study

Effective strategy achievement relies upon the execution, collaboration abilities, and aggregate endeavours of all people at various levels of the organization who comprehend the necessary change to accomplish the required outcomes (Enwereji and Uwizeyimana, 2019). The dynamic and convoluted business climate in South Africa has necessitated that organizations understand how to adjust to change, executing new strategies introduced by the steadily changing combative conditions (Enwereji and Uwizeyimana, 2019). Effective strategy execution can assist organizations in competing fruitfully (Ehlers and Lazenby, 2010).

Rawlins (2008) indicated that various organizations do not accomplish what they want because they cannot integrate the strategy into their business process. Around 70% of strategy executions fail (Rawlins, 2008). Johansson and Svensson (2017) noted that prior studies on strategy execution have zeroed in on top management's contribution to the execution

methodology (Shimizu, 2016). DeCarlo (2021) expressed that middle managers' job in strategy implementation represents the success of strategy execution. For a corporate strategy to have a natural and beneficial outcome, it should be appropriately executed. It should permeate the organization's personnel and way of life (DeCarlo, 2021). Top management bears an outstanding obligation regarding achievement; however, they cannot carry out plans independently. They need the dynamic help of middle management. Middle management is the best connection between leaders and their personnel (Enwereji and Uwizeyimana, 2019). Should an organization successfully connect with middle managers, impart the arrangement, guarantee their agreement, and gain their buy-in, the more confidence there will be in the success of the strategy execution (DeCarlo, 2021).

As indicated by Shimizu (2016, cited in Johansson and Svensson, 2017), past examinations of strategy execution zeroed in on top management contributions and their impact on technique execution (Judge and Stahl, 1995; Lohrke *et al.*, 2004; Bourgeois and Brodwin, 1984; Shimizu, 2016). Huy (2001) noted that middle management often failed at proper strategy execution. Middle leaders contribute much to implementing the strategy, yet are regularly undervalued by top administration (Alamsjah, 2011; Kim *et al.*, 2019). Nevertheless, middle management plays a significant role in strategy implementation (Thomas and Ambrosini, 2015). This study emphasizes middle management and its role in strategy implementation.

1.3 History, Business, and Growth Strategy at a Pulp and Paper Manufacturing Company

“The pulp and paper company was established on the 17th of December 1936. The company started manufacturing paper from straw in its novel mill east of Johannesburg. Today, it is a global diversified woodfibre company focused on providing dissolving pulp, packaging and speciality papers, graphic papers, biomaterials and biochemicals to customers in more than 150 countries. The pulp and paper manufacturing organization is the world leader in producing dissolving pulp to manufacture viscose staple fibre (VSF)” (Sappi, 2020).

1.3.1 Company values

“The company started manufacturing paper from straw in its novel mill east of Johannesburg. Today, it is a global diversified woodfibre company focused on providing dissolving pulp,

packaging and specialty papers, graphic papers, as well as biomaterials and biochemicals to customers in more than 150 countries. The pulp and paper manufacturing organization is the world leader in producing dissolving pulp to manufacture viscose staple fiber (VSF)” (Sappi, 2020).

1.3.2 Company vision

“The strategic vision for the pulp and paper manufacturing company is to grow through differentiation. Their transformation journey is not about radical change. It has been and continues to be, an intentional evolution of the business—changing to meet market needs and take advantage of growth opportunities” (Sappi, 2020).

1.3.3 Company mission

“Through the power of a unified culture — the pulp and paper company is committed to collaborating and partnering with stakeholders — it aims to be a trusted and sustainable organization with an exciting future in woodfibre and products in adjacent fields” (Sappi, 2020).

1.3.4 Company sales and revenue

“The pulp and paper manufacturing company has an estimated US\$5,296 million annual revenue, US \$526 million operating income, and an estimated US \$338 million net income. The organization has a total of 12,800 employees, and the revenue per employee is estimated at US\$413,750” (Sappi, 2020).

1.3.5 Company sales and products and customer base

“The pulp and paper manufacturing company products include raw material offerings (such as dissolving pulp (DP), wood pulp, and biomaterials) and end-use products (packaging and specialties papers, graphic papers, casting and release papers, and forestry products). The pulp and paper manufacturing company is one of the world’s largest dissolving pulp (DP) manufacturers and exports almost all of the 1 055 000tons produced by two manufacturing mills. One manufacturing mill is based in Durban, South Africa, and one is based inland.

Dissolving pulp (DP) is a highly purified form of cellulose extracted from sustainably grown and responsibly managed trees using unique cellulose chemistry technology. Converters primarily use dissolving pulp (DP) to create viscose fiber for fashionable clothing, textiles, and other consumer products. The South African paper business produces 690 000 tons of Kraft

liner board, corrugating medium, newsprint, office paper, and tissue paper which are primarily sold regionally” (Sappi, 2020).

“The majority of dissolving pulp (DP) is consumed in the textile industry where the pulp is converted through the value chain to yarn and ultimately textiles providing soft, breathable fabrics which hold color well and drape beautifully. Dissolving pulp is also used for many household, industrial, and pharmaceutical applications including for tablets, acetates, washing sponges, and non-wovens” (Sappi, 2020).

1.4 Company Growth Strategy between 2018 and 2020

“The pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa, initiated a growth strategy to grow into a profitable, cash-generative, diversified wood fibre organization focused on dissolving pulp (DP) paper and products in adjacent fields.

The critical elements of the growth strategy included *growth through moderate investments accelerated growth in adjacent businesses. The growth strategy meant growing dissolving pulp (DP) capacity to match market demand and continue expanding and developing the packaging and specialty papers in all regions, targeting 25% of group EBITDA by 2020.*” (Sappi, 2020)

“Part of strategic growth was also for the completion of the 110,000 ton Durban manufacturing plant expansion project and the expansion of the packaging and specialty papers volumes” (Sappi, 2020).

1.4.1 Competition and customers locally and internationally

“The top 10 competitors in Sappi Limited's competitive set are Fortress Global Enterprises Inc. Lenzing (Lenzing is headquartered in Lenzing, Other, and was founded in 1892.), Rayonier (Rayonier's headquarters is in Jacksonville, Florida, and was founded in 1926.), Ahlstrom-Munksjo, Domtar, Borregaard, WestRock, Verso, Mondi, Stora Enso and LINTEC. Together they have raised over 7.3B between their estimated 136.0K employees. Sappi Limited has 12,492 employees and is ranked 4th among its top 10 competitors. The top 10 competitors average 13,497” (Anon., 2022).

1.5 Problem Statement

A pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa initiated a growth strategy known as Vision 2020 (Sappi, 2020). This growth strategy aimed to develop the business, while upholding financial health, driving functional excellence and building trust. Growing the company entailed driving production and sales growth. Sustaining financial health meant increasing earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization (EBITDA), and margin; driving operational excellence meant driving efficiencies and maintaining machine efficiency (Sappi, 2021). Lastly, building trust entailed developing and growing the pulp and paper organization's talent. According to the company CEO, for the successful execution of the plan of action, the middle managers (MM) are central to implementation of the strategy. The organization's MM is hypercritical of achieving the corporate growth strategy (Sappi, 2020).

As McKinney et al. (2021) indicated, organizations have become more global and streamlined. Supervisors at all levels are being approached to accomplish more with fewer resources while adapting to vulnerability and a quick, consistent speed of progress. Additionally, boomers, Gen Xers, Gen Yers, and a rising number of contract agreement and part-time personnel present differing assumptions (Thomas and Ambrosini, 2015). The understanding among employees and organizations, such as the assumptions regarding rewards, acknowledgement, sum, nature of work, and commitment, is also evolving. Middle management is specifically asked to re-evaluate their views on leadership. For some middle managers, their job no longer involves making requests to subordinates (Thomas and Ambrosini, 2015).

The best middle managers should depend on solid skills and the capacity to direct an intricate structure of assets to gain the desired outcome in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) context. Middle management assumes a vital role within an organization to accomplish its essential objectives (Enwereji and Uwizeyimana, 2019). In many organizations, programme leaders, advertising supervisors, and design leaders are the mid-level managers who must accomplish more with fewer assets. MMs are considered answerable for achieving a task, regardless of whether they have no direct, authoritative power. Middle managers are expected to motivate employees, often changing channels, and spurring complex organizations of worldwide assets to gain the desired outcomes (McKinney *et al.*, 2021).

While past investigations featured senior management's input in strategy direction, middle management's significance in executing strategy choices is often misunderstood (Judge and Stahl, 1995; Wooldridge, Schmid, and Floyd, 2008). Past investigations have reflected that middle management is unimportant, even destructive (Huy 2001), not answerable for unsuccessful strategy execution (Floyd and Woolridge, 1992, cited in Johansson and Svensson, 2017). Current literature, however, comments that middle supervisors are esteemed for their strategy execution (Thomas and Ambrosini, 2015, cited in Johansson and Svensson, 2017).

The current challenge of dealing with strategy execution neglects to convey a good business intersection point. Failure to gain inclusive support from all key internal and external stakeholders is a huge challenge. For example, a senior organization's inability to correctly translate the set-up methodology into action has resulted in a useful technique's non-existence and practically zero execution plan (Kim *et al.*, 2019). Here lies the significance of middle management (Ahearne, Lam, and Kraus, 2014). Middle managers know how to accomplish objectives, motivate the workforce, and satisfy misconceptions and disharmony in executing process changes and strategic objectives (Johansson and Svensson, 2017).

Shimizu (2016, cited in Johansson and Svensson, 2017) stated that a review of one thousand different corporations showed that 60% of employees accept that their enterprise is weak at executing strategy, and just 37% have a clear understanding of their vital strategic objectives (Johansson and Svensson, 2017). More importantly, Kaplan and Norton (2005) put forward that 95% of the establishment's employees do not know about their enterprise's strategy policy, which implies a gap between strategy development and execution. There is a gap between the strategy respected by the senior organization leaders and the discernment of such by low-level workers. This is known as the execution gap (Floyd and Woolridge, 1992).

The literature on strategy execution is inadequate (Thomas and Ambrosini, 2015). Gaps in the exploration studies (Thorpe and Morgan, 2007; Judge and Stahl, 1995; Johansson and Svensson, 2017) indicate that middle management is underused (Thorpe and Morgan, 2007; Huy, 2001).

Considering the new literature recommending that middle management be given recognition in strategy-executing techniques, the researcher is examining this proposal. The contextual analysis will be in a pulp and paper company in Durban, South Africa.

Given the above views on middle managers and gaps in existing studies, there is a need for more scholarly research focusing on the role of middle managers in implementing strategy. At

the pulp and paper organization focused on, situated in Durban, South Africa, no study has been conducted since their implementing of a growth strategy between 2018-2020.

1.6 Aim and Research Objectives

The qualitative exploratory report aims to explore the role of middle managers in carrying out a growth strategy between 2018 and 2020 at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa. This exploratory study has the following research objectives to explore the role of the middle managers in implementing growth strategy between 2018-2020 at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa.

The study aims:

- to understand the role of middle managers in the implementation of a business growth strategy between 2018 and 2020 at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa
- to explore how middle managers contributed to the successful implementation of a business growth strategy between 2018 and 2020 at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa
- to evaluate how middle managers were supported in business growth strategy implementation between 2018 and 2020 at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa
- to examine how middle managers can be coached to enable them to contribute to the successful implementation of strategic growth goals at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa.

1.7 Research Questions

With the identified research objectives, the following are the research questions:

- Between 2018 and 2020, what was the role played by middle managers in the implementation of business growth strategy at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa?
- Between 2018 and 2020, how did middle managers contribute to the successful implementation of a business growth strategy at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa?
- Between 2018 and 2020, how were middle managers supported in the process of business growth strategy implementation at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa?
- How can middle managers be coached to enable them to contribute to the successful implementation of growth strategic goals at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa?

1.8 Significance/Contribution of the Study

This exploratory study addresses top management, middle managers, and scholars of strategy implementation. The study has revealed the challenges that middle management may encounter in their strategy implementation, and how such challenges may be addressed in the future for the strategy to be successful. The study has reiterated the critical roles middle managers play in translating strategy from concepts into action and results within an organization. In this way, the study will make middle managers more aware of their impact on the strategy implementation process. The study may therefore help middle managers and companies to work on their strategies. This study shows the need to focus on top managers in understanding strategy and the role and micro-level activities of middle managers and others responsible for strategy implementation within an organization.

1.9 Justification for the Study

The subjective methodology of this report is to gain comprehension of the role of middle management capacities in carrying out strategic growth plans of action within a pulp and paper organization. The study offers a perspective on the middle management's job in strategy execution and the difficulties confronted during the essential execution process (Saunders and Thornhill, 2015).

1.10 Research Methodology

1.10.1 Research design

In this study, the researcher will use the qualitative exploratory research method to understand the role of middle managers in strategy execution between 2018-2020 at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa. The study will focus on middle managers, who will be selected using purposive sampling. Data will be collected using in-depth individual, semi-structured interviews, to define the roles of middle managers in implementing a growth strategy between 2018-2020 at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa.

The semi-structured interview was carried out by personally meeting participants and probing their responses at the meeting. The data will be collected through face-to-face interviews with middle managers, paying strict adherence to Covid 19 protocols to protect the researcher and participants in this study.

The meetings were directed by utilizing an interview guide, an instrument that can accurately capture participants' perspectives (Saunders and Thornhill, 2015). The study will use thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns within the information concerning the function of middle management in carrying out a growth plan of action at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa. The data will be according to the views of middle management employees at the pulp and paper manufacturing company.

1.10.2. Population

The investigation subjects (participants) were the entire number of subjects; and the sample was a part of the population (Saunders and Thornhill, 2015). The participants of this study are middle managers who applied strategy implementation between 2018 and 2020, or who were at a high-level phase of strategy execution at the time of the investigation. Fifteen (15) middle managers were selected from a population of sixty (60), using stratified purposive sampling. This period was selected because it was expected that the participants involved in executing the strategy had clear memories of their roles. The middle management's job in carrying out the strategy would be easy to clarify. The sample was chosen from various pulp and paper organization divisions in Durban, South Africa.

1.11 Delimitations to the Study

In delimiting the study, it must be borne in mind that this pulp and paper company is a large and international company. However, this qualitative exploratory study focuses only on the company branch in South Africa based in Durban. The company's operations in other countries are not included in this study.

Many stakeholders in the organization of the pulp and paper company were involved in implementing the growth strategy between 2018 and 2020. However, this study has deliberately only focused on middle managers, excluding top managers and lower-level employees. This does not mean that top managers and lower-level employees have nothing to say about the various micro-level activities implemented to implement the strategy. Future researchers may focus on top managers' or lower-level employees' views or include everyone, so as better to understand strategy implementation.

1.12 Outline

This section presents the outline of the report.

Chapter 1: Introduction: Presents the background knowledge of the case research, the concept of strategy implementation, where the study will be directed, the problem statement, objectives, and critical questions of the survey.

Chapter 2: Literature Review: Discusses the literature review linked to this study. The history and meaning of strategy and strategy implementation are described together. The middle management's role in strategy implementation is described. Factors of strategy implementation are related, and critical concepts that are utilised in this study are provided in this chapter.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology: Discusses the methodology (research design, sampling, data collection, data analysis, and ethical imperatives for this research. This chapter outlines the research design and the research methods that are used in the study.

Chapter 4: Findings: Presents the findings of the case study.

Chapter 5: Discussion: Discusses in detail the findings of the case study. The research findings are discussed in this chapter apropos of existing literature and empirical studies.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations: Concludes and makes some recommendations for further studies.

1.13 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter has introduced the context of the study of the role of middle managers in implementation of a growth strategy at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa. The chapter has discussed this study's research problem, objectives, and questions. The significance of this study to management, employees, and the board of the pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa, is discussed in this introductory chapter of the study.

Furthermore, the chapter has also elaborated on the research methodology and delimitation of the study before presenting a summary. The next chapter focuses on the literature that informs the study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviewed the literature on the report topic and the theories of the written report. Literature connected with the study was scrutinized to recognize literature gaps. This chapter outlines the idea of strategy and strategy execution. It starts by reviewing strategy execution, thereafter investigating some explanations and points of view on the procedure. Various approaches to carrying it out within organizations are discussed. Many scholars have put forward intriguing perspectives on strategy: these were presented. The chapter also inspects the elements that influence the effective execution of strategies within associations. The chapter focuses on the coaching of managers.

2.2 The History and Meaning of Strategy

Horwath (2020) defines strategy as “the need for people to defeat their enemies”. The Chinese wrote the first epistles on strategy between 400 and 200 B.C. Sun Tzu’s *The Art of War*, authored in 400 B.C., has been regarded as the most excellent work on military strategy, even by those who have come millennia later (Horwath, 2020).

According to Lewa and Narikae (2017), strategy can be attributed to military leaders in the Greek army throughout prehistoric days. The Latin word ‘strategos’ (plural strategoi), taken from the Greek, denotes ‘actively utilizing your assets to defeat the opponent in the battle’. The term strategy has changed in both social and diplomatic contexts over the years. When Socrates, the great Greek thinker, consoled Nichomachides, a well-known military veteran, after he lost the vote to opposition wealthy merchant Antisthenes, the concept of corporate strategy was born (Lewa and Narikae, 2017). Socrates combined the tactics of a military leader and an entrepreneur, implying that in all these cases, one must determine how to use one’s assets to generate an edge over the competing factions.

According to Ansoff (1965), the theory of strategy in business grew in importance and popularity after World War II, when companies started to contend aggressively in the marketplace. Customer expectations were changing at such a rapid pace that enterprises were unable to stay current. Since World War II, organizational administration has taken great strides. According to Gluck, Kaufman, and Walleck (1980), this progression is divided into

five stages. Stage One, which took place mainly in the 1950s, reveals that the strategy focused on essential annual financial management. The focus of Stage 2 of the strategy growth, noted from the 1960s, was mainly on ‘forecast-based planning’. Businesses primarily focused on long-term preparation, culminating in multi-year forecasts. Around this period, the strategic planning process became systematically established (Gluck, Kaufman, and Walleck 1980).

In the 1970s, the third stage was characterized more broadly, with a growing emphasis on marketplace and rivalry pressures. As a result, planning around such a period considered environmental scanning and detailed market research, which inspired sound internal budgeting to achieve a competitive advantage (Gluck *et al.*, 1980). The corporation concentrated on an organizational system of values centred on executives’ adherence to the goal during the final stage, which has become recognized as strategic management. Unlike subsequent steps, wherein specialists were contracted to support strategic planning, managers and supervisors became deeply engaged in the strategy process.

The final stage, which took place in the 1990s, revealed that shifting beyond ‘strategic planning to strategic management’ did not produce the desired outcome. A novel approach to strategy was to be considered, prompted by the unpredictability imposed on technologies, economic trends, and other factors. A leader who depended on the company’s existing frames, such as guidelines and policies, internal systems, and capabilities, destroyed the company. A new leader was required, albeit with more intellectual function and strategic insight. This was coined “strategic thinking capacity” (Wilson, 1994; Bonn and Christodolou, 1984).

Following the discussion of strategy’s historical origins, the following section concentrates on the concept of growth strategy and the Ansoff model.

2.3 Growth Strategy

2.3.1 What is Growth strategy?

According to Wu (2022), a growth strategy is a collection of business actions that aim to maximize a company’s value within a specific time frame (Wu, 2022). According to Absanto

(2013), a growth strategy boosts sales, assets, net profits, and the opportunity of using the experience curve to lower the cost of goods sold per unit, resulting in higher profits (Absanto, 2013). Institute (2022) states that growth strategy is realized through the elementary growth approaches of intensive expansion, integration (horizontal and vertical integration), diversification, and international operations (Institute, 2022).

2.3.2 Why is growth strategy important?

Ilhan (2015) asserts that several factors drive business growth. The main benefit of business expansion is that it gives organizations a competitive edge over rivals and builds their capacity for overcoming adversity. Businesses can better understand their environment by focusing on growth (İlhan, 2015). KPMG (2022) asserts that, for companies to remain competitive in their market, they must adopt appropriate and effective growth strategies due to the rapid technological disruptions, regulatory-driven changes, increasing customer expectations, and sector convergence (KPMG, 2022). According to Institute (2022), a corporation can achieve greater expansion in three ways: market penetration, market development, and product development, as proposed in Ansoff's model (Institute, 2022).

2.3.3 Ansoff's Product-Market Expansion Grid

Based on product and market requirements, Ansoff categorizes intensive growth tactics into four groups. These include strategies for market entry, market expansion, product development, and diversification (Timothy, Parpairis, MacDonald, & Tosun, 2013, cited in Ilhan, 2015). An intense expansion strategy is a viable method for organizations to adopt when they have not been able to take advantage of market prospects with their current products. This is a good strategy for companies with a small market share (Akgöbek, 2011, p. 15, cited in Ilhan, 2015) (İlhan, 2015).

The product/market grid first introduced by Igor Ansoff (1968), seen in Figure 2.1, has proven to be extremely helpful in identifying growth prospects, according to Absanto (2013). This grid best represents the several intensification choices available to a firm. The two dimensions of the product/market grid are products and markets. Four growth techniques result from

combining these two dimensions. Ansoff's Grid suggests three different methods for obtaining development via the intensification approach (Absanto, 2013).

	Existing Product	New Product
Existing Market	Market Penetration	Product Development
New Market	Market Development	Diversification

Figure 2.1 The Ansoff Grid

Source: (Kotler, 1999, cited in Absanto, 2013 p.3)

According to Absanto (2013), growth strategies have been essential to business growth, development, stability, and ultimate success. Organizations have expanded their market shares, created new markets, and created unique products and services thanks to these great strategies. Business strategists employ various growth methods: four result either from changes in the product, or the market, or both (Absanto, 2013).

2.3.4 Market penetration (existing products/existing markets)

Penetrating the market using existing products is referred to as market penetration (Mucuk, 2010, p. 44, cited in İlhan, 2015). Market penetration is a market expansion strategy that seeks to increase market share with products in stock (İlhan, 2015).

Market penetration occurs when a business enters or penetrates a market with its current products. The best method of accomplishing such is to take advantage of the clients of your rivals (part of their market share). Other strategies include luring non-users of your product or persuading current customers to use your product more frequently (e.g., through advertising) (Absanto, 2013).

According to Institute (2022), market penetration entails attaining growth via current products and markets. A company can do this when:

- it motivates the company's current customers to make more frequent and more diverse purchases of its product. As part of its market penetration strategy, the company aims

to convert light to regular and frequent heavy users of its goods and services. Typical programmes utilized for this aim include volume discounts, bonus cards, price promotions, aggressive advertising, ongoing exposure, more extensive distribution, and transparent customer retention through effective customer relationship management (Institute, 2022).

- it is increasing its efforts to win over clients from rival businesses. The company must create considerable competitive advantages for this to happen. More vigorous promotion, better distribution, high-quality products, appealing prices, and appealing product designs can help a business outperform its rivals. All of these measures call for significant investment, which only businesses with ample resources can make. Less wealthy companies might look for niche markets. For instance, many small firms thrive by identifying and exploiting lucrative market niches. They can expand by learning highly specialized and distinctive talents to serve a select group of consumers with particular needs (Institute, 2022).
- it is targeting fresh clients in existing areas. In this endeavour, price reductions, improved customer service, publicity, and other strategies may be helpful (Institute, 2022).

According to Institute (2022), growth in a market will come from simply maintaining market share. If competitors reach capacity limits, there may be opportunities to grow market share. The company continues to operate in the same markets, selling the same products while pursuing a market-penetration strategy. By expanding its market share with its current offerings, growth is accomplished. Market penetration has limits: if a company wants to keep growing after the market has reached saturation, a different strategy must be employed. This strategy inevitably involves taking clients away from rivals unless there is inherent growth in its present market. Since it uses a great deal of the company's already-existing assets and skills, the market penetration approach is the least dangerous. This technique also has the benefit of not requiring additional funding for the development of new items (Institute, 2022).

2.3.5 Market development (existing products/new market)

The goal of the market development strategy is to increase sales by bringing current products into new markets. Pursuing additional market segments or geographical areas is one possibility for market development. If the firm's fundamental strengths are more closely tied to the

specific product than its experience with a particular market segment; or if new markets have higher growth prospects than the present ones, developing new markets for the product may be wise. A market development plan often carries greater risk than a market-penetration approach because the company is entering a new market. Managers typically lack an in-depth understanding of emerging countries, leading to faulty market assessments and poor marketing judgments. Using the market-development strategy, a company aims to boost sales by introducing its goods to new markets. The two approaches to putting a market-development strategy into action are: (i) expanding the firm's current product into new geographies; and (ii) diversification. The first strategy is accomplished in two ways: (a) by expanding its sales force, hiring additional channel partners, sales agents, or manufacturing representatives, and franchising its business; or (b) by luring new market segments. Such can be accomplished by making slight changes to the current items that appeal to new segments (Institute, 2022)

This plan tries to create new market niches for the company's current products (Timothy, Parpairis, MacDonald, & Tosun, 2013, p. 8). A market-development strategy is a method of introducing new goods to niche markets. To put it another way, market development identifies new applications for products, which is a valuable method of market penetration (Koçolu, 2012, p. 269) (İlhan, 2015).

A typical strategy is for a company to create a new market for its current goods and services. The latest market could be geographical (international export, for example) or an undiscovered area of the current market. It is even feasible to create a new market for existing products by changing their packaging or broadening their distribution options. In any case, a market development growth strategy necessitates an in-depth understanding of the competitive landscape; and the capacity to spot market inefficiencies that can be used to a company's benefit. If the company has inadequate marketing capabilities, hiring a qualified marketing expert will be necessary for expansion into the new market (Absanto, 2013).

2.3.6 Product development (new products/existing market)

Product development expands a business by creating fresh or enhanced offerings for its existing markets. The company keeps operating within its current market while creating new items specifically for these customers. If the new products increase sales and market share, growth

will result. This technique has a good chance of being successful with minimal brand loyalty and short product life cycles (Institute, 2022).

A product development plan may still be helpful if a company's capabilities are tied to its unique consumers rather than to the product itself. In this circumstance, the company can make the most of its advantages by creating a new product aimed at its current clientele. Although the company works in well-known markets, product development strategy entails more significant risk than simply expanding market share because new product development is typically accompanied by inherent risks (Institute, 2022).

The product-development approach involves developing and altering the products already on hand to become more desirable, boosting market activity (Imşek Elik, 2011, p. 68). This growth strategy uses well-known trademarks and attempts to increase product lifespan (Koçolu, 2012, p. 270). It enables business growth by creating new products for already-existing markets (İlhan, 2015).

The exact opposite of a market-development plan is a growth strategy centred on product development. Instead of entering a new market with its current products, the company will try to introduce a new product in a market it is currently familiar with. Because they are already aware of the current market dynamics, business owners are more at ease working in this situation. A product-development strategy, however, can be just as tricky as a market-development strategy because it frequently calls for the organization to acquire new skills and to continuously modify the products until they are successful in the market Kotler (2000) (Absanto, 2013).

2.3.7 Diversification (new products/new market)

This approach seeks to create new items and introduce them to fresh markets (Timothy, Parpairis, MacDonald, & Tosun, 2013, p. 8). In other words, diversification is a strategy for breaking into new markets with fresh goods. The diversification plan, however, differs slightly from the other three strategies in that it calls for new establishments, current technology, and talents, rather than for employing readily available stocks (Koçolu, 2012, p. 270) (İlhan, 2015).

There are several reasons for businesses diversifying. Diversification serves as a survival tactic in some situations. For instance, it makes sense to think about diversity if the company

generates most of its revenues at a specific season of the year. Expanding the company's array of goods or services can guarantee a consistent revenue stream from January through to December. The company can either sell more products to its current clients or expand into new markets by increasing its variety of goods and services. There are other solid reasons for diversification: this may significantly enhance the company's growth potential. The primary motivation is to expand a brand's reputation into new areas to grow the business beyond one's wildest dreams (Absanto, 2013).

2.3.8 Diversification strategy

By acquiring new enterprises, the diversification strategy hopes to enter new markets, and thereby, new industries (Karaevli, 2008, p. 87). Businesses can take advantage of changes in new markets, generating yields that are above average thanks to such changes (Ülgen Mirza, 2004, p. 224). When companies discover new market potential, they exploit the situation to their benefit. Conglomerate and concentric diversification are the two ways in which diversification takes place (İlhan, 2015).

Conglomerate diversification

Businesses engage in conglomerate diversification when they invest in markets and technologically distinct geographic regions. (2012) Koçolu, p. 271. Such occurs in specific marketplaces, and features unique and innovative products. When a company's existing industry has low sales and profit rates, a conglomerate diversification plan gives them an advantage (Wheelen & Hunger, 2012, p. 215) (İlhan, 2015).

A conglomerate is a grouping of two or more firms, each of which is engaged in a distinct industry, into a single corporate structure, typically consisting of a parent company and multiple subsidiaries. Often, a conglomerate is a business with various industries. Conglomerates frequently have a significant global presence. Conversely, conglomerates are created for diversification purposes rather than or manipulating paper ROI. Companies with this mindset would only open new branches or undertake acquisitions in other industries if they thought doing so would boost their profitability or stability (Absanto, 2013).

Businesses embrace aggregation because it decreases costs, enhances added value, and eliminates risks and issues associated with delivering feedstock (Ncer, 2012, p. 410) (İlhan, 2015).

Concentric diversification

This strategy aims to concentrate business efforts on a single industry. In this approach, a company either focuses on existing markets with technological products, or new markets with specialised products (Dinçer, 2007, p. 208) (İlhan, 2015). Concentric diversification is the addition of complementary items or divisions to a firm. The company's business divisions nonetheless share a common thread that connects them somehow. Similar technology, consumer usage, distribution, management abilities, or product resemblance may be connecting factors. Companies that want to benefit from their competitive position strategies should diversify this way (Absanto, 2013).

2.3.9 Conclusion on growth strategies

Businesses are in fierce competition because of the rising number of companies and the ongoing shifts in consumer sentiment. The pressure of competition, which serves as an incentive for growth, makes inorganic growth a strategic alternative for organizations lacking sufficient resources. To adapt and expand, businesses may need to enhance, preserve, or abandon their current system. Therefore, making the decision to grow, thereafter selecting the appropriate growth strategy, are crucial company processes (İlhan, 2015).

To expand and make the best strategic decisions, a corporation must carefully consider external influences, internal factors, customer expectations, and external opponents. As a result, for businesses to develop, they must be able to adapt to their changing environment. For that reason, profit maximization occurs in the short-term objectives of a corporation. Companies must choose a strategy that has a broad impact. Businesses should be able to adjust to local and global technological developments, selecting an appropriate strategy (İlhan, 2015).

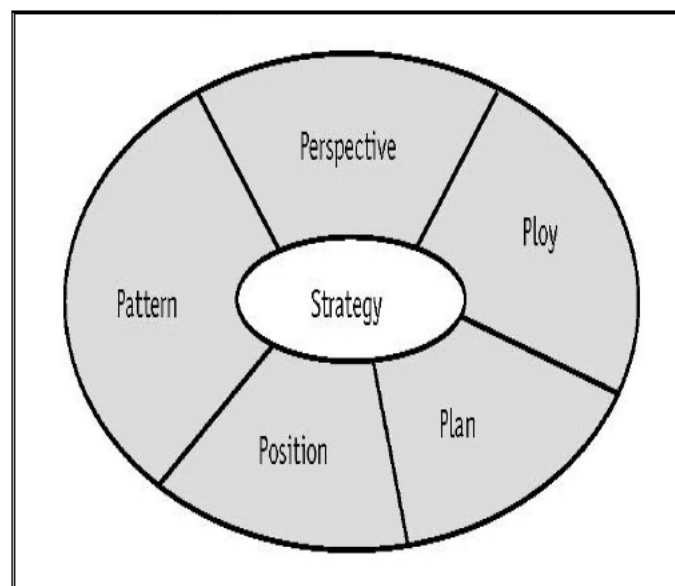
Following the discussion of growth strategy definitions, the following section concentrates on the concept of strategy framework.

2.4 Mintzberg 5 P's of strategy framework

Mintzberg (1978) proposed the 5 P's of strategy that help comprehend the phenomenon of strategy in the study. In the expressions of Mintzberg (1987), strategy is characterized in various ways as:

1. "Pattern
2. Plan
3. Position
4. Ploy
5. Perspective"

These definitions are demonstrated in Figure 2.2 and expounded further.



Source: (Louw and Venter, 2011, cited in Golden Pryor, 2019, p. 8)

Figure 2.2: The 5 P's of strategy (Louw and Venter, 2011)

Strategy as a perspective alludes to the hierarchical approach to getting things done, the essential manner by which personnel perceive the macrocosm, distinguishing their association from inside, and perceiving themselves as inserted into or directed by way of life and philosophy (Louw and Venter, 2011). It is vital that, while a strategy might mean inventive

obliteration of the adversary's benefit in the business world, a strategy might also mean the utilization of assets and capacities to accomplish wanted results.

Strategy as an arrangement has offered a general, cognizant heading and planned game plan into the future on the most proficient method to manage what is going on (Mintzberg, 1987). Strategy as an arrangement hints at a theoretical and future direction in addressing what is happening – in other words, a future actuality.

Thirdly, strategy as a ploy alludes to a smaller arrangement (set of facilitated activities to acknowledge the purpose that is essential for the performance) to outsmart rivals. As Mintzberg and Quinn (1996) state, technique as a ploy is explicitly the sole manner of outsmarting a contender.

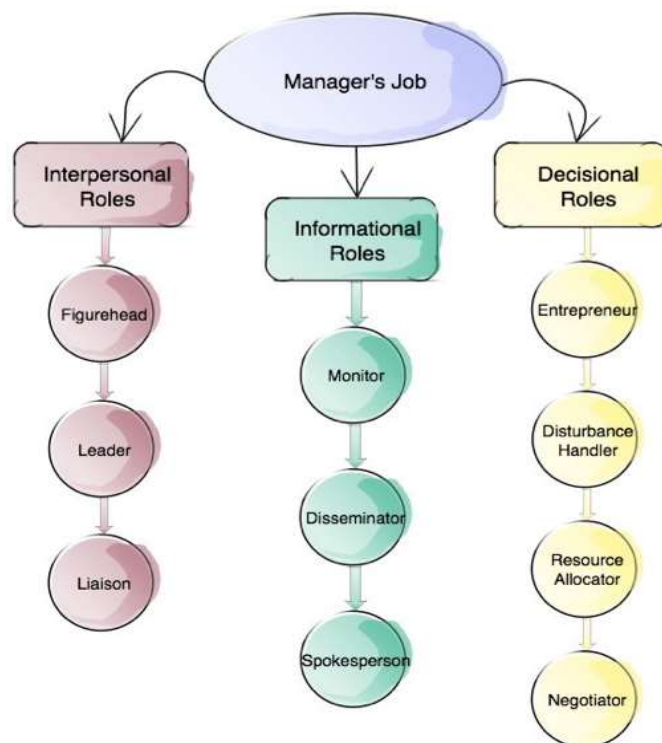
Fourthly, strategy is considered a situation for the organization or association in its current circumstance. In the case of competition, an association makes a situation for itself corresponding to contenders and other outside partners through a designated arrangement. “On the other hand, the position might arise through an example of conduct or result of either a proactive or responsive undertaking to make a fit between the enterprise and the climate” (Mintzberg, 1987).

Fifthly, strategy is considered an example that is clear in developing choices, rather than deliberate, expected results of a pre-imagined arrangement (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985). To be exact, strategy is a reliable example which arises through time from a progression of choices. This way, one needs to recognize the acknowledged standard in a flood of options or practices shown after some time to reach the strategy.

In this specific investigation which assesses the execution and checking of a strategy at a pulp and paper manufacturing company, the perspective on strategy as a design is intriguing. This perspective assists with understanding the example of steady and conflicting choices and conduct obvious in the inward working of the pulp and paper-producing organization from 2018-2020. This study will zero in on strategy as an arrangement. An example of choices and moves made by workers and administrators at the pulp and paper producing organization will be set out.

2.5 Mintzberg Model: Ten Different Roles of a Successful Manager

Professor Henry Mintzberg directed an intensive experiential exploration of management's ordinary exercises through a wide assortment of associations and positions. Mintzberg (1973) prescribed administrators as playing ten different roles isolated into three fundamental classes in light of situational needs, as displayed in Figure 2.3 below (Tawk, 2021).



Source: (Mintzberg, 1973, cited in Tawk 2021, p. 1)

Figure 2.3: Graphical representation of Mintzberg's model (Tawk, 2021).

2.5.1 The manager's different roles as per Mintzberg's model

Mintzberg's administrative hypothesis is established on the possibility that leaders are engaged with ten roles and isolated into three clusters: interpersonal, informational, and decisional. Moreover, Mintzberg (1973) characterizes the working exertion of administrators in every position. The practices of those supervisors are significant elements of their prosperity (Tawk, 2021).

2.5.1.1 Interpersonal cluster

The interpersonal cluster incorporates those functions, in which a director formally assumes the role of an expert representing his association in friendly exercises and occasions. Obligations that include relational jobs may once in a while be standard, including minimal serious correspondence and no significant navigation. Still, they are vital to the smooth working of an association and cannot be disregarded by the supervisor (Mintzberg, 1989).

The subsequent role is initiative. This role is connected with individuals' inspiration and motivation. As pioneers, leaders should mentor, back, and guide their subordinates. Since the individual in question is accountable to an authoritative unit, the supervisor is answerable for the output of individuals of that unit (Makhanya, 2015). Individuals act in such a manner that establishes their position of authority. A portion of those activities include initiative; for instance, the director is typically liable for recruiting and preparing staff in many associations. Each leader should rouse and empower their personnel, in some way or another, aligning their particular necessities with the association's objectives. The impact of the supervisor is most plainly found in the leadership function. Formal power equips the supervisor with incredible expected power; it is the leadership that decides how much power the supervisor can wield (Makhanya, 2015).

The literature concerning management has consistently perceived the leadership function, especially those connected with inspiration, as illuminating and fulfilling for the influential individuals who control their authoritative unit. The leadership function encompasses such behaviour (Mintzberg, 1989). An administrator's last role in the relational group is to be a point of contact and to assemble contacts with all partners. Directors should conduct business-building beyond their association limit (Tawk, 2021). The third relational role of being a point of contact manages the connections that work-movement studies have revealed to be fundamental for a director. A director should be able to link extraneous matters to the enterprise (Tawk, 2021).

2.5.1.2 Informational cluster

The informational cluster incorporates the fundamental roles. In light of these roles, the director should impart information, screen workflow, manage, and disperse the data at all levels (Tawk, 2021). Hence, the role of this group is the following:

(i) Monitoring: directors ought to request both internal and external data apropos of the work environment. This will help them scrutinize their area of expertise from within and from outside points of view, finding accompanying hardships, and combating this quickly.

(ii) Disseminating: managers should designate more tasks to employees when fitting, and pass on important information to their personnel.

(iii) Being a spokesperson: as a leader, one should send data extraneous to the work environment, playing the role of a brand envoy (Tawk, 2021).

2.5.1.3 Decisional cluster

The administrator presumes a significant component in their unit's decision-making structure. The director alone can subject the team to substantial new-sprung game plans as its conventional power. As its functional hub, the decision-maker alone has current information to settle on choices that determine the unit's plan of action (Tawk, 2021). The decisional function includes the following:

(i) Entrepreneur: As a business person, directors ought to energize change and inventiveness by driving the execution of novel thoughts. The director looks to work on the unit, adjusting it to changing conditions in the work climate (Enwereji and Uwizeyimana, 2019). In terms of monitoring, the manager is continually keeping watch for novel thoughts; when a good thought is discerned, the individual starts, with regard to the business visionary function, an improvement project that the person might regulate, or, in all likelihood, designate to a worker (Mintzberg, 1989).

(ii) Disturbance-handler: Leaders are liable for avoiding any interruptions that can forestall accomplishing the required target. The disturbance overseer role shows the leader automatically reacting to strain (Tawk, 2021).

(iii) Resource-allocator: Leaders must appoint and oversee various monetary, innovative, and human-resource exercises. The manager must conclude the allocation of resources in their hierarchical unit. Admittance to the leader comprises openness to the unit's operational hub and leader (Tawk, 2021). The administrator is likewise responsible for planning the unit's design, an example of formal connections that decide how work must be separated and facilitated. Additionally, in their role as asset allocators, the supervisor approves the meaningful choices of the unit before they are carried out. The administrator can guarantee that

choices are interrelated by holding this power; all should go through a solitary mind (Enwereji and Uwizeyimana, 2019). This power supports the direction and a separated system. CEOs face many complex decisions. They need to consider the effect of every choice on outcomes and on the association's methodology. CEOs need to guarantee that their choice will be satisfactory to the people who impact the association, ensuring that assets will not be overstretched (Tawk, 2021). CEOs must be in touch with the various expenses and advantages, and the practicality of the proposition. One standard arrangement in endorsing projects appears to select an individual rather than a proposal. That is, supervisors approve those ventures introduced to them by individuals whose opinions they trust (Mintzberg, 1989).

Investigations of administrative work at all levels show that administrators invest extensive energy in arrangements. Indeed, a supervisor is mindful of significant structures in their area of expertise and association (Tawk, 2021). The exchanges are obligations of the supervisor's work; they should therefore not be evaded. Exchanges are an essential part of the role. The director can continuously submit authoritative assets, and the individual in question has the operational hub data that significant arrangements require (Mintzberg, 1989).

A leader knows when to presume each part independently or when to draw on a blend of functions to advance. The leader's occupation can be defined as presumptuous of a few features connected to his orientation (Mintzberg, 1975). Notwithstanding, Garvin *et al.* (2008) put forward the learning association idea that is well perceived. A leader should play the authoritative position to move individuals and offer them the necessary data to join forces collectively, to participate, and to benefit from one another (Tawk, 2021).

Supervisors are very at home in their authoritative environment. Nonetheless, they can continuously assist themselves and their workers by embracing favourable modification, preparation, and improvement. As Mintzberg (1975) defined it, the occupation of supervisors is viewed as rudimentary regulation for great administrators; however, adding new abilities and capabilities can continuously enliven a leader to a more significant level. A degree of investigative skills and discernment of individuals aids in enhancing the enterprise's overall performance (Tawk, 2021).

2.6 The Middle Manager

Despite the term middle manager (MM) being grounded in the literature, one would not necessarily designate this title to individuals in associations. Instead, the place of a middle manager alludes to a functional capacity or hierarchal situation. A few conceptualizations of the phrase have been projected. Scholars have portrayed middle managers as functional aides of power (Mills, 1956), or as those caught between the association's method and everyday exercises (Nonaka, 1994) and dealing with a group of originators (Osterman, 2008). Several scholars have based their depiction on real situations in the hierarchical outline, for example, "any supervisor beneath the CEO and one level above line labourers and experts or directors who work in the centre of the authoritative order" (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992).

Ikavalko (2005) portrays MMs as personnel who go about as regular personnel and also as leaders. Floyd and Wooldridge (1992) express that middle managers interface the exercises of upward accompanying gatherings. MMs are liable for, at minimum, sub-practical work processes, yet not for the work processes of the association in total. Admittance to top administration and information on tasks are critical determinants for middle managers. The depiction utilized in this exploration is any administrator beneath the CEO and one level above line labourers and experts; or leaders who work in the centre of the hierarchy (Van Rensburg, Davis, and Venter, 2014). Ehlers and Lazenby (2010, cited in Hlophe 2017), state that procedure execution interprets chosen systems into activities to guarantee that authoritative targets are met. Strategy execution is intended to translate the association's goals into activities (Hlophe, 2017).

2.7 Understanding the Concept of Strategy Implementation

No explicit and coherent definitions of strategy implementation (SI) exist (Noble, 1999; Noble and Mokwa, 1999). Because the two terms strategy and implementation are defined separately, there are many perspectives. There is also the confusion between strategy implementation and strategy execution (Favaro, 2015). Regardless of the various definitions, the most commonly accepted one is Wind and Robertson's description from 1983 (Wind and Robertson, 1983). In this case, strategy implementation is defined as a distinctly expressed strategic plan operationalization. However, this explanation is criticized by researchers who want to include

the term's behavioural, cultural, and social aspects (Frankwick *et al.*, 1994; Workman, 1993). Several alternative definitions have been presented since then (Noble, 1999). Some interpretations can be directly linked to specific areas, for example, to be used in a corporate business context, which is suitable for this study. Miller (2020) adds that strategy implementation is the course of transforming plans into action to reach the desired outcome (Miller, 2020).

Noble (1999) explains the conducting of strategy as an act of control. Implementation is a sequence of interventions in the structure of a business. Controlled systems and specific activities can control performance, resulting in the desired endpoint (Hrebiniak and Joyce, 1984; Reed and Buckley, 1988). Another view of the term sees strategic implementation (SI) as executing a plan, or putting a plan into action (Noble, 1999). Similarly, SI has also been seen as an output linked to a strategic determination when a decision is put into practice (Miller, Wilson, and Hickson, 2004). Team Asana (2021) avers that strategy implementation is the fourth step in the strategic management process, in which strategic plans are set in action (Asana, 2021). However, this point of view fails to include the new nature of an implementation process. Finally, a definition that might be appropriate for our specific case study is Floyd and Woolridge's (1992) view. In this case, SI is considered managerial involvement, in which managerial participation is essential for aligning strategic goals with the organization's daily actions. Miller (2020) maintains that the accomplishment of every organization depends on its capacity to implement decisions and execute key processes proficiently, effectively, and consistently (Miller, 2020).

2.8 The Implementation Process of Strategy

Strategy execution is a convoluted and multifaceted process (Noble, 1999; Beer and Eisenstat, 2000; Atkinson, 2006). The implementation process is often more time-demanding than the strategy formation process, and has equal importance. Researchers have shown that a corporate business cannot succeed without successful implementation. However, most managers and leaders have far more knowledge in the field of strategy formation than in strategic implementation, which is where the strategic plans come to life (Hrebiniak, 2006). Generally, most scholars encourage the implementation of specific steps or interventions (Hrebiniak and Joyce, 1984). They often suggest a controlled strategy breakdown to reach these steps and

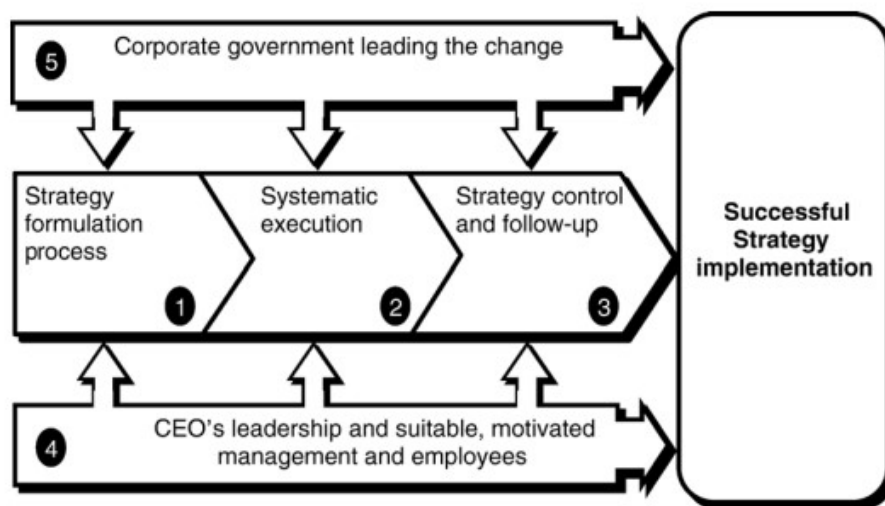
activities (Kotter and Schlesinger, 2008; Wernham, 2007). The following steps or actions are especially crucial during the strategy implementation process.

Initially, strategy articulation or declaration is required. Such action is noted when managers and stakeholders translate a strategy into a clear and tangible format. Strategy articulation is expected to lead to consensual understanding and goals (Enwereji and Uwizeyimana, 2019). A mutual understanding and strategic direction should be communicated to the whole team or to the critical people (Reed and Buckley, 1988). The second step or activity is strategy validation and affirmation. Such is an essential part of the implementation process, generating technical and strategic proof in the whole organization (Wernham, 2007; Reed and Buckley, 1988; Noble, 1999). The validation step must be internally consistent and coherent. Creating awareness of the organization's strategic direction among all employees requires an iterative and continuous process. External justification is also often needed in non-commercial organizations (Kotter and Schlesinger, 2008).

The third primary activity is strategic communication. Strategic communication involves converting the strategic vision into clear and concrete strategic objectives. However, unlike strategic articulation, individual or team-specific goals, guidelines, and metrics should be specified (Cummings and Worley, 2005). Additionally, appropriate ways of communicating the strategic messages are included in this step, always using the proper communication channels for the right aim. Fourth, strategy monitoring is a way for an organization to confirm whether the strategic actions, direction, and goals are being achieved (Garvin *et al.*, 2008). The organization can track each implementation action if the strategic objectives are adequately linked to the right metrics, milestones, and KPIs. This prevents failures, and can encourage success (Reed and Buckley, 1988). The final step is strategy engagement. Floyd and Woolridge (1992) and Amason (1996) emphasize the need to be committed. In the implementation process, managers and key people must be engaged and eager to implement and transmit new strategic decisions or strategies to efficiently reach out (Wooldridge and Floyd, 1990; Amason, 1996). Further research has also shown that commitment can reduce the likelihood of cynicism or counter-effort in the implementation process (Guth and MacMillan, 1986). Another academic states that the individual's responsibility determines the success of the strategic change (Loup and Koller, 2005).

2.9 Five Key Dimensions in Implementation of a Strategy

A toughening and competitive business climate in Latin America led Brenes, Mena, and Molina (2007) to investigate various companies' strategy implementation processes in Central and South America. The study highlighted the critical factors for successful strategy implementation. The study was based on 25 local companies in Latin America, and was therefore exceedingly culturally subjective. The researchers concluded that all five dimensions, as depicted in Figure 2.4: formulation, execution, control and follow, management and human resources, and corporate governance were of great importance in successful strategy implementation (Brenes *et al.*, 2007).



Source: (Brenes, 2007, p. 591)

Figure 2.4: The five dimensions of SI according to Brenes *et al.* (2007).

The initial three dimensions depend on one another, going from strategy development to strategy accomplishment, using systematic feedback loops and control check-ups. The five aspects are further described below (Brenes *et al.*, 2007).

The first dimension is strategy formulation. This dimension includes all parameters and mechanisms which an organization must consider when forming a strategy. Such involves the identification of implementation obstacles and barriers, setting priorities, and a foundation for the vision. Other critical components to consider are the environment, the rivals, and the industry's effect on the implementation process.

Furthermore, this process indicates whether the organization has the right abilities and expertise to implement the strategy (Fahey and Randall, 1994). Second, the strategy execution dimension consists of all activities related to the strategy execution and implementation process. Initially, the company must establish an execution plan or a priority system for each implementation activity. Furthermore, strategic decisions must be delegated to critical individuals responsible for the various implementation activities. This dimension also includes aligning and altering the organizational structure, culture, and business systems to suit the newly formulated strategy. The next dimension is implementation and strategy controls, and follow-ups. This dimension consists of all functions that the organization uses to evaluate, follow up, and control the strategy-implementation process. The various functions will measure improvement, monitoring, and pointing out time failures.

The fifth dimension is the most fitting CEO (or top management (TM) leadership) to motivate other managers and employees. Without the most suitable CEO or top managers able to communicate, lead, listen, or commit to employees, the strategy implementation process will become tricky and complicated. This will similarly be the case if low-level managers and employees oversee the final implementation. Fahey and Randall (1994) found that a good implementation process is characterized by dedicated staff from various levels of the organization and the process. Involvement is also often linked to outstanding leadership rather than complex strategies offered by, for instance, a consultancy organization. Great leadership can create an appropriate environment and conditions for everyone to adopt the approach (Fahey and Randall, 1994).

The final critical dimension is how well the top management can lead change. The corporate administration must be authentically committed to the strategic modification, ultimately leading and advancing every individual level to successfully enforce a plan of action (Brenes *et al.*, 2008). A successful agreement between stockholders, managers and employees on strategic matters increases the potential for financial support from the stockholders. This also simplifies the implementation process and ensures that it is aligned with shared priorities and visions. Pistor, Keinan, and Kleinheisterkamp (2000) show that organizations in which the board of directors employs clear role-setting, analysing and debating on strategic topics, are using systematic control, monitoring, and rewarding directors and employees. Such are the organizations that most often succeed in the strategy-implementation process.

The results reflected that the most successful establishments had the most appropriate, motivated, and involved leaders and management teams. The following section describes Nutt's (1980) three managerial tactics in strategy implementation.

2.10 Strategy-implementation Tactics

In 1980, Paul Nutt announced three tactics used by managers during strategy implementation. The study discovered that the interventional implementation tactic was generally the most effective style to use in the implementation process. However, the success rate depends on the organization's structure, culture, and environment (Nutt, 1980). All tactics are specified and described below, highlighting the essential characteristics of each one.

2.10.1 Intervention-implementation

In the intervention-implementation tactic, a manager is obligated to utilize a strategic initiative. The administrator then suggests the need for modification within the establishment, intensifying the reward of the strategic initiative compared with the current situation. When the need for change has been established, an illustration of the strategy-implementation plan is presented, and input is considered. However, the manager has been responsible throughout the process, with a clear state of control and monitoring. Sometimes committees have been used by the manager for input regarding the process. Finally, the process demonstrates overcoming the challenges before the execution phase begins (Nutt and Backoff, 1992).

2.10.2 Participation-implementation

In contrast to the intervention implementation tactics, in which the managers have full control, the participation-implementation approach delegates total responsibility and decision-making to a group. As with the previous method, a manager has first delegated the responsibility; however, in this case, the manager will further delegate the responsibility and the authority to the group. The group should include key people with a deep understanding of the organizational challenges and capabilities; they should have a vested interest in the outcome (Garvin *et al.*, 2008). This group can include both formal and informal leaders, employees, and managers. When the implementation process has been formed, the key individuals in the implementation team and their manager will implement such together. Employees will then help and support the group in their decisions, and provide additional insights into the suggested implementation.

The most significant element of this tactic is that the group has a veto, and therefore the power to execute their plans (Nutt and Backoff, 1987).

2.10.3 Persuasion-implementation

According to the study, the most commonly used approach is the persuasion-implementation tactic (Nutt and Backoff, 1987). An expert characterizes this tactic as, for example, a consultant or technically knowledgeable employee presenting improvements and initiatives that can be used in the implementation process. Initially, a manager states the strategic direction; thereafter delegating the initiative's responsibilities to the technical or strategic experts. The expert will then prepare a suggested action plan, which will be presented to the manager. It is hoped that this plan will be implemented. After managerial approval of the initiative, well-prepared documentation is required. The documents include the purpose and the benefits of the strategic initiatives. The manager's function and aim are then to involve, commit, and communicate the action to reach the right people (Nutt and Backoff, 1987).

The results indicated that the interventionist implementation approach was the most successful, even if the tactic was used in only 20% of the cases. However, the success had much to do with the high execution and implementation rate, leading to realizing the strategic goals. Furthermore, the findings showed that, if managers created a suitable environment and the right conditions in which strategic initiatives and plans could be understood and realized, the strategic implementation was always productive and successful (Garvin *et al.*, 2008). However, during times of high pressure, the participation implementation approach will become a proper choice. During low pressure, the persuasion implementation approach increased in implementation success rate. In an organization with high time pressure, it is better to delegate the implementation responsibility to a mixed group of people rather than to a single expert (Nutt and Backoff, 1987). The following section will discuss common barriers to and problems in the implementation process by presenting relevant models and theories within the field.

2.11 Strategy Implementation Obstacles and Barriers

It is well known that a good strategy can make a company competitive and successful if it can link leadership, structure, activities, culture, values, and management to the strategy (Beer, 1980). However, from the strategic idea to the actual implementation, many decisions and obstacles must be overcome. Strategy implementations' problematic nature appears in the

statistics; nearly 70% of all corporate strategies fail to be entirely implemented (Khan, 2017). The following section will present the most commonly noted problems, barriers, and obstacles, according to the literature.

2.11.1 The silent killers or barriers to strategy implementation

Based on statistical knowledge, Beer and Eisenstat (2000) started to map companies’ most commonly faced obstacles during strategy implementation to discover the causes of these problems. The main findings from a decade of collected data were six silent killers, which summarized the most mentioned barriers preventing strategy-implementation success and undermining organizational learning. Beer and Eisenstat (2000) showed that only engaged, communicative, and transparent managers could overcome the obstacles by understanding and explaining the leading causes of the barriers. Their six identified “silent killers” can be seen in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: The Six Silent Killers of Strategy Enforcement according to Beer and Eisenstat (2000).

Six silent killers of strategy implementation	
1	Top-down or laissez-faire senior management style.
2	Unclear strategy and conflicting priorities.
3	An ineffective senior management team.
4	Poor vertical communication.
5	Poor coordination across functions, business, or borders.
6	Inadequate down-the-line leadership skills and development.

Source: (Beer, 2000, p.37)

The six silent killers are further described below, even though the paper identifies structure, systems, management, and policies as problematic (Beer and Eisenstat, 2000).

The initial barrier is the top-down or laissez-faire senior direction style. This problem considers top management’s discomfort with conflicts and struggles related to their employees; or top management’s ability to misjudge their team’s potential. The problem leads to decisions

without collaboration or input from functional and technical leaders. Consequently, this will decrease trust, commitment, inefficient strategy implementation, and inadequate organizational performance (Eisenhardt, Kahwajy, and Bourgeois, 2009). The next barrier is an unclear strategy and conflicting priorities. A vague strategic plan with ambiguous or conflicting priorities can result in a strategic battle, lack of coordination, even tearing the whole organization apart. Research has shown that the top-management team must formulate clear and tangible strategic targets with lower-level managers to prevent conflicts and fragmentation (Unsworth, Dmitrieva, and Adriasola, 2013).

The third barrier is an ineffective senior management team. This problem occurs when the top-management team works in isolation, fearing to lose power. They will, therefore, not cooperate with the lower levels; rather, they work independently. The result is an inefficient collaboration, implementation process, and twisted goals. Another typical implementation obstacle is poor vertical communication (Unsworth *et al.*, 2013). The lack of vertical communication occurs when employees and managers do not communicate or avoid expressing their problems and issues. For example, employees feel it is better to keep the ideas and challenges to themselves. Moreover, when managers fear communicating or think it unnecessary to communicate embarrassing or sensitive topics to their staff, this creates unnecessary problems. Poor vertical communication often results from cynicism, unsolved problems, and unproductive implementation (Valentino, 2004).

The final barrier is inadequate down-the-line leadership skills and development, including the problem of having unsupportive and uncommitted top and middle management. If first-line managers (FLM) are not supported with leadership training, education, and coaching, they will not develop the right skills and experiences for strategy implementation (Valentino, 2004). The study showed that successful implementation requires low-level managers to lead teams, coordinating, and communicating strategic initiatives across business sectors, which further gives them self-confidence, leading to a statistically better performance rate (Higgins, 2005).

To conclude, not all organizations can overcome the six silent killers or barriers; a specific environment and condition must be present which encourages a manager successfully to overcome the obstacles and hindrances to strategy implementation. Hrebina's (2006) alternative implementation to combat obstacles will be presented in the next section.

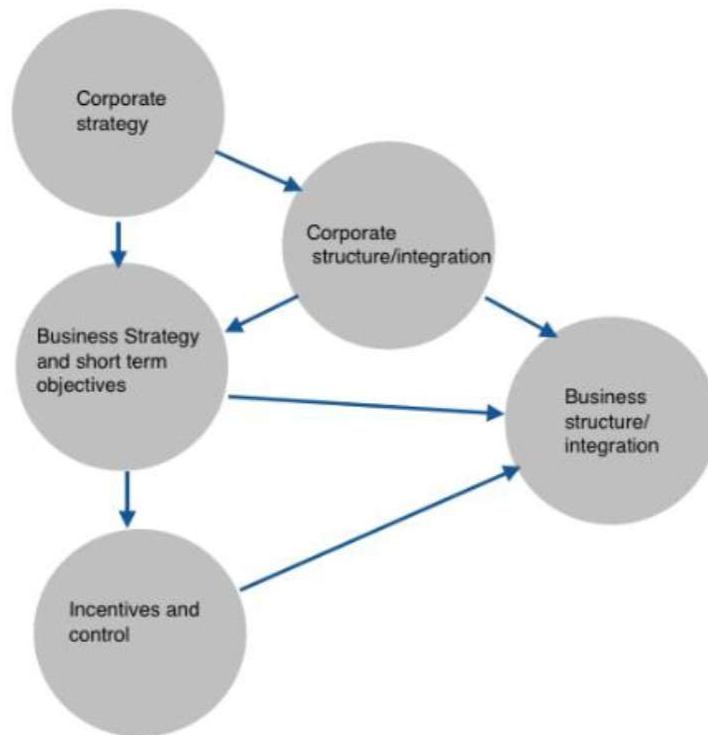
2.12 Obstacles to Effective Strategy Implementation by Lawrence Hrebiniak

The following critical roadblocks or obstacles in the strategy implementation process are cited by Lawrence Hrebiniak in his paper “Obstacles to Effective Strategy Implementation” (2006) as depicted in Figure 4. This empirical research was based on a collaboration with Wharton-Gardner’s and Wharton-Executive Education’s survey studies, collecting data from 443 participants (Hrebiniak, 2006). The involved participants were managers part of any strategy implementation process. Based on two studies, five main strategy-implementation problems could be highlighted. Each one of these is further considered and explained below.

The first roadblock is the inability to oversee modification. Strategy implementation effectiveness can be directly correlated to managing change and resistance. In the Wharton-Gardner and Wharton-Executive Education surveys, this problem was ranked the toughest and the most important problem to solve in implementation. Organizational culture was often mentioned in survey discussions as a critical aspect of change-related problems (Hrebiniak, 2006).

Secondly, poor or vague strategy formation can negatively affect the implementation process. This roadblock emphasizes the importance of a clear and tangible strategy by showing that a clear strategy can drive the process forward and in the right direction. A well-performed execution cannot overcome the limitations of a vague strategy (Hrebiniak, 2006). This roadblock aligns with Beer and Eisenstat’s (2000) second barrier of the unclear strategy described above.

Figure 2.5 shows implementation, key steps, and activities, according to Hrebiniak.



Source: (Hrebiniak, 2006, cited in Oberg, 2018, p.24)

Figure 2.5: The key steps of SI according to Hrebiniak (2006).

Hrebiniak's third identified roadblock is the absence of guidelines in the implementation process. The survey results stressed the need for an execution guide or a plan for implementation of activities and decisions. Without instruction, employees tend to do what they think essential, but which is not necessarily suitable for the organization. The result is often conflict, frustration in decision-making, and splintered opinions and strategic directions (Hrbinak, 2006). Furthermore, the roadblock can be indirectly linked to the above barrier of conflicting priorities. With unclear guidelines and a lack of collaboration, strategic conflicts may arise. As with these implementation obstacles, Hrebiniak's (2006) fourth roadblock describes deplorable or deficient information-sharing and perplexing obligations and accountability. Pitiful communication, information sharing, and unclear responsibilities can negatively affect strategic implementation. Hence, complex strategies often require excellent cooperation and efficient communication (Hrebiniak, 2006).

According to Hrebiniak (2006), all work or efforts against the power structure are considered an implementation failure. Also, the paper suggests that it could be good to use influential

employees in the implementation process, even at the risk of failure (Hrbiniak, 2006). This roadblock contradicts the findings of other authors (Floyd and Woolridge, 1992; Goodman, Rousseau, and Church, 2004). For example, Huy (2001) encourages organizations to balance being interruptive. However, the most critical discovery in the survey results was the need for implementation guidelines. The complex nature of SI does not allow for an unstructured or unplanned process. Moreover, managers cannot expect employees to take the correct strategic actions alone. Therefore, Hrebiniak (2006) created a strategy-implementation guide based on previously mentioned critical roadblocks; the implementation guide is described below.

The primary and first logical step in an implementation process is to create a corporate strategy. The corporate strategy should also concern the whole organization, the management teams, and all employees. Further, a diversification and coordination plan should be included, together with a clearly stated resource and time allocation strategy. The corporate strategy should be a strategic and financial function, including an expansion and investment plan (Hrebiniak, 2006).

The second step in the guiding model is the need for corporate structure. A corporate structure is essential for the implementation of the corporate strategy. An excellent corporate structure helps to create the right balance between decentralization and centralization in strategy implementation (Goodman *et al.*, 2004). Independent business units are more responsive and efficient to internal and external change. However, centralization can allow for potential synergies and economies of scale, reducing functional duplication. The delicate balance of shared resources versus local business control is therefore necessary.

Nevertheless, there is a need for integration and interplay (Goodman *et al.*, 2004). A need for synchronization and collaboration, which can be horizontal or across all business units and hierarchical levels, exists within the corporation. Business units and levels must share all efforts, viewpoints, and strategic decisions to benefit from centralization. Integrating expertise horizontally and between business units is crucial to efficiently achieving the business goals (Hrebiniak, 2006).

According to Hrebiniak (2006) and the survey findings, the various business departments need a business strategy. The business strategy should cover products, technical services, specific plans, internal resources, time allocations, operational work, and capabilities. The business strategy should be concentrated on distinguishing the enterprise from competitors, and competing in the market. Hence, the business strategy is also central to the corporate strategy execution, although these two aspects are interdependent, affecting each other. This can be

explained by visualizing a business unit as a cash cow that can finance other business units with growth potential, yet without existing money (Hrebiniak, 2006).

The next step in the implementation template is the business strategy breakdown. By breaking down the business strategy into short-term goals or metrics, more effective execution with the strategy can be obtained daily. Hrebiniak (2006) asserts that short-term thinking is appropriate if it is attached to long-run, strategic thinking. Nevertheless, it is a tough and complicated challenge for all managers to deal with this problem. Managers must develop measurable short-term objectives logically related to the business and the long-term strategic goals. Managers must decide what is required daily, monthly, and yearly – about rivals, customers, and organizational development (Hrebiniak, 2000).

Moreover, Hrebiniak (2006) continues to describe the structure as equally vital for the business strategy as it is for the corporate strategy. Different business departments confront different challenges and competition, which results in a need for other business structures. The business structure ought to be directed by the business strategy to utilize the strategy successfully. The business structure defines and coordinates the implementation activities with the corporate functions (Feldman and Pentland, 2003). In geographically fragmented or large organizations, the business structure and integration between departments play a more meaningful role in strategy enforcement. Non-functioning coordination and integration between business units can split the coherent culture, goals, and perception. Furthermore, it will become harder to work proactively (Feldman and Pentland, 2003).

The last step in Hrebiniak's (2006) implementation model is incentives and controls. Managerial motivation and rewards for high performance can create commitment, self-confidence, and the right strategic power. Control systems and feedback can, on the other hand, prevent failure and encourage success. Both incentives, control, and feedback aim to drive the implantation process in the right direction (Hrebiniak, 2006).

According to Hrebiniak (2006) and Noble and Mokwa (1999), strategy implementations' most commonly expressed obstacles and problems have been highlighted and explained. The following section will present the implementation success factors and strategic levers.

2.13 Strategy Implementation Success Factors and Levers

This section discusses success factors and levers of strategy implementation, emphasising Crittenden and Crittenden's (2008) and Roney's (2004) articles on the topic.

2.13.1 *Eight levers of strategy implementation*

Crittenden and Crittenden's paper "Building a capable organization: The eight levers of strategy implementation" (2008) is primarily based on research by Bonoma and Crittenden (1988). These researchers suggested that implementation consisted of both managerial skills and structure. Crittenden and Crittenden (2008) were further influenced by Thompson, Gamble, and Strickland's research from 2007, showing how organizational skills could be linked to implementation responsibilities. Crittenden and Crittenden created a list of the eight most crucial levers for prospering strategy implementation based on the two papers. The list divides levers into those on managerial skills and levers with a structural nature. The structural levers are described below and include tools affecting the organization's implementation cycle (Crittenden and Crittenden, 2008).

The first powerful lever is action: A successful implementation requires cross-functional consolidation and cooperation between all organizational levels and business units, whether the strategy implementation involves research and development (R&D), production or merging and acquisition. Essential questions to ask are "who," "what," and "when" the collaboration and integration should occur (Crittenden and Crittenden, 2008).

The second strategy implementation lever is working with continuous improvements. Kulvinskiene and Seimiene (2009) emphasize the importance of innovativeness and having the backing of creative capital in the implementation processes. Organizational learning practices and constant work with strategic improvements have also affected innovativeness. Therefore, continued developments and content improvements are key factors in the implementation process. A suitable support system is required to encourage innovative initiatives and to support the R&D departments (Kulvinskiene and Seimiene, 2009). A strategic support system can provide the strategic implementation process with essential qualitative and quantitative data about cost, inventory, investments, and employees. Furthermore, a functioning decision-support system can help managers make cross-functional decisions, solve problems efficiently, and better understand the interactions between business units (Ross and Weill, 2006).

Establishing strategic and supportive policies can assist the daily implementation activities in conformity with a support system. Rightly formed policies can create coherence between geographically diversified departments and can strengthen formal and top-down leadership. However, policies should be established proactively rather than after an incident (Thompson *et al.*, 2007).

The following four implementation levers describe managerial skills as highly individual and arbitrary. The leadership skills concern managerial perceptions and behavioural activities. The four structural levers above are vital to successfully managing the strategy implementation process (Rawlins, 2008).

The initial administrative ability is collaboration. Heifetz and Laurie's (2009) research revealed an extraordinary leader's key liabilities. Such encompassed bearing, assurance, direction, overseeing clashes, and forming standards. The above-mentioned researchers showed that a vital communicating initiative positively affected the positioning processes. Key administration is viewed as a leader's ability to settle on a staff member who can make choices that could fortify the drawn-out essential achievement of the association, which is the second implementation lever (Heifetz and Laurie, 2009; Collins and Montgomery, 2005). A worthwhile key leader should allot assets on schedule, and in the correct arrangement. Such a leader must comprehend where and when to reserve assets including staff, support, time, abilities, material, and information. Ideal opportunity and asset assignment can make an effective, rapid, and positive execution cycle (Gould and Campbell, 2006).

The third managerial lever is monitoring, as Hrebiniak (2006) and Brenes *et al.* (2008) explained. Better strategic implementation results can be achieved using a monitoring and rewards system. The reward system is usually divided into monetary incentives, including bonuses, salary increases, promotions, and non-monetary incentives, including verbal and written rewards, feedback, assignments, and praise. According to Allio (2005), favourable work should be praised, and poor work should be chastised. The salary payments should reflect the overall corporate or business unit performance, further boosting team-building (Allio, 2005).

Finally, the strategic organizing or cultural shaping lever reflects that a healthy culture correlates to strategic implementation success. Culture is defined as a system of favoured norms, appropriate attitudes, behaviour, and shared values (Chatman and Cha, 2003).

Crittenden and Crittenden's (2008) research points out that all eight levers are not incumbent upon successfully utilizing a plan of action. Instead, the organization should understand each lever and how it might affect the implementation process. Therefore, a corporate strategy can be implemented through just some of the structural levers and some of the managerial skills used as implementation indicators (Crittenden and Crittenden, 2008).

2.14 The Role of Middle Management in Strategy Management

Johnson, Scholes, and Whittington (2008, cited in Kitoo, 2013) express that middle managers are implementers, sensitizers, re-translators, change specialists, facilitators of solid reactions to occasions, and extension experts between top administration and lower-level leaders. As implementers of crucial change, middle managers carry out essential change programmes and approaches to top management. Such implementation guarantees asset arrangement and legitimate administration. Middle managers screen personnel and disclose company strategy to new and lower-grade employees (Kitoo, 2013).

Huy (2001, cited in Johansson and Svensson, 2017) states that strategy correspondence is of fundamental significance. Middle managers are in the best position for speaking with many association divisions, regularly having wide-running social webs (Johansson and Svensson, 2017).

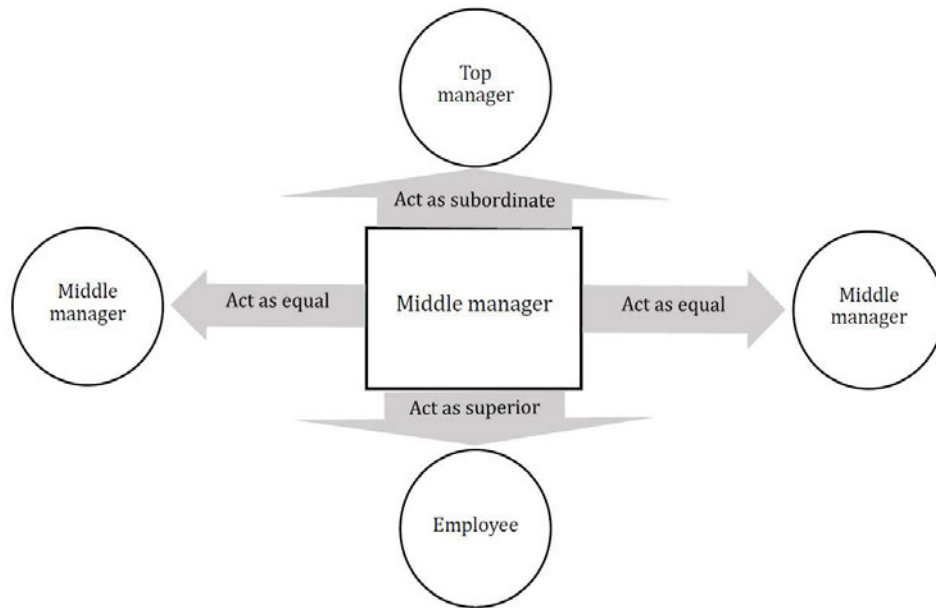
Nzinga *et al.* (2013, cited in Ramgulam, 2015) have recognized six essential functions that middle managers carry out in an association's strategic administration process. The researchers noticed that middle managers go about as mentors for front-line personnel, directing and guiding their activities to line up with the association's essential goals. The extra job that middle managers play is target setters; the performance focuses that personnel should achieve are elaborated in line with the strategy (Osterman, 2008). The third job of middle managers is to spur labourers to acknowledge rigid performance goals. As per Nzinga *et al.* (2013, cited in Ramgulam, 2015), a middle manager's fourth job is data director and communicator. The fifth job of the middle manager is that of a moderator who negotiates with upper administration on corporate issues like goals and impetuses, then negotiates with groups to achieve the objectives of the upper echelons (Ramgulam, 2015).

Huy (2001) contends that middle managers function as business visionaries, communicators, advisors, and individuals who skilfully balance progress and stagnation within an organization (Huy 2001). Huy (2001) expressed that MMs are issue-solvers (Johansson and Svensson, 2017).

During the past decades, middle management's role has been reduced due to reorganization, delayering, downsizing, and outsourcing of services (Balogun, 2003; Drucker, 1988). This reduction has resulted in a flatter and often more cost-efficient organizational structure. Reduction has also led to increased employee responsibilities, middle managers having a more complex role description. Today there is no coherent definition of a middle manager (Rezvani, Linying, and Pouria, 2017). A common way of describing the role is that of occupying a position between top management and front-line managers (Livian, 1997). However, this description does not capture the full complexity of the term. Mintzberg and Quinn (1996) offer the following definition:

“What organizations have are the outer people, connected to the world, and the inner ones, disconnected from it, as well as many so-called middle managers, who are desperately trying to connect the inner and outer people.” (Mintzberg and Quinn, 1996)

Middle managers have a position within the organization in which they function as an interface between all actors to create an efficient hierarchical organization, as seen in Figure 4. Their role enables them to operate as a communication and feedback channel, uniting the whole organization. MMs report information from inside the organization, from employees to top management, and from the opposite side, from top management to the employees (Likert, 1961). An MM is seen as a manager subordinate to the top manager (at least two levels below CEO) but as superior to the front-line manager (at least one level above) and at an equivalent level to another middle manager. This flexibility adds complexity to the role of middle managers who must behave differently depending on the part or function they are currently adapting (Uyterhoeven, 1989). Finally, middle managers are essential as agents of change; MMs serve as an important factor in strategic management (Floyd and Woolridge, 1992; Huy, 2001; Guth and MacMillan, 1986). Figure 2.6 situates the middle managers between top managers and employees and the horizontal relationship between middle managers at the same level (Uyterhoeven, 1989).



Source: (Uyterhoeven, 1989, cited in Oberg, 2018, p.10)

Figure 2.6: The different roles of the middle managers according to Uyterhoeven (1989, cited in Oberg, 2018).

Middle managers are close enough to the employees and the operational work, which gives them the knowledge to understand and see technical challenges and product-specific problems. MMs are more intimate than top management with the organization's complex or department-specific issues, and are responsible for facilitating and controlling employees' work (Osterman, 2008). An MM is also close enough to the top management to grasp the overall business challenges and opportunities because of their position. Their intermediate position in a hierarchy allows them to possess the proper knowledge to be a part of the formation of strategy and strategy implementation (Uyterhoeven, 1989, cited in Oberg, 2018).

The functions of middle managers are wide-ranging in linking corporate strategy to day-to-day operations by adopting targeted goals to reach the strategic vision. Furthermore, parts can be strategic, technical, or human-resource-focused. All responsibilities include communication with superior and subordinate managers and other organizational units if necessary (Livian and Burgoyne, 1997). The strategic function includes implementing the corporate strategy most efficiently while maintaining high productivity and group efficiency. Such can be performed by linking strategy to operations and creating regulations and policies. The technical functions contain tasks related to the operational day-to-day routine and control of organizational

efficiency (Osterman, 2008). To fulfil this, middle managers must work with the development of human resources and deal with fiscal and physical challenges; be able to manage a budget, allocate work time and to coordinate operations. Finally, the tasks related to human resources include being a good leader, inspiring and motivating employees, and being a subordinate manager.

Even though middle managers function as an essential transition between superior and subordinate managers, they are often portrayed as resistant to top managers' change initiatives (Balogun, 2003). Studies have questioned this during the past decades, stressing that organizational performance is primarily a reflection of the middle management rather than the organization's top level (Currie and Procter, 2005).

2.15 What is Strategy Implementation for Middle Managers?

The importance of middle managers and their impact on efficient strategic management has, during the past decades, been an area of increasing focus. Replacing a view of the middle manager as an obstacle rather than a creative force, many studies have included MM's perception of the SI process and how middle managers can contribute (Wooldrige and Floyd, 1990; Huy, 2001; Guth and MacMillan, 1986). Here are two frameworks describing the responsibilities of a middle manager during strategy implementation, presented by Huy in 2001 and Floyd and Woolridge in 1992.

2.15.1 The framework of Huy

The MMs play a vital role in the outcome of a strategic initiative because of their central position, giving them an overall understanding of the organizational needs and employee requirements. In his framework, Huy (2001) highlights four different roles or traits through which MMs contribute to the strategy implementation success. The four primary areas of contribution are their role as businesspeople, favourable communicators, loyal therapists, and stabilizing tightrope artists.

First, a middle manager's role requires an innovative entrepreneurial mindset. Their unique position gives them a position from which they can observe problems daily. Additionally, their ability to see the big and visionary picture results in the role of an entrepreneur (Osterman, 2008). An excellent middle manager can encourage employees to grow, and can motivate them to see new possibilities. An entrepreneur is responsible for managing change by envisioning

and implementing the corporate vision. One widely debated impediment of middle managers is their opposition to change and their agenda of fulfilling their plans (Guth and MacMillan, 1986). One way of preventing this is to guarantee that middle managers are given credit and rewards for their hard work (Huy, 2001).

As their name suggests, a middle manager can communicate change across and vertically through the organization. They are often much better than top management at using the informal network to manage ongoing change initiatives. Their communication should be clear and compelling; people cannot be committed unless they know and believe in the organization's vision. All people can understand an adopted language used by MMs; while the MM's help efficiently implements a corporate strategy (Huy, 2001).

Thirdly, middle managers must be able to accept and handle the role of a therapist, managing employees' emotions and dealing with different personalities. Should an organization decide to adopt a new strategy properly, the strategy must align with the corporate structure; however, the organization must also establish a culture of willingness to change (Osterman, 2008). Research shows that individuals react differently to organizational change (Osterman, 2008). Some evaluate or criticize the chosen direction, wondering whether this is the right way to go; others reflect on their position or are concerned about the consequences a change may generate. Middle managers must act as therapists in these situations, treating the anxiety, refuting criticism, and supporting employees through adaptation. Without the traits of a therapist, there is a higher risk of obstacles and barriers to the implementation process, and increased criticism (Huy, 2001).

The last role or responsibility of a middle manager is the balance between innovativeness and consecutiveness in the role of a tightrope artist. There is a delicate balance between promoting changes and continuity, in which the right mix must be found (Osterman, 2008). New middle managers cannot simply change everything; they must have people on the same page, shifting organizational direction based on capabilities and core values. Fortunately, middle managers tend to work differently, leading to a balance between being more radical and innovative, and encouraging and supporting continuity and sustainability (Huy, 2001). Top managers who respect, support, and collaborate with the most influential middle managers, will increase the ability to manage change and succeed with corporate strategy implementation.

2.16 Strategy Implementation Factors

Alamsjah (2011) asserts that several fundamental aspects are required for middle managers' flourishing implementation of a strategy. These characteristics are "corporate culture, clear strategy, communication, execution plan, human resources capabilities, documentation, performance management, change management, CEO involvement, organizational structure, and uncertain environment" (Alamsjah, 2011).

Tomaz Čater (2015) put forward the critical actions for flourishing strategy implementation as depicted in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2: Summary of the Essential Actions for Effective Strategy Implementation (Tomaž Čater, 2015).

<i>Activity group</i>	<i>Activities as operationalised in this study</i>	<i>Activities addressed in the literature</i>
Planning activities	Formulating and implementing development programmes	- Programming and budgeting (Pučko 2006) - Developing programmes, budgets and procedures (Wheelen & Hunger 2006)
	Planning and implementing projects	- Translating strategy into projects (Pellegrinelli & Bowman 1994) - Managing projects (Kovač 1996; Grundy 1998; Hauc & Kovač 2000; Minarro-Viseras et al. 2005; Pučko 2006)
	Using an efficient annual planning system	- Establishing operating-level objectives (Hrebiniak & Joyce 1984) - Tactical (annual) planning (Pučko 2006) - Annual business planning (Birnbbaum 2007)
	Applying action planning	- Action planning (Pučko 2006; Wheelen & Hunger 2006; Birnbbaum 2007) - Turning strategy into action (Farsight Leadership Organisation 2007)
Organising activities	Organising for strategy implementation	- Fitting the organisation to the strategy (organisation design) (Lorange 1982; Kovač 1996) - Designing a primary and operating organisational structures (Hrebiniak & Joyce 1984) - Organising for strategy implementation (Pučko 2006) - Organising for action (Wheelen & Hunger 2006) - Developing organisational structure (Birnbbaum 2007)
	Allocating strict responsibility for strategy implementation	- Translating enterprise-level plans into lower-unit-level plans (Kaplan & Norton 2005) - Allocating responsibility for strategy implementation (Pučko 2006) - Involving people from all organisational levels (Wheelen & Hunger 2006)
Leadership activities	Using leadership to direct employees	- Triggering enthusiasm in employees (Nichols 1994) - Directing employees (Pučko 2006) - Leading by coaching people (Wheelen & Hunger 2006) - Motivational leadership (Farsight Leadership Organisation 2007) - Leading the change (Brenes et al. 2008)
	Using formal communication	- Emphasising communication between all parties (Al-Ghamdi 1998) - Communicating the corporate strategy (Kaplan & Norton 2005) - Communicating strategy to people (Speculand 2006)
	Applying MBO (management by objectives)	- Aligning employees' goals with strategic goals (Kaplan & Norton 2005) - Management by objectives (Pučko 2006; Wheelen & Hunger 2006)
	Applying HRM activities	- Executing HR activities (Fulmer 1990; Ulrich 1998) - Staffing (Pučko 2006; Wheelen & Hunger 2006) - Managing human resource factors (Birnbbaum 2007)
Controlling activities	Using an efficient tactical control system	- Creating incentives and control mechanisms (Hrebiniak & Joyce 1984) - Controlling the implementation of strategies (Pučko 2006) - Monitoring and control (Birnbbaum 2007) - Implementing control and follow-up actions (Brenes et al. 2008)
	Applying the BSC (balanced scorecard)	- Using the balanced scorecard (Kaplan & Norton 1996, 2006) - Consistently measuring progress and performance (Farsight Leadership Organisation 2007)

Source: (Tomaz and Cater, 2015, p.5)

2.17 Challenges that Middle Managers encounter when implementing a Strategy

Khan (2017) expressed that the inquiry shows the following components causing the enforcement of a plan of action: “Poor or vague strategy, clear objectives, communication, engagement, appropriate resources, benefit delivery management, accountability, talent management, involvement, buy-in, priorities, selection, alignment, project management, risk management, monitoring, performance and leadership” (Khan, 2017).

2.18 Theoretical Framework/Conceptual Framework

2.18.1 Floyd and Wooldridge's Conceptual Framework

The unique organizational position of middle managers places them where they must take on the role of a strategic implementation leader and another daily operational role. Historically, the middle manager has not been an actor in the strategy implementation process. Nevertheless, current academia suggests that middle managers frequently have a significant impact and effect on the strategy implementation outcome. Floyd and Woolridge’s research from 1992, based on 259 middle managers in 25 corporations, visualizes the complexity and stringent requirements placed on middle managers. MMs within an organization fully understand and evaluate whether strategy initiatives grasp the most critical impediments.

Middle managers are vital for connecting upper administration vision to real-life (Ahearne *et al.*, 2014; Freek *et al.*, 2020). Kras, Rudes, and Taxman (2017) noticed that middle managers could work on authoritative execution in two ways: better quality vital navigation, and more efficacious technique execution (Mair, 2017).

Floyd and Wooldridge (1992; 1996; 1997) and Wooldridge *et al.* (2008) perceived four functions of middle managers which affect hierarchical execution. These functions, according to Floyd and Woolridge (1992), are:

- “Championing strategic alternatives: the middle manager engages in persistent and persuasive communication of proposals that either provide the firm with new capabilities or allow the firm to use existing capabilities differently.
- Facilitating adaptability: the middle manager encourages cross-functional problem solving, experimentation, and idea generation and creates arrangements that increase organizational flexibility.
- Synthesizing information: the middle manager derives strategic meaning from events, connects ideas to strategic issues, and sells issues to top management and others in the organization.
- Implementing deliberate strategy: the middle manager aligns the unit's actions with the firm's strategic intent.”

As depicted in Tables 2.3 and 2.4, these functions offer “a framework that combines upward and downward influence with behaviours that integrate and support strategies on the one hand and diverge from the official strategy on the other” (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1996:42). “Downward influence impacts how well the organization is aligned with the new strategy, while upward influence affects top management’s opinion on organizational circumstances and alternative strategic options. Divergent ideas do not align with the organization’s strategy, whereas integrative ideas support its strategic alignment” (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1996). Hence, depending on the association’s environment, the chosen strategic implementation matters. The implementation should also be in line with the leadership style of older leaders, considering their disposition; thus, middle managers can take on many functions (Floyd and Lane, 2000).

Table 2.3: Middle Manager’s Four Strategic Roles (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992, cited in Oberg, 2018).

	Divergent	Integrative
Upward	Championing alternative	Synthesizing information
Downward	Facilitating adaptability	Implementing deliberate strategies

Source: (Floyd, 1992, cited in Oberg, 2018, p.33)

A middle manager should be entangled in implementing the strategy due to their operational orientation of “managing resources, informing decision-makers, and communicating top management’s strategic intent throughout the organization” (Salih and Doll, 2013; Kras *et al.*, 2017). Their incorporated strategic actions connote implementing a deliberate organizational plan of action by translating the corporate goal of action into sub-strategies and rendering top managements the newfound data on implementation in an incorporated way (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992; Van Rensburg *et al.*, 2014).

Table 2.4: MM’s Strategic Impact Tasks in each Strategical Function (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997:467, cited in Hermkens, 2020).

Upward	
Synthesizing information	Gather information on the feasibility of new programs Communicate the activities of competitors, suppliers, etc. Assess changes in the external environment
Championing	Justify and define new programs Evaluate the merits of new proposals Search for new opportunities Propose programs or projects to higher level managers
Downward	
Facilitating adaptability	Relax regulations to get new projects started 'Buy time' for experimental programs Locate and provide resources for trial projects Provide a safe haven for experimental programs Encourage informal discussion and information sharing
Implementing deliberate strategy	Monitor activities to support top management objectives Translate goals into action plans Translate goals into individual objectives Sell top management initiatives to subordinates

Source: (Floyd, 1997, cited in Hermkens, 2020, p.11)

Middle managers regularly assume an indispensable role in strategy implementation (Balogun, 2003), “implementing high-level decisions and coordinating activities at an operational level”. This is a vital contribution to the carrying out senior management's ‘strategic ambitions’ (Balogun, 2003).

2.18.2 Theoretical responsibilities and division for MMs

The various role expectations of middle managers during strategy implementation are described in Floyd and Woolridge's framework from 1992 and Huy's from 2001. These frameworks have functioned as a foundation; they have been combined to create a more general framework for analysing role expectations. The general framework is described below and will be used when analysing the role expectations and the main research question. The framework differs in responsibilities to superiors (upward) and responsibilities to subordinates (downward) in the organizational structure, as per Figure 2.7 (Huy, 2001; Floyd and Woolridge, 1992).



Source: (Huy, 2001; Floyd and Woolridge, 1992, cited in Oberg, 2018, p.36).

Figure 2.7: The general framework of the middle manager's role, both upward and downward (Huy, 2001; Floyd and Woolridge, 1992).

- The strategic rebellion – Middle managers present alternatives to their superior's current strategic direction in this role. The purpose is to enlighten potential changes to the current strategic direction by selecting possible options, presenting them to the superior manager (Floyd and Woolridge, 1992).
- The interpreter of strategic context – Within the current strategic direction, a middle manager interprets and evaluates information from internal and external

events. Their rendering of information influences the impression of the situation (Floyd and Woolridge, 1992).

- The entrepreneur – This role emphasizes the importance of maintaining an entrepreneurial mindset and visualizing a walk-the-talk motivation towards subordinates. It is important to incorporate both a big picture and day-to-day approach (Huy, 2001; Floyd and Woolridge, 1992).
- The motivator – Middle managers in this role expect to encourage employees to grow and develop new qualities and capabilities. Also, they need to motivate employees to be creative and to see new possibilities and solutions to challenges (Huy, 2001).
- The communicator – The expectation covers the mediation of the strategic vision. Such includes both a vertical and horizontal communication path in which middle managers must align with other middle managers to ensure the right strategic direction, thereafter deploying the aligned vision vertically within the organization. Within this role, the importance of formal and informal leaders should also be addressed and used to create compelling communication that results in lasting change initiatives (Huy, 2001).
- The landscape architect of a change-supportive environment – To implement a strategy successfully, it is essential to create a change-supportive climate. If the organization does not have a culture willing to change and a flexible and adaptable attitude, strategic initiatives are not likely to be effective (Huy, 2001; Floyd and Woolridge, 1992).
- The therapist – People react differently to alterations when initiating a strategic change, especially a radical change. The therapist talks to subordinates, calms them and explains the consequences of the shift (Huy, 2001).
- The implementer must maintain a balance between change and continuity while implementing deliberate strategies. This role expects to execute the implementation of the corporate strategy suitably; aligning the changes with the current organizational structure (Huy, 2001; Floyd and Woolridge, 1992).

The general framework of role expectations visualizes the different responsibilities or areas middle managers have in SI. Furthermore, it is essential to point out that the framework is based on existing studies focusing on the role expectations of middle managers' involvement in SI.

2.18.3 Strategic Coaching (SC)

The objective of SC is to increment individual achievement in a typical business methodology. An organization initiating another division can adjust personal improvement goals to the new undertaking's business setting and contending methodology (Yukl, 2012). An association shaken by abrupt change can offer help and direction to leaders while keeping them firmly in the organization's technique, aim, and values. Personal improvement can work as a crucial correspondence interface keeping the top administration's finger on the pulse of its senior management while supporting messages from higher management. Correctly implemented, SC ought essentially o affect the company, with quantifiable outcomes such as expanded deals, higher usefulness, and lower personnel turnover, amounting to a highly exceptional yield on investment (Hornsby, Kuratko, and Zahra, 2002).

In this complex and challenging enterprise sector, organizations constantly look for the best opportunities to improve their competitiveness. SC is one of a vast compass of human asset advancement practices that can assist enterprises in fashioning a favourable situation regarding contenders. Diedrich (1996) and McCracken and Heaton (2012) comprehend the implication of SC for workers and enterprises, seeing the preparation as a significant device for vocational progression. A burgeoning number of organizations use training (Chong, 2008; Moen and Allgood, 2009; Richard *et al.*, 2002) because the training reacts to the demands and requests of the work environs (Sherman and Freas, 2004). Training is successful in various ways, for instance, remedying and working on inadequate achievement (Gravina and Siers, 2011); or conflict resolution in the work environs (Anderson, Rayner and Schyns, 2009). SC can be used to speed up vocation erudition (Parker, Hall, and Kram, 2008), or to warrant sustainable dominance (Boyatzis, Smith, and Blaize, 2006).

Even with the rapid, problematic change, organizations understand that leaders cannot be expected to have every one of these reactions; and that dictation-and-control administration is currently not feasible (Yukl, 2012). Therefore, many firms are advancing towards a training model in which leaders work with fault-finding thinking and energize personnel advancement by posing problem-solving and offering backing and guidance rather than providing requests and making decisions (Ibarra and Scoular, 2019).

2.18.4 Companies are moving away from traditional command-and-control practices

Coaching is presently not simply a consideration of interdependence regarding what an individual knows and offering it to someone less knowledgeable or less superior, albeit that remains a critical perspective. This is additionally an approach to posing inquiries to ignite experiences in the other individual (Yukl, 2012). Sir John Whitmore, “the main figure in this scholastic niche, characterized it; talented instructing includes opening individuals’ capability to amplify their performance. The best experts have dominated the two pieces of the interaction: granting access to information and helping other people find it themselves. They can craftily do both in various circumstances” (Ibarra and Scoular, 2019).

It may be easier to seek that sort of coaching; however, it is more challenging to initiate such as a regular practice through the numerous layers of an association. In most associations, a significant gap exists between yearning and practice (Yukl, 2012). SC can be undertaken hierarchically as an individual MM (Ibarra and Scoular, 2019).

A training approach is essential for leaders who are acquainted with handling achievement issues by guiding individuals. Furthermore, it can make MM mentally awkward because it denies them their most recognizable administration apparatus: attesting their position (Yukl, 2012). In this case, they may oppose instructing and be left to their perspectives, not delving further. Common phrases akin to this notion may come across as the MM stating, “I’m excessively occupied”, “This is not ideal utilization of my time”, or “Personnel in my division are not coachable”.

Regardless of whether numerous directors are apathetic regarding training, most believe it is carried out effectively. Yet, for many this is not so. In one review, 3,761 leaders evaluated their training abilities; their appraisals contrasted with those who worked with them. The outcomes did not match the expectations; some 24% of the leaders fundamentally misjudged their capacities, evaluating themselves as better than expected. However, their associates positioned them in the lowest third of the gathering (Accenture, 2020). Training effectively can be difficult for even the most skilful and benevolent of MMs.

2.19 Definition of Coaching

The literature offers numerous meanings of coaching. Kampa-Kolesch and Anderson (2001) posit that “training is a type of efficient critique intercession that is deliberate to upgrade proficient abilities, relational attentiveness, and individual viability”; although Peterson (1994) believes that instructing is a cycle that equips individuals with the apparatus, data and all valuable prospects needed for practised advancement, and to extend their adequacy (Gil and Carrillo, 2013).

Then again, Colomo and Casado (2006) characterize instructing as a directed, organized, and consistently checked improvement activity that causes an associate to reach the ideal achievement level for their present capacity in an association. These scholars view instructing as a discussion between two gatherings – a mentor and a coachee – in a practical, results-arranged setting. Although various instructing explanations have been offered, there is some consensus regarding the centre of training practices. Most explanations agree that training is a process that considers a progression of coordinated communications between a leader and a coachee (Bono *et al.*, 2009). Then again, Feldman and Lankau (2005) contend that instructing connectedness considers coordinated advising concerning business-related issues, utilizes 360-degree criticism, and proposes upgrades in the adequacy of one’s present position.

Furthermore, Hannafey and Vitulano (2013) clarify that instructing occurs between a management-level client and a mentor recruited by an association, to help the person become more robust and fruitful in management. Such was likewise featured in the socialization of workers by Saks and Gruman (2011) due to its helpfulness. Instructing is a procedure prearranged by an affiliation that includes two individuals – a mentor and a coachee. Instructing intends to address enterprise-related issues and to work on the coachee’s abilities and capacities of vocation furtherance. This definition will be utilized in the present study.

2.20 Coaching in an Organizational Setting

In the formulation stage, a mentor should observe an advancement of regulations to warrant the practicality of the interaction. For illustration, the association should work with carrying out the procedure and recognizing the requirements of its personnel because, by serving these necessities, the firm will lay out the programme targets (Kampa-Kolesch and Anderson, 2001).

The company will also investigate the preparation during the interaction to modify those viewed as antagonistic practices. The enterprise can then adjust the training system to suit the attributes of every member. The members' trustworthiness will likewise affect the viability of the coaching (Kampa-Kolesch and Anderson, 2001).

Whenever the enterprise chooses to dispatch training, it should first lay clear goals for doing so. These goals should aid the coachee to concentrate on their occupation and their life (Jones and Spooner, 2006). For this rational motive, the enterprise will distinguish objectives. It will regulate and confirm how such is achieved to warrant that the coachee's activity and decision-making take a proactive direction. In this way, through the training process, associations try to foster proficient skills to effectuate their appointed goals. Companies attempt to strengthen coachees thus guaranteeing that they roll out the most apposite improvements throughout the procedure to assure its prosperity.

After the readiness stage, the following step includes leading the interaction. Two members participate simultaneously: the mentor, who educates, trains, or ushers the coachee into their present place of employment (Evered and Selman, 1989); the centre of this training relationship is the hands-on learning activity, notwithstanding other prospective issues. For example, there may be privacy issues, hostile situations, questions concerning proficient principles, accomplishment approximation issues, and financial issues (Hannafey and Vitulano, 2013).

As Hutchinson and Purcell (2010) contend, "many mentors are discontented with the activity since they need dynamic help from associations as far as giving acknowledgement, timing and job lucidity". Backes-Gellner and Tuor (2010) feature the significance of a quality work environment for the accomplishment of human asset practices. It is essential to regard various meaningful focuses for achieving the training system to understand the execution stage. For instance, the mentor deals with the training system and acts as an expert who helps the coachee conduct strategies (McCracken and Wallace, 2000). The mentor also adjusts the coachee's abilities and information to the current structure in the association, urging the coachee to change qualities and position.

The association should be aware of the mentor's capacities, abilities, and experience (Gray, Ekinci, and Goregaokar, 2011). The mentor focuses on the coachee in a cooperative partnership in laying out and explaining the targets, fostering a strategy which assists the coachee to accomplish these goals (Zeus and Skiffington, 2002), rebuking the coachee if they neglect to satisfy recently acknowledged responsibilities. The coachee, this way, should view the mentor

as an essential collaborator with whom they can share thoughts, plans, and systems. The coachee can then advance and gain a more extended-term vision of emerging inquiries.

To guarantee the adequacy of the instructing system, the mentor should have profound information on the coachee's work and how the occupation connects with the company's targets (Yukl, 2012). The mentor should be willing and ready to impart data to the coachee and be prepared to devote time to the interaction. For the activity to continue accurately, the connection between the mentor and coachee should be founded on trust. The connection should align with the hierarchical environment described by Shih, Chiang, and Chen (2012). Likewise, achievement can be impacted by certain variables, such as the sort of personal relationship between the mentor and coachee and the concordance, association, and liking between them (Wanberg, Welsh, and Hezlett, 2003).

As stated above, to guarantee that the training system is viable, the mentor and coachee should attempt to accomplish various goals. The mentor should be competent and experienced, understand the association well, communicate information, and commit time to the activity, censuring the coachee when they do not proceed as agreed (Yukl, 2012). The coachee should be focused on the action, seeking a worthy accomplice in the mentor, able to share thoughts and procedures and to confide in the mentor (Yukl, 2012).

Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) state that the training relationship is mutual from the social trade hypothesis. These two parties must lay out a regularizing system in which to work. The accomplishment of the interaction will rely upon the privacy of the activity, the consistency of the situation with both mentor and coachee, and their integrity, sanity, philanthropy, and responsibility.

Numerous investigations agree with this outlook. Instructing is compelling in offering workers a healthy approach to learning that suits their unique needs, and prompting more remarkable professional fulfilment (Colomo and Casado, 2006; Zaleska and De Menezes, 2007). The help of other authoritative individuals, such as line supervisors, is additionally vital (Leisink and Knies, 2011). Similarly, Moen and Allgood (2009) note that this training makes directors more practised and compelling in their positions of authority, as worker performance will improve, assuming the instructing system is ready, and carried out suitably.

2.21 Different Styles of Coaching

To encourage administrators to instruct and to modify tasks with respect to a learning organization, the 2×2 lattice is used (Figure 2.8). The lattice is a simple yet valuable device. “One axis shows the data, counsel, or mastery that a mentor places into the relationship with the individual being disciplined; the other demonstrates the persuasive energy that a mentor pulls out by tapping into that individual's own experiences and resolutions” (Aaron De Smet, 2020).



Source:(Aaron De Smet, 2020, p.2)

Figure 2.8 The different styles of coaching (Aaron De Smet, 2020)

The upper left, in Quadrant 1, is directive coaching, which happens essentially through ‘telling’. Tutoring falls into this classification. Here, a supervisor with long stretches of collected information energetically shares it with a subordinate colleague. That individual listens cautiously, wanting to retain as much information as possible (Jones and Spooner, 2006). This approach has a great deal of support, but also has a few drawbacks. Since it comprises expressing how to approach and conduct work, it may reduce energy in the individual being trained; it may even minimize their energy level and inspiration. It likewise accepts that the manager knows things that the beneficiary of the instruction does not. This is not necessarily the correct supposition in a complex and continually changing workplace. Moreover, because it permits leaders to keep doing what they have been doing (tackling others’

concerns) (Wilson, 2020), training is not generally the outcome. There might be times when all associates are gainfully continuing their work, and the right way to oversee them is to let them be. This free enterprise methodology shows up in quadrant 2 (Whitmore, 2019).

“At the base right, in quadrant 3, is non-directive training based on tuning in, addressing, and keeping judgment. Supervisors here work to draw intelligence, understanding, and imagination out of the individuals they are instructing, fully intent on assisting them with figuring out how to solve issues and adapt to testing circumstances alone. This methodology can be profoundly stimulating for those being trained. Yet, it does not fall into place easily for most supervisors, who will often be more agreeable in ‘tell’ mode” (Whitmore, 2019).

At the upper right, in Quadrant 4, is situational instructing, which addresses the perfect balance in the structure. All directors in a learning association ought to seek to become a master at situational training, which, as its name suggests, includes finding some kind of harmony among order and non-directive styles as indicated by the necessities existing apart from everything else. Directors should initially practice non-directive training by itself until it becomes natural. Directors should then begin to adjust the reinforced capacity with set times of supportive directive coaching (Jones and Spooner, 2006).

2.22 The GROW model of coaching

The most effective way to improve non-directive training is to utilize the GROW model. This model was conceived during the 1980s by Sir John Whitmore and others (Whitmore, 2019). The GROW model includes four activity steps, the acronym for – goal, reality, options, and will. The GROW model is not difficult to understand; however, it is difficult to practice, requiring that MMs prepare themselves to think in new ways regarding their job and worth as leaders (Wilson, 2020).

The four activity steps are as follows (Wilson, 2020):

(i) Goal

At the point when an MM starts talking about a subject with somebody in their training, what the person needs to achieve at this moment should be laid out precisely. Their objectives for the undertaking, their work, or their part in the association should be disregarded. However, what they desire to gain from this training should be considered. Individuals are not inclined

to do this naturally in many discussions, regularly needing assistance with such. A good method for beginners is to ask them questions such as: “What do you want to have when you leave that you do not have now?”

(ii) Reality

With the objective of the discussion laid out, inquiries should be posed that centre on what, when, where, and who, every one of which will empower individuals to change their perception and to focus on explicit realities. This makes the discussion genuine and valuable. The ‘why’ questions are not included. That is because inquiring about ‘why’ means that individuals must investigate reasons and inspirations rather than realities. Doing that can convey suggestions of judgment or trigger endeavours at self-support, the two of which can be counterproductive.

During this stage, a good reality-centred inquiry to pose is: “What may be the key things we want to know?” Painstaking details should be noted about individuals’ reactions. Could it be said that they are missing something significant? Could it be said that they are discussing functional issues but failing to remember the human side of the situation; or, on the other hand, the converse? Whenever individuals are requested to slow down and think this way, they frequently lose themselves in consideration. Afterwards, they can draw in the issue alone with newfound energy and a new viewpoint. This progression is elementary since it prevents individuals from neglecting relevant factors and jumping to conclusions. Here, the MM’s job is to initiate the correct issues and move out of sight afterwards.

(iii) Options

At the point at which individuals come to the MM for instruction, they frequently feel perplexed. Individuals may state: “There’s no other option for me”, or, on the other hand: “I have just a single genuine choice”, or “I’m conflicted between A and B”. In these cases, the job of the MM is to assist them with thinking all the more comprehensively and profoundly. It can be helpful to reach the point of asking something as straightforward as, “Assuming you had a magic wand, how might you treat the situation?” This may be the key to liberating many individuals and changing how they view that inquiry. They then may begin to think quickly, and in new, valuable ways. When they have widened their point of view and found new choices, the responsibility of the MM is to incite underlings to develop their thinking, maybe by empowering them to investigate the potential gains, the disadvantages, and the dangers of every choice.

(iv) Will

This step has two sections, each including an alternative explanation of the word ‘will’. The MM inquires, “How will you respond?” This empowers the individual to survey the particular activity plan that has risen from the discussion. Assuming the discussion has worked out well, they would reasonably understand what that arrangement is. If they do not inform the MM, the MM will have to push back through the last strides of the GROW interaction, assisting them to characterize how they will tackle the issue.

The next part includes gaining information about the employee’s will to act, albeit on a scale of 1-10. The MM will have to revise the last strides of the GROW process to reach an answer they can follow up on.

Working environment instruction happens outside of formal training meetings. Most frequently, it occurs in vague exchanges, when a director may react to a solicitation for help by suggesting a single conversation starter, for example, “What have you previously considered?” or “What is the main thing here?” When a more significant number of such cooperation occurs, the MM may notice that employees are becoming progressively more curious, posing important inquiries, and working from the assumption that they do not have every one of the responses. This will prompt them to become more solution-focused, applying this to their career and to the benefit of the organization.

We live in a universe of change. Efficacious leaders should increasingly heighten their commercial enterprise and practical skill with a general limitlessness concerning learning, promoting that limitlessness in individuals they regulate. Never again will directors be able to command and control. Nor will they dominate by compensating associates for executing flawlessly tasks they are competent in. With full institutionalized help, MMs must rethink themselves as intellectuals whose job is to draw energy, imagination, and erudition from individuals with whom they work.

2.23 Key Benefits of a Middle Manager Coaching Programme

The previous section covered the role of the MM as the mentor; here, the MM would be considered the coachee. The advantages of an MM training programme are as follows: (1) Leaders will become influencers, (2) MMs will decide how to utilize their soft abilities to

improve their understanding of complex circumstances; (3) MMs will realize when and how to utilize the apparatus available to them; (4) MMs will become more proficient at putting forth distinct objectives; and (5) MMs will be prepared for development, with a hint of practicality (Merchant, 2010).

Time after time, HR experts have centred on two extremities of the labour force range: teaming up with senior authority and guaranteeing that on-ground labourers/personnel are locked in and enthusiastic. However, as much as these two mainstays of any hierarchical system are elementary, it is crucial to include and empower a third component – the MM (Merchant, 2010). An MM will care for a complex group, attending to various difficulties, keeping the team focused on key goals, and maintaining the central business tasks. Therefore, MMs are a significant cog in the machine, making the workplace more cordial, and guaranteeing that long-term and short objectives are met (Accenture, 2020).

An Accenture (2020) report states that 25% of US organizations have diminished authority programme expenses or have never had one. Then again, 39% of associations surveyed perceive the critical commitments of MM and the danger of underprepared MMs running the labour force (Accenture, 2020). There is a lack of arranged and regularized MM instructing programmes that assists them in offering better help to their groups and fashioning themselves for future influential positions. The advantages of having a MM instructing programme are as follows (Accenture, 2020):

2.23.1 They will become change agents and not roadblocks to disruption

Change is inevitable, regardless of the business. Indeed, in numerous ways, adjusting to socio-cultural occurrences and accepting new technology is essential to a company's endurance. MMs are fundamental in orchestrating a progression, eliminating uncertainty or dread through correspondence, and assisting personnel with adapting to their changed jobs. A worker-instructing programme can adjust any MM rapidly to a change; teach them how to impart information better, and aiding their understanding of hierarchical ramifications.

2.23.2 They can use soft skills to simplify a complex situation

Soft abilities will be consistently required regardless of how specialized or item-explicit a MM's job may be. A MM who conveys information well knows how to adjust the knowledge as indicated by a worker's perspective. The MM who can receive and put forth important

information is a valuable resource for an organization. Worker instructing modules visualized in the form of soft abilities taught in instructional meetings will give a stronger level of emotional intelligence in the MM, helping them to assist personnel with performing better, appreciating their job, and remaining occupied with the work environment.

2.23.3 They will be able to use a plethora of tools with ease and comfort

A significant piece of any leader's everyday schedule is dealing with various apparatuses. Indeed, this especially turns out to be more convoluted with a bigger pool of workers answering to a solitary administrator. Adjusting the complex abilities to utilize instruments with the soft skills to realize the correct apparatus for a given situation is frequently troublesome. Training and instructing programmes can assist administrators with discovering that equilibrium and how to utilize it for their potential benefit. For associations, a reasonable and itemized personnel usefulness report will assist with evaluating factors such as overheads, labourer effectiveness/commitments, and participation levels, among others. This makes the programme a fundamental need for MMs who can then use the various apparatuses doled out to them with certainty. In the long haul, this will convert to improved project management, and an intense guide to practical highs or lows for their speciality unit.

2.23.4 They can set well-defined goals for themselves (and also others)

Authority and progression plans are unquestionable requirements for any organization, large or small. Associations can prep the up-and-coming age of leaders in sensitive situations. Also, an individual can set their development to future goals. Therefore a MM preparation programme, with a consistent flowchart of designated worker instructing modules, will help organizations recognize best execution and potential, pushing these MMs to a higher level. When a MM's propensity for objective setting is enhanced, this will permeate down to each personnel member, making a bias-free worker acknowledgement and movement culture.

2.23.5 They will always be ready for innovation, with a dash of pragmatism

In a quickly advancing worldwide business climate, organizations must continually add new features to an item or service. This implies that each organization should focus on development (concentrate on market development, consider client impressions, change plans/items/objectives, guarantee to undertake reception). Organizations need to keep their

MMs ready and willing to change. By demanding that MMs not become comfortable in their position, rather, continuing to prepare themselves for new obligations, organizations can make development a goal, both for the association and the person.

2.23.6 Why coaching always makes sense

A new report revealed that 58% of administrators have never attended any work environment management preparation. This indicates a troublesome issue: leaders are kept at a specific level, sometimes without the chance for development. Others are promoted for their great work, regardless of whether they may be unable to rouse and lead the more significant labour force. Worker training with a normalized timetable will guarantee that each MM gains an opportunity of improving themselves and moving up the corporate ladder, while helping others to perform at their best. In the long run, this can minimize dangers, keep MMs cheerful and connected, and guarantee that each labourer performs at their best in the work environment.

2.24 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter discussed the key concepts of strategy, strategy implementation, and middle management; the chapter covered coaching models. The chapter outlines that strategy implementation is a complex process that unfolds over time. Middle managers are essential to strategy execution. Various obstacles to strategy implementation require different roles of middle managers. After discussing the concept of strategy, strategy obstacles, and the importance of middle managers, the next chapter focuses on research methodology.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to address the methodological analysis utilized in this qualitative report to respond to the fundamental research question of the role of middle managers in carrying out growth strategy at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa. This study investigated a middle managers' role in business growth strategy execution.

This chapter starts by discussing the research paradigm of this study. After that, the focal point is on sampling, describing research participants, data-accumulation procedures, and the chosen interview type. This section will also outline the data-analysis process and ethical considerations.

3.2 Research Paradigm

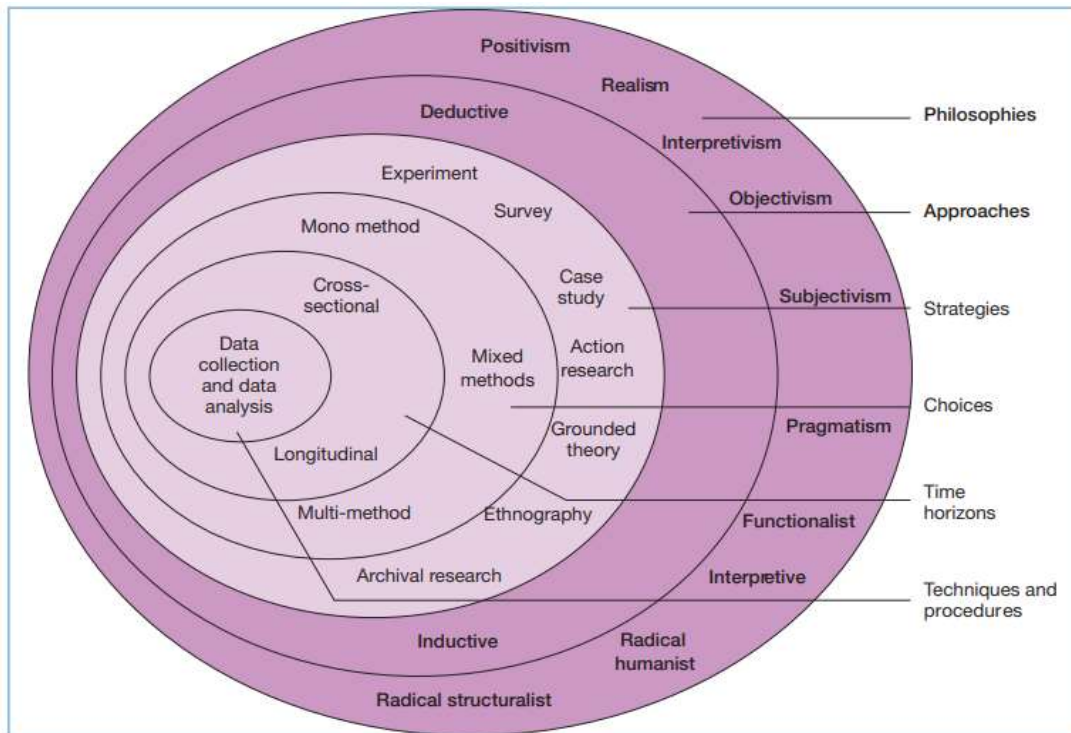
An evaluation of authorship from scholars in the field prompts a thoughtful discernment of the value of a research paradigm. For illustration, in "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions American," scholar Thomas Kuhn (1962) first utilized the word paradigm to mean a philosophical perspective. The term has its aetiology in Greece, in which it implies a blueprint. In elucidative exploration, the word represents a scientist's orientation (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006). This orientation is the viewpoint, thought process, way of reasoning, or set of mutual beliefs that illuminate the implication of translation concerning research subject matter. Lather (1986) remarks that a research paradigm intrinsically mirrors the investigator's opinion of the macrocosm they inhabit and desire to experience. It establishes the theoretical belief and constructs that form the way in which an investigator sees the universe, and how they decipher and act inside that macrocosm (Yin, 2017).

Guba and Lincoln (1994), pioneers in the field, distinguish a paradigm as a cardinal arrangement of convictions or perspectives that guides research activity or an investigation. Essentially, the scholars of subjective examination, Denzin and Lincoln (2000), distinguish ideal models as human improvement, which manage first regulations demonstrating where the

specialist is coming from to build significance installed in the subject matter. Perfect models are hence significant because they give belief, which, for researchers in a circumstantial discipline, impacts what ought to be contemplated, how it should be reasoned, and how the after-effects of the review ought to be deciphered (Patton, 1990). The paradigm characterizes a scientist's philosophical direction, which has critical ramifications for each choice made in the exploration procedure, including decisions on technique and strategies. Thus, a paradigm provides insight into how significance will be developed from the accumulated information, given individual encounters (Yin, 2017).

In positions about epistemology, ontology, and axiology, paradigms apply critical effects on the technique utilized in an exploration project (Morgan, 2007). In this manner, the decision on a paradigm suggests assurance about specific philosophies that stream from that worldview. This association is vital because the systemic ramifications of worldview decisions pervade the examination questions, choice of participant, information assortment instruments and assortment methodology, and information investigation (Patton, 1990).

The research onion model (Figure 3.1) was introduced by Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019) in their book *Exploration Techniques for Business Understudies*. "This model intends to clarify the various phases of composing an exposition to assist researchers with making an improved and coordinated methodology. The exploration onion model emblematically delineates how various components engaged with the examination could be inspected to foster the finalized exploration plan" (Saunders *et al.*, 2019).



Source: (Mark Saunders, 2015, p.102)

Figure 3.1: The research onion comprises six main layers, which are philosophy, approach, strategy, choice of methods, time horizons, and data collection and analysis (Saunders *et al.*, 2019).

3.3 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy is a set of beliefs on how knowledge about a topic should be gathered, examined, and used. Rather than liturgical texts (what is considered valid), the term epistemology (what is observed as valid) encompasses the various ways of investigation towards reasoning (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). At that time, science was motivated by the most popular approach of converting administered into general knowledge: doxa to episteme. In the contemporary practice of science, two major exploratory styles of thought have been differentiated, namely positivist and interpretive (Galliers, 1991).

3.3.1 Positivism

Positivists accept that the truth is steady and can be noticed and depicted from a non-subjective perspective (Burrell and Morgan, 1979), for example, without disrupting the considered

peculiarities. It is attested that peculiarities should be detached and that perceptions should be repeatable (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). This frequently includes control of reality with varieties in just a solitary autonomous variable to recognize normalities and shape connections between a portion of the constituent components of the social macrocosm. Forecasts can be made based on the recently noticed and clarified fundamental factors and their connectedness (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). “Positivism has a long and rich historical tradition. It is so embedded in our society that knowledge claims not grounded in positivist thought are simply dismissed as scientific and therefore invalid” (Hirschheim, 1985:33).

This view is, by implication, upheld by Alavi and Carlson (1992), who “in an audit of 902 research articles, found that every one of the experimental investigations was positivist in approach”. Positivism has likewise had an incredibly effective relationship with the physical and innate sciences. There have, nonetheless, been many discussions on whether this positivist worldview is reasonable for the sociology field (Hirschheim, 1985). This study deals with people in the business context and can be viewed as part of sociology and the actual sciences (Hirschheim, 1985). Some factors or constituent pieces of reality, however, may have been thought of as unimportant under the positivist worldview – and subsequently have not been researched (Galliers, 1991). This study has not adopted a positivistic paradigm as it does not seek to measure but rather to understand different perspectives of reality by various participants.

3.3.2 Interpretivism

Interpretivism attests that the truth will be perceived entirely through the subjective translation of and intercession in actuality. Investigating peculiarities as they occur is vital to the interpretive theory, along with the affirmation that researchers cannot try not to influence those peculiarities they study (Bryman, 2001). “There might be numerous understandings of the real world; however, these translations are a piece of the logical information they seek. Interpretivism has a less radiant practice than positivism, nor is it more limited” (Bryman, 2001). For this report, an interpretivist philosophy is chosen, the research focusing on understanding middle management’s role in the strategy implementation of the pulp and paper industry.

3.4 Research Design

Research design alludes to the system of statistical surveying strategies and procedures that a scholar selects. The investigator's chosen plan permits them to use reasonable strategies for the review and to set up their investigations effectively in the future (Mello, 2021). The goal of exploration can be either subjective, quantitative, or blended. Under these examination plans, specialists can choose between various exploration techniques; surveys, overviews, correlational investigations, or semi-trial survey reviews. Additional sub-sorts of examination techniques include the specific exploratory plan, characterizing research issues, and descriptive studies (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Research designs also incorporate the components of information assortment, information estimation with separate apparatuses, and examining of the information. As a guideline, the exploration issue an investigator decides to focus on is the deciding variable of the examination design selected by the scholar rather than the alternative way around (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The planning stage is the point at which the specialists decide on the devices used in the review and how they are utilized. A sound exploration typically guarantees the tiniest degrees of predisposition in the information assortment technique to work on the examination's internal and outside legitimacy (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The ideal result of test research is to have a plan that will bring about a minimal measure of mistakes in the review.

Research designs can be limited to five sub-types portrayed as follows (Mello, 2021):

- a) *Descriptive research design*: Engaging examination plan: This alludes to the strategies that portray the qualities of the factors under study. This philosophy centres on responding to questions such as 'what' other than the 'why' of the examination subject. The essential focal point of this design is only to portray the idea of the phenomenon concerned instead of zeroing in on the 'why'. The idea is also called an observational research method, as none of the variables in the study is influenced by the research process. If the problem is unclear enough to conduct a descriptive analysis, researchers can first use experimental research methods.
- b) *Experimental research design*: Experimental research, or experimentation, is conducted via a scientific approach using two or more variables. The first variable is a

constant that one can manipulate to see the differences caused in the second variable. Most studies under quantitative research methods are experimental. Experimental research helps the researcher gather the necessary data to make better decisions about the proposed hypothesis. The success of empirical research usually confirms that the change observed in the variable under study is solely based on manipulating the independent variable. Experimental research design is the most practical and accurate kind of research method which helps establish causation. This research design is used in social sciences to understand and observe human behaviour. Such behaviour is followed by placing humans in two groups so that researchers can compare them.

- c) *Correlational research design*: This alludes to an affiliation or a connection between two factors. A correlational examination focuses on how one factor influences the other and the progressions that are seen when one or both of them change. This exploration strategy reveals organic connections between elements. Thus, around two gatherings are expected to lead a correlational quantitative exploration effectively. The factors under this study are not in charge of the scientist, and the investigator is attempting to determine whether a connection between the two factors exists. Since correlational examinations solely provide comprehension of whether there is a connection between two elements, it does not lay out causation. In this way, it is not prescribed to make ends, simply based on a correlational report; if two factors are in a state of harmony, this does not mean that they are interconnected or that one factor is causing the progressions of the other factor. A connection coefficient is a definite quantity that decides the strength of the connection between two elements, moving from -1 to +1. On the off-chance that the connection coefficient acquired is -1, it demonstrates an ideal negative connection between the two factors; for example, as one aspect expands, the other factor contracts. Assuming that the connection coefficient of a review is viewed as +1, this shows an ideal positive connection between the two elements; when one aspect expands, the other variable likewise expands.
- d) *Diagnostic research design*: Here, the scientist attempts to assess the reason for a particular issue or peculiarity. This design is utilized to probe more exhaustively the problematic elements of the organization. This design incorporates three stages:

- Origin of the problem – When did the challenge emerge? In which circumstances is the challenge more apparent?
 - Diagnosis of the problem – What is the hidden reason for the challenge? What is causing the challenge to become more prominent or to expand?
 - Resolution of the problem – What is working in relieving the problem? Under which circumstances does the challenge appear to be less clear?
- e) *Explanatory research design*: This design deems a scientist's thoughts and considerations on one subject to be the directing point for future examinations; such is likewise utilized in further investigation of hypotheses.

The current study is exploratory: little existing research has centred on the function of middle managers in the execution of growth strategy at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa

3.5 Research Approach

The second stratum of the 'research onion' necessitates matching the inquiry design to the investigating methods. In considering whether to use a deductive or inductive approach, paying attention to the main difference between these two approaches is essential. The deductive approach "involves testing a theoretical proposition by employing a research strategy specifically designed for testing" (Saunders and Thornhill, 2015: 714). This conceptualization is appropriated by presenting a hypothesis, 'deductive' meaning logical thinking moving from the comprehensive to the detailed.

Inductive conceptualization involves exploring newfound phenomena or logical thinking from the detailed to the comprehensive. Such is more often than not connected with qualitative research. The investigator begins with an entirely open mind, with no preconceived cognitive content, collecting and studying information that results in a series of intentions or hypotheses (Saunders and Thornhill, 2015).

In this study, no theoretical framework or prior assumptions is being tested. For this study, an inductive approach was adopted because it focused on gaining insight into the function of

middle managers in executing growth strategy at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa.

3.6 Research Methodology Choice

Scholars make the major strategic decision on the distinction between subjective and quantitative information. As documented already, subjective information seems as portrayed in light of language or images, while quantitative information appears as numbers (Babbie and Mouton, 2004).

Subjective information is more excessive and is, for the most part, grounded in an abstract and interpretive viewpoint. While this is the case, it is not generally so. Subjective exploration upholds a top-to-bottom comprehension of the circumstance examined and, because of time requirements, it includes a small sample of participants (Babbie and Mouton, 2004). Therefore, the discoveries are restricted to the sample contemplated and cannot be summed up in different settings or by a more extensive populace. Well-known strategies incorporate semi-organized or unstructured meetings, participant perceptions, and document investigation yield subjective information. A subjective investigation is more tedious than a quantitative examination (Gichuru. 2017).

Quantitative information may be more straightforward to gather and dissect, depending on an enormous sample of participants. Quantitative strategies depend on the information that can be dispassionately estimated with numbers. The information is examined through mathematical correlations and measurable examination (Gichuru. 2017). Thus, it shows up more logically and may speak to individuals who seek detailed responses to direct causal inquiries. A quantitative examination is usually speedier to do as it includes programming technology. Well-known techniques given quantitative information incorporate questionnaires and measurable records, among others (Babbie and Mouton, 2004).

The decision of which system to utilize will rely upon the examination questions, the detailing of which is thus informed by the exploration viewpoint. “By and large, unstructured or semi-organized meetings produce subjective information, and questionnaires produce quantitative information; however, such a differentiation is not pertinent all of the time” (Gichuru. 2017). This research followed a qualitative research methodology, the researcher seeking an in-depth

discernment of the role of middle managers in implementing growth strategy at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa.

3.7 Research Strategies

Research strategies can be characterized as the way in which a scholar responds to their exploration questions. It is the systemic connection between the way of thinking and the ensuing selection of strategies to gather and break down information (Gichuru. 2017). Various examination styles have prompted various conceivable exploration strategies which are connected with quantitative, subjective, and blended strategies research plans individually (Saunders and Thornhill, 2015).

The strategies available to the researcher are the experimental type of strategy, survey, case study, action research, grounded theory, ethnography, and archival research.

3.7.1 Experiment

An experiment intends to concentrate on causal connections, regardless of whether an adjustment of one free factor creates an adjustment of another dependent variable (Saunders and Thornhill, 2015).

3.7.2 Survey

This is typically connected with the deductive methodology. The survey is a well-known and normal procedure in enterprise and management research, and is most often used to answer ‘who, what, where, how much, and the how many’ inquiries. Survey will generally be utilized for exploratory and informative examination (Babbie and Mouton, 2004). Surveys permit a variety of information from a sizeable populace in a profoundly practical manner. Frequently acquired by utilizing a survey disseminated to a sample, this information is normalized, permitting simple correlation (Saunders and Thornhill, 2015).

3.7.3 Case study

Yin (2003) characterizes this as a system for carrying out scholarly explorations, which includes an experimental examination of a specific contemporary peculiarity in its natural setting, utilizing various sources of proof. Yin (2003) additionally features the significance of the setting, stating that, inside a contextual investigation, the limits between the peculiarity

being considered and the location in which it is being contemplated are not clear. This is the direct inverse of the experimental technique, in which the exploration is embraced in an exceptionally controlled setting (Gichuru, 2017). Such additionally varies from the study methodology. Albeit the examination is adopted in the setting, the capacity to investigate and comprehend this setting is restricted by the number of factors for which information can be gathered (Saunders and Thornhill, 2015).

3.7.4 Action research

In 1946, Lewin applied the term activity research. Management investigators have deciphered the term in an assortment of ways, yet there are only four ways given in the literature. The first underscores the reason for the exploration: research in real life instead of investigating the activity (Coghlan and Brannick, 2005) so that, for instance, the examination is preoccupied with the goal of hierarchical issues. Such could include the ramifications of progress, along with the individuals who experience the problems straightforwardly (Saunders and Thornhill, 2015).

3.7.5 Grounded theory

As per Goulding (2002), this technique is exceptionally accommodating for scrutiny before clarifying conduct; the accent is on creating and building hypotheses. As much of business and management is about individuals' practices, for instance, customers or workers, a grounded theory procedure can be utilized to investigate a broad scope of enterprise and management problems (Saunders and Thornhill, 2015).

3.7.6 Ethnography

Ethnography is firmly established in the inductive methodology. Ethnography includes the area of human sciences. The intention is to depict and clarify the social world the examination subjects occupy in the manner they would portray and describe it (Huberman and Miles, 2002). This is an examination methodology that is extremely tedious. The scrutiny occurs throughout a drawn-out time span, as the scientist needs to delve as far as possible into the social world being investigated (Huberman and Miles, 2002).

3.7.7 Archival research

This applies to regulatory records and reports as the primary source of information. The term archival can allude to later as well as recorded archives (Huberman and Miles, 2002).

3.8 Qualitative Research Method

Creswell (1998) suggests that qualitative researchers select a method for their study from the approaches of narrative inquiry, phenomenology, ethnography, case study, and grounded research. The research strategy is also closely linked to the research design and what the researcher aims to achieve – namely, to explore, describe or explain. This phenomenological study is exploratory and is centred on the function of middle managers in executing growth strategy at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa.

3.8.1 Interviews

The research interview is an interpersonal encounter between the researcher and the research participant, during which the researcher poses a series of prepared questions to the participant to gain their perceptions, attitudes, feelings, and experiences. Qualitative interviews were traditionally carried out face-to-face and later via the telephone (Farooq and De Villiers, 2017). However, the rise of electronic networks and the internet has seen a surge in using computer-mediated tools, such as Skype, to conduct research interviews. Opdenakker (2006) states that face-to-face interviews are beneficial in that social cues such as body language and voice intonation provide additional information to the researcher. Interviews via electronic communication mean that the researcher can interview people worldwide.

Depending on the nature of the information the researcher seeks, the researcher may interview individuals using an unstructured, structured, or semi-structured interview guide or the researcher may use a focus-group interview (Creswell, 1998).

3.8.1.1 Unstructured Interviews

The unstructured interview implies informal conversation between the researcher and the participant. Zhang and Wildermuth (2009: 240) draw attention to “the basic characteristics of unstructured interviews. The researcher comes to the interview with no predefined theoretical framework and thus no hypotheses and questions about the social realities under investigation; rather, the researcher has conversations with interviewees and generates questions in response

to the interviewees' narration. Consequently, each unstructured interview might generate data with different structures and patterns. An unstructured interview intends to expose the researcher to unanticipated themes and help them develop a better understanding of the interviewees' social reality from their perspective". This interview method necessitates detailed knowledge and intense preparation on the researcher's part to understand people's lives. The interview can yield rich data; however, the collected data can be time-consuming to transcribe and analyse (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2009).

3.8.1.2 Structured interviews

According to Cohen and Crabtree (2006), the structured interview one in which the researcher poses a standard set of predetermined questions to all participants in the same way and in the same order. The participants' responses are limited, with minimal room for variation; thus, these generate consistent data that can be compared across all participants. Structured interviews are best suited to topics in which the literature is highly developed, and there is no need to develop rapport between the researcher and the participant (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006).

3.8.1.3 Semi-structured interviews

The semi-structured interview is described by Longhurst (2009) as an informal conversation. This interview type has characteristics of both structured and unstructured interviews in that they contain both open-ended and closed questions. The researcher engages in these conversations consciously, systematically, and in a partially structured manner (Longhurst, 2009). The researcher has developed an interview guide containing predetermined questions to lead the interview (See Appendix A). However, as the discourse is flexible and progresses, the researcher may diverge from the guide to ask follow-up questions or probing questions to pursue topics that arise during the conversation. Semi-structured interviews may be face-to-face or carried out online using software such as Skype or Facetime (Longhurst, 2009).

In this research study, a semi-structured interview method was followed. The researcher and participants engaged in a formal interview. The researcher developed an interview guide comprising a set of predetermined, open-ended questions. Also, the researcher prepared a list of possible prompts to enable the researcher to make the best use of the opportunity to explore specific themes or responses that arose during the conversation. The researcher had to ask relevant questions about the study to gain insight into peoples' perceptions. The researcher had

to develop a rapport with the participants so that they would feel free to express their views. The interview was flexible and could deviate from the interview guide to follow the subjects of the conversation as they were disclosed. The researcher had to take care not to talk too quickly, to listen actively, and not to interrupt. The researcher attempted to take notes during the interview but also audio-recorded the discussion with each participant's permission, to enhance the interview data's accuracy.

3.9 Time Horizon

The fifth stratum of the 'research onion' is concerned with the time view in a research study. These can be either longitudinal or cross-sectional examinations. Saunders and Thornhill (2015) describe the cross-sectional study as a 'snapshot' and the longitudinal study as the 'diary perspective'. This means that longitudinal examinations are repeated over a prolonged period, while cross-sectional reports are constricted to a particular time frame. There was restricted time to complete this research report. Therefore, the time horizon utilized was cross-sectional to allow participants to reflect on how the strategy was implemented; and to elaborate on the role of middle managers. The growth strategy was implemented from 2018 to 2020 at a pulp and paper manufacturing facility in Durban, South Africa.

3.10 Target Population

The target group is defined as the "complete set of cases or group members that is the focus of the research inquiry, and from which a sample will be drawn" (Saunders and Thornhill, 2015: 729). This report's group comprised middle managers who were employees at a paper and pulp manufacturing facility in Durban.

The description of middle managers used in this research project was: "any manager below the CEO and one level above line workers and professionals" or "managers who operate in the 'middle' of the organizational hierarchy" (Rensburg & Venter, 2014). There were 50 such middle managers at the paper and pulp manufacturing facility, situated in Durban, who had had experience of how the growth strategy was actually implemented.

Participants had to meet a fundamental requirement for participating in the study. The participant:

(1) Must be a middle manager;

(2) Must have experienced a strategy execution process within the past two years, or as of now be engaged with a strategy execution at a high-level stage. Participants had to meet essential criteria for selection: (1) Participants had to be middle managers; (2) Participants had to have been through a strategy implementation process within the last two years.

This inclusion/exclusion criterion was critical. Key informants or only those with hands-on and adequate growth strategy experience between 2018 and 2020 were participants in this exploratory research.

The researcher interviewed fifteen (15) middle managers who met the above standards. A fifteen (15) sample size was considered fitting for personal exploration. The meetings would be semi-organized, in person, with open and exploratory inquiries to comprehend middle managers' role in strategy execution (Saunders and Thornhill, 2015). Approval for access to perform interviews with the targeted sample was sought from the pulp and paper organization's gatekeepers.

3.11 Sampling

Datta (2018) states that the sample selected is critical to the study in that it will impact the generalizability of the research findings. According to Saunders and Thornhill (2015), sampling methods available to researchers can be separated into probability and non-probability sampling.

In probability sampling, the chance of a participant being selected is the same for all participants. Datta (2018) describes the advantages of probability sampling as reducing frequent mistakes and sampling partiality; reasoning drawn from the sample is generalizable to the population. The disadvantage is that the technique requires extraordinary effort, is time-consuming, and is expensive.

By contrast, non-probability sampling provides a scope of alternate techniques to choose a sample where the probability of each participant being selected is unknown. Saunders and Thornhill (2015) describe the methods available to the researcher as quota, purposive, volunteer, and haphazard. In this study, a purposive sampling technique was used. The researcher was guided by Cooper and Schindler (2012: 152), who explained that the researcher

utilizing purposive sampling uses their judgment and selects participants for their “unique characteristics, experience, attitudes or perceptions” to best answer the research questions and meet the research objectives.

It is essential to be more specific in that this study adopted a stratified purposive sampling, focusing on the strata of those employees who qualified as middle-manager employee. The selection criterion for this study was: middle managers, having had experience of a strategy execution operation within the past two years, or currently in a progressive phase of a strategic execution initiative. The total number of participants in this study was fifteen (15), of which seven were men, the rest women.

3.12 Data-gathering Process

“A semi-structured interview is a method of data collection in which the interviewer asks about a set of themes using some predetermined questions but varies the order in which the themes are covered, and questions asked” (Saunders and Thornhill, 2015). The investigator conducted pilot meetings to survey the clarity of the interview inquiries. Five middle managers participated in the pilot study, and changes were made to confine the investigation to the research questions.

The investigator contacted the chosen middle managers by phone to organize a meeting. Before the interview, a guide was emailed to the selected middle manager, highlighting the key questions and giving them time to prepare for the interview. The interview purpose was initially explained to each participant. The middle managers were advised that the study was interested in their answers on their experiences and perceptions. The idea was to collect in-depth data through face-to-face interviews. The individual, in-depth interviews with each middle manager were recorded to ensure the accuracy of the data process. On average, the interview took 45 minutes. The interviews were conducted at a pulp and paper manufacturing facility in Durban, South Africa. Data collection ceased after reaching data saturation. In research, data saturation indicates the moment in the exploration development when no additional data is revealed in the information assessment. This effect communicates to scholars that data gathering may end.

3.13 Data Analysis

Interview information was transliterated before record assessment. During data analysis, the data is allocated brief, succinct codes, known as thematic analysis. In most instances, the codes are keywords or short phrases (Saldaña, 2016). The researcher noted patterns and topics that commonly emerge from the data (Neuendorf, 2019). Braun and Clarke (2006: 79) describe thematic analysis as “a method of identifying, analyzing and reporting themes or patterns within data” (Bryman, 2012).

The following are four critical factors in qualitative data analysis:

1. Encounters, observations, and replies are recorded and analysed.
2. The original document is thoroughly read, with crucial text chunks marked.
3. Coded topics, subcategories, and divisions are identified.
4. Patterns that create the meaning of essential, meaningful clusters are sought. The researcher explains the relevance of the themes or categories to the research participants.

The researcher followed the stages of Braun and Clarke (2006) and reviewed the survey texts countless times to become acquainted with the material so that patterns could be detected.

Data were categorized and coded into themes and sub-themes: (1) to understand the role of middle managers in the conducting of a business growth plan of action between 2018 and 2020 at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa; (2) to assess how middle managers contributed between 2018 and 2020 to the successful conducting of business growth strategy at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa; (3) to evaluate how middle managers between 2018 and 2020 were supported in the process of the business growth plan of action implementation at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa; (4) to examine how middle managers can be coached to enhance implementation of strategic growth goals at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa.

The researchers then grouped and patterns of the complete dataset were correlated before ultimately labelling and defining the patterns.

3.14 Research Quality

Four requirements must be fulfilled, according to Guba and Lincoln (1994): credibility, transferability, reliability, and confirmability.

3.14.1 Credibility

The degree to which the information obtained and its interpretation are distinctive, genuine, and convincing is called credibility (Guba, 1981). In many other terms, credibility refers to how relevant, dependable, and persuasive the research is. The triangulation method and member check are used to accomplish this. Triangulation is “the use of more than one method or source of data in the study of the social phenomenon so that conclusions may be cross-checked” (Bryman, 2012).

The researcher employed member check in this study because respondents were allowed to remark on the translated data.

3.14.2 Confirmability

The degree to which the study’s conclusions can be corroborated by many in the area is confirmed. After examining the evidence, the essential issue for confirmability is to decrease or even remove the investigator’s ingrained prejudices from the conclusions (Guba, 1981).

According to Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2011), for the study to meet this requirement, steps must be designed to ensure that the analysis focuses on the respondents’ opinions and knowledge rather than the researcher’s qualities and preferences. This is the extent to which the research results are supported by the data collected (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). The researcher utilized various approaches to increase the integrity of the findings:

- The conversations were documented on a listening device and in the form of documents to guarantee that essential information was not omitted throughout the conversations.
- To portray the role of middle managers in strategy execution from 2018 to 2020, the research study included quotes of participants.
- During the discussions, interruptions were completely avoided.

3.14.3 Dependability

Guba (1981) reminds that dependability describes the tendency to arrive at simultaneous conclusions under identical conditions. However, because the interpretive technique is based on various readings of actuality, it is difficult for the researcher to reach a comparable result. The investigator may infer findings that are impacted by the researcher's perception of the world by their very character. The researcher maintained the voice recordings, research notes, and copies of the data obtained to demonstrate that the correct process had been followed. To assure dependability, the investigator has included thorough information on the research procedure or attestation in this report.

3.14.4 Transferability

Transferability is about the investigator ensuring that the information provides a good perspective for anyone reviewing the research results to connect to their setting and circumstances (Lincoln and Guba, 1989). The degree to which study results can be applied to distinct circumstances or demographics other than the original study is referred to as transferability. Transferability can be accomplished when investigators offer extensive descriptions of the scope of the study so that viewers can determine whether the findings can be applied to other situations.

The investigator has included full details on methodology, conditions, and subjects in this investigation so that readers can apply the conclusions to comparable positions. This piece of data can aid any audience in determining the significance of the data in connection to the research questions.

3.15 Ethical Considerations

The researcher requested ethical endorsement as per the University of KwaZulu-Natal guidelines. Approval for access to perform interviews with the targeted sample was sought through the pulp and paper organization's gatekeepers.

A letter was composed and conveyed to the participants to provide them with the entire goal and intent of the exploration task. Every participant consented to an arrangement structure at the initiation of the meeting. The investigator clarified the reasons for the review, introducing the setting of the meeting (Creswell, 1998). Each participant took the study voluntarily, without unnecessary strain (Saunders and Thornhill, 2015). The reason for the meeting was to survey

the process, not the individual or organization, and participants were asked to react given their encounters and discernments. Moreover, the meetings' privacy was maintained, guaranteeing that the particular individual or organization referenced would be made anonymous before the investigation and incorporated into the final exploration report (Creswell, 1998).

Consideration was taken to guarantee reliability in setting up the subjective variant of the transcript to ensure the information's quality and legitimacy for examination. Each record of the meeting was kept as a discrete archive and was checked for typographical blunders in preparation for the analysis (Creswell, 1998). The names of participants and associations were removed, and records were anonymized in light of the informed consent agreement endorsed by the participants and the questioner at the start of the interview (Saunders and Thornhill, 2015).

3.14.1 Voluntary participation

Kuper *et al.* (2009) assert that volunteers are autonomous and have the right to accept or refuse to participate in a study. In this research study, middle managers, employees at a pulp and paper manufacturing facility in Durban, were the research participants. Participants were told that involvement was entirely by choice, and that they could exit the study without any consequences. The participant information sheet was given to participants before the interview.

3.14.2 Informed consent

As participants in this study, middle manager employees had the right to know the purpose of the study and what the researcher hoped to derive from the study. In this research study, participants were given an introductory letter and asked to sign the informed consent form, indicating that they understood clearly what the study was about; and that their consent was based on being fully informed of the study.

3.14.3 No harm to participants

The investigator guaranteed that no harm was caused to participants by being forthright and clarifying what was involved in this review. The investigator did not ask questions that could humiliate or compromise participants (Creswell, 1998).

3.14.4 Confidentiality and anonymity

Privacy was fundamental to this review. Participants from the pulp and paper producing office were informed that only the researcher and the research supervisor would have admittance to the accounts and records (Creswell, 1998). Anonymity was guaranteed as no identifiers were recorded with the responses. The investigator has utilized code names rather than real names in detailing the review data. Participants were told that their names, offices, or work titles would be referenced in the exploration report (Creswell, 1998).

3.14.5 Ethical clearance

The investigator acquired ethical clearance from the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal before the initiation of the review. The investigator guaranteed that the study was ethically conducted. The appendix contains a copy of the ethical clearance certificate provided by the University of KwaZulu-Natal (see Appendix A).

3.15 Summary of the Chapter

The study has only used one type of data. This is a weakness; the use of documents as data sources would have helped to understand more about the growth strategy and its execution. Future researchers must navigate the challenge of organizations treating strategy documents as secrets that are not readily available or accessible for research, especially in very competitive organizations.

It is also important to underline that the study's results cannot be generalized to all pulp and paper manufacturing organizations. The study selected participants using purposive sampling, excluding others involved in strategy implementation. However, the results are transferable to similar contexts to show strategy implementation in pulp and paper manufacturing. Furthermore, the study has adopted a middle management view to explore strategy implementation at a pulp and paper manufacturing company. This way, the views of non-middle management employees at a pulp and paper manufacturing company were excluded. Without the perspective of other key players in strategy implementation, the study provides a partial view. Another limitation of the study is the use of a relatively small sample. This limitation was mitigated by focusing on an in-depth and rich understanding of the relevant issues from the viewpoint of actors with lived experiences. Lastly, the interviews were conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. In-depth interactions with the participants required adherence to COVID-19 pandemic safety protocols. It is possible that this has affected the freedom of exchange by the researcher and the participant, as they had to observe social distance and wear masks, among other constraints.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of this investigation. The chapter begins by offering a variety of responses on the function of middle managers between 2018 and 2020 in the enforcement of business strategy at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa. The chapter will then present how middle managers contributed to successfully implementing the business growth strategy at the pulp and paper manufacturing company. Views come next on how middle managers were supported in the process of business growth strategy implementation. Lastly, the chapter will examine how middle managers can be coached to contribute to the successful implementation of growth strategies.

4.2 Themes on understanding the Role Middle Managers played in the Implementation of Business Strategy between 2018 and 2020 at a Pulp and Paper Manufacturing Company in Durban, South Africa

Table 4.1: Themes that emerged from the Investigation into the Role Middle Managers play in the implementation of Business Strategy

Thematic focus	Frequency
The thematic focus of the role middle managers play.	
1. The sense-making and sense-giving roles	4
2. The implementation roles	12
3. The interpersonal, informational, and decisional cluster roles.	9
The thematic focus is on what enables the middle manager's role.	
4. Business key processes (systems and procedures, organization, structure, processes linked to policies) enable the role of middle managers.	13

5. Staff enable the role of middle managers.	9
6. Multi-disciplinary teams enable the role of middle managers.	10
The thematic focus is on what can be done differently to enable the middle manager's role.	
7. The involvement of middle managers at the strategy formulation stage can enable the middle manager's role.	8
8. Middle managers' empowerment in decision-making can enable their role.	7

4.2.1 Sense-making and sense-giving role

Four MMs indicated that middle managers play a sense-making and sense-giving role. The findings reflect that middle managers receive the strategy from top management; they make significance of it, passing on the importance to their personnel. One middle manager explained how he sees himself within the given strategy. The MM broke it down to the staff, as depicted below:

MM012: *“My role involved knowing what the strategic direction is, seeing myself in there, and then I break it down into actions and performance indicators for my department first and then for my staff” (MM012).*

Furthermore, one participant stated that he derives the critical performance indicators for his team from the company strategy. This manager further noted that this link is critical in aligning strategies vertically between senior management and the lower shop-floor staff, as depicted below:

MM015: *“As a MM, I develop the key KPIs of my team, which I translate/derive from the core company strategy. This link is critical, so basically, I ensure that we as a department are aligned to the company strategy – we need to find ourselves there” (MM015).*

Another MM outlined that his role involves understanding and appreciating top management's strategic changes and direction before translating such to his team, to gain support.

MM014: *“My role involves understanding and appreciating the strategic changes and direction from top management and then translating that to my team to gain support and buy-in” (MM014).*

One MM stated that top management delivers strategy to middle managers, who must then convey such to the shop floor. He said that it must make proper sense for the shop floor to meet the strategic goals, as shown below:

MM013: *“The top management deliver the ‘raw’ strategic goals and changes to my level, and it becomes my job to ‘polish’ and make it simple to the shop-floor – it must make proper sense to them so that we meet the strategy mandate” (MM013).*

4.2.2 Implementation role

Twelve MMs stated that their role includes implementation. One MM delineated the MM’s participation in the execution role as follows:

MM010: *“I am involved with the shop-floor – I deal directly with the implementation of the strategic projects – we drive the process and hence product. We, as middle managers, drive directly the strategy implementation and not the strategy formulation through the people that we work with. We are the implementers of strategy – we drive strategy through the teams that we work, we are the executors of strategy implementation” (MM010).*

Another MM elucidated the key obligations connected with their execution role as follows:

MM007: *“As a process engineer, you make sure you we know what's our projected targets. We need to look at cost reduction strategies. We look at optimization. So basically, it is looking at where we can improve and applying design concepts and techniques which we have gained in our tertiary education. Applying that to actually see where we can actually save and expand. So by doing that, you know all the different unit operations, you can actually see you in small quantities, but overall be able to contribute to that overall strategy for that business, so it's as a process engineer. You play your part in your area, but that will ultimately contribute to the overall*

strategy for the business... that's basically conducted in the form of projects troubleshooting and optimization..”(MM007).

4.2.3 The interpersonal, informational, and decisional cluster role

Nine of the MMs indicated that they play interpersonal, informational, and decisional cluster roles as middle managers. One of the middle managers illustrated that the middle manager plays many roles – from being a mediator to a communicator, motivator, coach and team leader.

MM002: “It’s a number of roles, one being a mediator between the top management and the shop-floor – in terms of delivering the objectives of the strategy. A communicator in terms of communicating the strategy to the shop floor. A motivator in terms of motivating the team that I lead to achieve the strategy. A coaching role for my subordinates in terms of expected outcomes of the strategy. A team leader in terms of leading the team to achieve the strategic objectives” (MM002).

One MM reiterated that the middle manager’s role is involved in the day-to-day work in being a trainer, coach, leader, and communicator. This was reported by one of the middle managers as depicted below:

MM004: “Day to day activities implementation linked to the strategic goals. To facilitate the MDT, to coach the team to ensure that we are aligned to the strategic goals of the business. Training role, coaching role. Communication to the team about the strategic goals and how we achieve them” (MM004).

Another MM spoke on the communicating, implementer, coaching, training, and leadership roles, as depicted in the paragraph below:

MM005: “Implementation of the strategic goals for my team. To lead the MDT to achieve the department goals. This involves coaching the team, leading the team, and training role” (MM005).

One MM commented on the liaison role, as depicted below. The middle manager also reiterated the communication role and coaching role.

MM006: *“Hour to hour strategic initiatives implementation. I am a communicator – for strategy implementation. I am a mediator between top management and the shop-floor. I am a motivator and coach for the MDT team members that I lead”* (MM006).

Another middle manager spoke to the liaison role with the senior management for strategic direction. The middle manager also reiterated the leadership roles that middle managers play, along with the monitoring role and communication role, as depicted in the paragraph below:

MM008: *“As a production manager, my role is to lead the MDT and to ensure that we get the right production levels. The right amount of steam and power is achieved. Team leadership for the MDT team. To respect each other and in each and every person that is in that same knows his responsibilities and roles that needed for us to achieve their goals, that and their KPI that we put in front of us. As for the guys reporting to me, KPI’s objectives that we put in front of them, I ensure that I have follow up and keep and coaching them whenever they deviate from those things. So that is why I keep to the tower and show that we are keeping up with that strategy. I liaise with the HOD’s whenever I need some more information, daily basis intervals. To get a clear direction, and even the guys that report to me, to know what exactly what is going on, and what is the next step after we have achieved it”*(MM008).

A MM revealed that they play the role of an inter-mediator, a leading role, an enforcer of strategy, a coach, a leader, and an enforcer role. This is outlined in the paragraph below:

MM009: *“As a E and I engineer, I lead a multi-disciplinary team to achieve the strategic goals for the Department that we support. I am an inter-mediator in the translation of the strategy to the teams. I also am an enforcer of the strategy implementation for the department. I also play a motivator, coach, and team leader to the team. I lead various projects that are for the strategy implementation”*(MM009).

One MM stated that middle management plays an idea-generation role for the department. He further noted that as a middle manager, he plays an entrepreneurial role for the team he leads.

MM013: *“I more often act as a generator of ideas – I generate ideas to move the Department forward and implement those ideas. Some and many come from my team – most of these are business-oriented goals. How do we improve this year on EandI from a continuous improvement basis. I consider myself as an entrepreneur but within the company to support the strategic goals”*(MM013).

Another middle manager commented that, as a middle manager, he works as a resource allocator. He places the right resources for the right job. He said that he locates resources in his department based on their skills and experience to meet the strategic goals for the business; this is stated below:

MM014: *“I consider myself as placing the right people for the right job to meet my goals. I lead my team that way, and that is why I am very successful at what I do. I locate the resources in my department based on their skills/experience in order to meet my strategic goals for the department and the business as a whole”*(MM014).

A participant stated that, as an MM, he works as a change management agent. He handles the disturbances that come with strategic changes.

MM015: *“I am a change management champion. Strategy is an overall change, so I lead my team towards fulfilling the vision 2020 goals. I handle the disturbance that comes with that, its either good or bad, I have to find a way of cushioning that to the shop-floor from the top management”* (MM015).

4.2.4 Business processes and systems enable the middle manager’s role

Thirteen MMs suggested that business processes and systems allow the middle manager’s role. The managers noted that the set of processes and practices are used to align and control the organization. One manager stated that the finance, the enterprise resource planning, and the safety system enable the role of the middle management as set out below:

MM002: *“The MDT team (multi-disciplinary team) system. The finance system (budgets, capital expenditure), the safety system, the ERP system, the safety system. The hierarchical system”* (MM002).

An MM remarked that the business processes allow for decision-making and monitoring for the strategy implementation, as depicted below:

MM004: *“The MDT system. The ABB system. The SAP system. The learning system (U demy), Sappi learning. Logbooks communication. Day-to-day monitoring on the logbooks. The logging of results in the PHS systems. These enable for decision making and monitoring the implementation of the day to day activities for strategic implementation”*(MM004).

The human resources systems allow the middle manager to manage staff adequately, according to one MM; he further noted that the enterprise resource planning system allows for material handling and management.

MM009: *“Data monitoring systems are enabling to measure the energy usage in terms of electricity, water, and steam. The ERP system allows for the material handling and management. The HR systems ensure that we manage the staff adequately. The financial systems empower my department to allocate resources for strategic goals”* (MM009).

Another MM offered that some of the business processes and systems guide his actions and work efficiently for him.

MM008: *“Lean management tools, of which we are currently using, which is the Sappi 11 fundamentals which are working very well for me. Following those eleven fundamentals, they telling me which meetings must I must I create for my team. Things that I might implement based on the 11 fundamentals to work efficiently – they are systems of 5S problem-solving. The lean and me office is also assisting the teams that they are working towards one goal”* (MM008).

According to another MM, the company policies enable the middle manager’s role.

MM003: *“The MDT team, the policy (training), the theoretical and practical availability and application during commissioning in line with the policies to get them competent. Online courses, getting the vendors for training material to make it successful for implementation. The experts to bring about the knowledge”*(MM003).

4.2.5 Staff enable the middle manager's role

Nine MMs stated that the staff is the organization's most valuable asset. One middle manager described the importance of staff as below:

MM010: *“People, as a resource, are very critical – people and the teamwork, and the different disciplines, and the support of the people from different stakeholder - that is the main factor that enables strategy implementation– people being involved from the development of the strategy and the implementation of the strategy. Support from the different disciplines of the organizations and overall the lead team, whom we call our senior management – their buy into the strategy, and ensuring that we get full comprehension and involvement of the entire manufacturing plant with regards to the strategy”*(MM010).

4.2.6 Multi-disciplinary teams enable the middle manager's role

Ten MMs stated that the multidisciplinary teams enable the middle manager's role. A multidisciplinary unit approach conveys professionals with assorted skills with which they can resolve a problem. The multidisciplinary teams allow for MMs to work together to achieve common goals within each business unit:

MM007: *“Apart from that, we have set up multidisciplinary teams which allow for us to work together to achieve our common goal within each business unit so that itself has a big contribution to actually make sure we reach our KPI in our individual sections, so I think those are the biggest systems. Getting aligned and I think - I think within our department as having that that common. - goal and knowing what we are trying to achieve, I think that that makes the biggest difference to allow for us to successfully implement”*(MM007).

4.2.7 Middle managers' involvement in strategy formulation can enable their role

Eight of the MMs commented that more involvement of middle managers at strategy formulation stages would enable their role in strategy enforcement. One of the MMs described this aspect of involvement as follows:

MM010: "More involvement and not up to down type of approach, people need to be involved from the inception of ideas – people need to be involved from the inception of decisions and not just be told that the decision has been made and this is how you implement, it just becomes more of a hand to mouth situation, rather than involvement and not using your abilities, as a developed middle manager, and it also hinders your growth in terms of thinking and strategy involvement in business" (MM010).

Another MM suggested that middle management be more involved in strategy formulation and also in decision making, as stated below:

MM009: "There is too much reliance on hods for decision making, which delays things. It also dis-empowers the middle management team as they have to touch base with the HOD's before making the final decision. The middle management should be more involved in strategy formulation and also on the decision-making" (MM009).

4.2.8 Middle manager's empowerment on decision-making can enable their role

Seven MMs stated that middle managers should be empowered to make decisions. One middle manager described this as follows:

MM004: "We need to have space to make decisions and give feedback – rather than to have a manager to check on you every hour. Improvement on the escalation protocol – so that middle managers can make decisions without consultations. Clarified protocol – to break the micromanagement from middle management to top management. This involves budgets, operations, downtime without consultation. Micromanagement limits the role of middle management" (MM004).

Another MM reiterated that middle management should not be micromanaged: such retards their development. He stated the following:

MM010: *“More involvement and not up to down type of approach, people need to be involved from the inception of ideas – people need to be involved from the inception of decisions and not just be told that the decision has been made and this is how you implement, it just becomes more of a hand to mouth situation, rather than involvement and not using your abilities, as a developed middle manager, and it also hinders your growth in terms of thinking and strategy involvement in business”*(MM010).

One MM remarked that there is too much reliance on the heads of departments for decision-making, which delays strategy implementation. Such disempowers the middle management:

MM009: *“There is too much reliance on HOD’s for decision making, which delays things. It also disempowers the middle management team as they have to touch base with the HOD’s before making the final decision. The middle management should be more involved in strategy formulation and also on the decision-making”* (MM009).

There should be a reduction of micromanagement for middle managers, according to one participant. The reduction of micromanagement allows for growth.

MM005: *“Reduction of micromanagement from leaders – this allows for growth. The involvement of the middle management at strategy formulation”* (MM005).

4.3 Themes on exploring how Middle Managers contributed to the Successful Implementation of Business Growth Strategy between 2018 and 2020 at a Pulp and Paper Manufacturing Company in Durban, South Africa

Table 4.2: Themes that emerged from the Investigation into Middle Managers’ contribution to the Successful Implementation of Business Growth Strategy

Thematic focus	Frequency
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1. Performing the planning, organizing, leadership, and controlling activities.	14
2. Skills, training, and educational background are enabling factors for middle management contribution.	7
3. Facilitated coaching could enable middle managers to contribute towards strategy implementation.	8

4.3.1 Performing the planning, organizing, leadership, and controlling activities

Fourteen MMs indicated that middle management performs planning, organizing, leadership, and controlling activities. One explained it as below:

MM002: “Leading the MDT team to achieve the objectives of the strategy. Communication daily of the strategic objectives to the team. Planning around the strategic objectives from a daily basis, weekly basis, and monthly basis. Liaising with senior management on prioritizing the strategic objectives for the department” (MM002).

The controlling and leading activities were explained by one participant, as below:

MM004: “To clearly communicate what the strategy is and what is expected on the MDT team, and what role each member is expected to achieve the strategic goals for the company for engineering, safety, and production. To monitor if there are deviations and bring back to control. Generate ideas on plant and operational improvement and minimize challenges. Come up with capital projects to mitigate risks, and for some things not working according to standard. Coach people by encouraging them to do their part, as some individuals need motivation to make them contribute. To mentor the team I am leading. To encourage the team, so that my goals are met easily by the team” (MM004).

Another MM indicated the role played in the execution of projects as below:

MM007: “As a process engineer, you make sure you we know what's our projected targets. We need to look at cost reduction strategies. We look at

optimization. So basically, it is looking at where we can improve and applying design concepts and techniques which we have gained in our tertiary education. Applying that to actually see where we can actually save and expand. So by doing that, you know all the different unit operations, you can actually see you in in small quantities, but overall be able to contribute to that overall strategy for that business, so it's as a process engineer. You play your part in your area, but that will ultimately contribute to the overall strategy for the business... that's basically conducted in the form of projects troubleshooting and optimization” (MM007).

One MM was involved in the organization’s coordination of resources.

MM010: “My involvement is ensuring that I organize the necessary resources at all times, coordinate the resources, and resolve whatever challenges that might hinder the success of strategic projects, mainly through the involvement of resources such as people and equipment – ensuring that is available at all times, and it's coordinated well—also adding or changing or implementing changes as you move along with the plan for the strategy implementation” (MM010).

A MM suggested that succession planning and development activities contribute to strategy implementation.

MM012: “The strategic sourcing of HR resources. The succession planning and development activities with the clients I service, and the engagement survey activities” (MM012).

4.3.2 Skills, training, and educational background are enabling factors for middle management contribution

Seven MMs indicated that skills, training and educational background are enabling factors for middle management contribution. A middle manager stated that his educational experience enabled him to contribute to strategy implementation.

MM002: “My exposure to strategic implementation from various background. The educational background. The communicated annual objectives and targets for the department” (MM002).

One MM believed that it is the availability of the training systems that allow for strategy implementation:

MM003: *“Classroom sessions, training venues, commissioning. Training systems (online courses)” (MM003).*

Another MM indicated that his educational background helped him greatly in implementing strategy.

MM010: *“The broader perspective on things, having the goal in mind – mainly I must say the background – education has helped me a lot on how I implement strategy and how I succeeded in implanting strategy. Well, the team as well – the involvement and buy-in from my team- them being the advocates of what we are trying to drive has contributed quite significantly—factors like my other colleagues being involved and getting the support from my manager or my leader also—just being responsible and taking responsibility and accountability – that this has to be a success” (MM010).*

The technological background of one MM allowed for the ease of implementation of the strategy.

MM008: *“I am technologically sound person; I contribute my knowledge to the operations department and the Technical department. I am good at building a team; as a team, we sing one song. I do the implementation of the 11 fundamentals for the MDT team. I plan and organize the activities that support the 11 fundamentals in terms of resource planning, safety initiatives, performing RCA’s and also doing Gemba walks” (MM008).*

4.3.5 Facilitated coaching will enable middle managers to contribute towards strategy implementation.

Eight MM personnel indicated that facilitated coaching would enable middle managers to execute the strategy. One of the MMs suggested that facilitated coaching would develop them.

MM007: *“Middle man, should be empowered more to be part of the strategy. Facilitate coaching for the middle management to develop them” (MM007).*

Another MM reiterated that coaching and regular reviews would reduce micromanagement.

MM004: *“Micromanagement that needs to be minimized. Coaching through regular reviews and meetings” (MM004).*

One MM indicated that middle managers need to be trained and developed adequately through facilitated coaching.

MM006: *“The middle management should be trained and developed adequately. Facilitate mentoring and coaching for them” (MM006).*

Another MM indicated that middle management would be empowered through the facilitated coaching process.

MM007: *“I think more empowerment would make a big difference, being empowered to make the decisions. Less micromanagement so that you and your teams are not restricted; you actually have that freedom to be innovative. I think that would actually make a difference because. This could easily be facilitated through coaching and mentoring processes” (MM007).*

A MM stated that the middle management would be empowered to operate outside the box through the coaching process.

MM013: *“If we can be allowed to do things outside the box and supported on whatever outcome experienced. Through guided protocols, the MM can be empowered which is another form of coaching” (MM013).*

4.4 Themes on how MMs were supported in the Procedure of Business Strategy Execution between 2018 and 2020 at a Pulp and Paper Manufacturing Company in Durban, South Africa

Table 4.3: Themes that emerged from the Investigation into Support for MMs in the Procedure of Business Strategy Execution

Thematic focus	Frequency
1. The leadership team / top management support.	12
2. Availability of resources (Finance, Human resources, infrastructure-related) to execute strategy support.	14

3. More support is required for middle management empowerment on decision making, leadership, and skills, and development.	11
4. More involvement of the middle managers at strategy formulation stages is required.	3

4.4.1 The leadership team/top management provides support for the middle management

Twelve MMs stated that leadership support enabled the role of the middle management during strategy implementation at the pulp and paper manufacturing plant. One of the middle managers articulated this point of view as below:

MM010: “...sometimes it's important that the leader support you and also him availing all the resources that are required to complete the project strategically” (MM010).

Another middle manager stated that he receives support through the immediate supervisor in the following way:

MM004: “Weekly meetings with management – so if there are requirements for financial support are made there. We do get support from that meeting. If there is a need for human resources as well, my manager does that as well” (MM004).

Several MMs stated that the support from the senior management comes through the availability of the resources, namely, human resources and financial resources, as stated below:

MM013: “The finance/budget availability, the HR resources availability, the lean manufacturing tools availability” (MM013).

Another reiterated the management support, as below:

MM002: “Budget support. Capital expenditure project availability. SAP system availability. Management support. Financial support. Human resources support” (MM002).

One MM affirmed management support, as below:

MM005: *“Management support. Financial support. Talent and development support. The safety system support” (MM005).*

Another MM attested to the leadership and management support:

MM006: *“The leadership and management support. The financial support. The MDT support. The safety team support. The learning team support” (MM006).*

A MM confirmed that the leadership team supports the middle manager’s role, as stipulated below:

MM009: *“The leadership team, the financial systems, the management teams, the HR team, the Safety teams, and the finance teams” (MM009).*

One MM stated that it is through the budget availability and human resources availability facilitated by the senior leadership that they feel supported:

MM013: *“The finance/budget availability, the HR resources availability, the lean manufacturing tools availability” (MM013).*

The MM’s support was articulated differently, as below:

MM012: *“The senior management tone on strategy, the MDT teams, and the HR policies that are in place. The people within the company which are a resource” (MM012).*

An MM opined that it is senior management that provides support for their respective roles:

MM014: *“Lots of support from other Departments, IT, Finance, HR, Safety and Senior management” (MM014).*

One MM commented that it is the clarity of the strategy at the corporate level that defines support:

MM015: *“Leadership clarity on strategy at corporate levels, the management team support on the strategic meetings, the viability of finance and budget” (MM015).*

4.4.2 Availability of resources (finance, human resources, infrastructure-related) to execute strategy support

Resources as tools refer to physical infrastructure (cars, telephones, and computers) and systems, which are critical tools in strategy execution. Organizational infrastructure also includes information technology (IT), which many middle managers highlighted as essential. Many middle managers listed human and financial resources as crucial to the strategy execution. An example from one interview illustrates this point:

MM010: *“Additional resources including manpower and finance are required to support strategy implementation” (MM010).*

Another MM echoed similar sentiments by stating as below:

MM009: *“Budget support. Capital expenditure project availability. SAP system availability. Management support. Financial support. Human resources support is required resources and tools to support strategy implementation” (MM009)...*

Other MMs, however, found the ERP system a valuable tool:

MM007: *“We have the SAP systems which allow us to actually manage materials and from that perspective manage costs” (MM007).*

A MM articulated that other tools also support strategy implementation:

MM007: *“Data monitoring, sorry process monitoring, and data analysis tools that we have, so we’ve got the ABB system, which allows us to view the process and draw on trends. We have quality control systems which allow us to monitor and make adjustments when necessary” (MM007). .*

One MM echoed the change management resources as supportive of the strategy implementation:

MM010: *“Microsoft, the entire Microsoft package, the Microsoft Project Planning systems – the ERP systems – the finance systems – the leadership team – the MDT systems – safety systems – the change process that the business has – the PMRS system (MOC) system – once you go through that you manage change more – change business process” (MM010).*

For another MM, the availability of capital expenditure resources and IT infrastructure supported him as he went about performing strategy implementation, as below:

MM003: “Training Policy, Strategy. Budget for the training program. The extension of contracts. Funds viability. Expert availability. Autonomy on how to carry the training programme for the project. I was able to make decisions. Safety department for Covid-19 protocols. Regional team. Availability of the training venues to keep the programme going. Vendors online training. Contracted management. Online courses. The vendor training was set out for the training programme. Shared folder system. IT systems. Projects drawing and updates” (MM003).

Other interviewees stated that it is the human resources that support strategy implementation:

MM013: “The finance/budget availability, the HR resources availability, the lean manufacturing tools availability” (MM013).

4.4.3 More support required for middle management empowerment on decision-making, leadership and skills, and development

The extract below from an interview with a MM illustrated the point on middle management training and development requirements and needs:

MM013: “More skills development – we need more skills to run this company adequately. We need to train and develop our MM. we also need to be exposed to the lean manufacturing system as well” (MM013).

A MM asserted that there should be more autonomy in decision-making for middle managers, and less micromanagement:

MM002: “More autonomy in terms of the project implementation and decision making. Less micromanagement” (MM002).

One MM echoed a similar sentiment that middle managers should be allowed to make their own decisions:

MM005: *“Micromanagement that needs to be minimized. Coaching through regular reviews and meetings. The middle managers should be allowed to make their own decisions” (MM005).*

Many MMs shared the above sentiments regarding middle management decision-making empowerment. One middle manager articulated the point in this manner:

MM008: *“Middle management is scared to take decisions. They should improve plant knowledge for ease of decisions. Since we are changing from old doings, each department can have the lean manufacturing change agent to facilitate the best practise for the MDT” (MM008).*

Another MM, when asked what could be done differently to support middle management, stated the following:

MM009: *“Middle management decision autonomy” (MM009).*

Another interviewee stated that there is a need for training and development of middle management:

MM006: *“The training and development of the middle management” (MM006).*

4.4.4 More involvement of the middle managers at strategy formulation stages is required

Some MMs interviewed remarked that the involvement of the middle management at the strategy formulation stage is one way to support the middle management:

MM010: *“Involvement from the start communicates on the knowledge about the project – because you are involved every step of the way - the more you know, the wiser decisions you make for better strategy implementation” (MM010).*

Another MM echoed a similar point of view, as stated below:

MM001: *“Middle man. Should be more empowered and involved when strategy planning is done” (MM001).*

4.5 Themes on Middle Manager Coaching so as to contribute to the Successful Implementation of Growth Strategies at the Pulp and Paper Manufacturing Company in Durban, South Africa

Table 4.4: Themes that emerged from the Investigation on Middle Managers being coached so as to contribute to the Successful Implementation of Growth Strategies

Thematic focus	Frequency
1. There is no facilitated coaching for middle managers at the pulp and paper manufacturing company.	10
2. Coaching enables middle managers' roles.	13
3. Leadership skills, change management, project management, strategy formulation, and decision-making are areas that middle management can be coached in.	14

4.5.1 Most middle managers were not coached at the pulp and paper manufacturing company

Ten interviewed middle managers stated that there is no facilitated middle-management coaching. One of the middle managers was asked whether he had ever been coached. He replied the following:

MM007: *“No, no, not really. Ultimately you, once you in the position, you are expected to have all the solutions, I think this has been identified as a barrier and there has been changes in instructions to actually try and tackle this so.. There is a plan going forward to actually improve on the coaching aspects” (MM007).*

Many middle managers echoed with a simple “No” answer when asked whether they had been coached.

Some of the interviewees stated that the coaching is not structured – they learned from their previous manager. One middle manager articulated this point, as below:

MM004: *“Learnt from the next manager – been told what is required, and you learn from the other managers. Training that you get is how to use the SAP system – which is the only training I reached from this role” (MM004).*

Another interviewee stated that he had not been properly coached, only to some extent:

MM001: *“To some extent, but more could be done” (MM001).*

Some managers had a different view, remarking that they had been coached, but not from a structured process:

MM002: *“Yes, I was. But it’s not a structured approach coaching process” (MM002).*

Another manager stated that he had been coached but through a project team, as stated below:

MM003: *“Coaching came from the expertise that were brought to the project. The senior members of the project team, the vendors, the expertise. I was guide on how I can improve to reach the objective of the project. I had feedback from the teams on how we could improve. The challenge came when we had different people giving different instructions” (MM003).*

4.5.2 Coaching enables middle-management role contribution

Fourteen of the interviewed middle managers commented that coaching helps middle management contribute toward strategy implementation.

4.5.3 Leadership skills, change management, project management, strategy formulation, decision making are areas that middle management can be coached at

Leadership skills, change management, project management, strategy formulation, and decision-making are areas in which middle management can be coached. The interviewed middle management indicated this. One view from a middle manager is given below:

MM001: *“Areas outside your direct field of expertise. Leadership skills, change management, project management, strategy implementation, and formulation are areas that middle managers can be developed on through facilitated coaching” (MM001).*

Many MMs affirmed this statement, as one remarked below:

MM014: *“Decision making, leadership, strategy implementation, communication, and agile project implementation” (MM014).*

Another interviewed MM expressed the area of coaching for middle management as below:

MM003: *“People skills to keep your team motivated. Its people driven to implement strategic implementation. We had a diverse team coming around the table and what made it easier to solve problems. The diversity skills to develop managers to handle different problems. Effective team leadership, team management. Project management skills” (MM003).*

One interviewee gave the following as areas for coaching middle management:

MM007: *“Leadership. Management in terms of soft skills, these are always something things that can benefit managers. If we get that right, we can get subordinates more geared to achieving our strategic objectives” (MM007).*

Another MM expressed this thought similarly:

MM008: *“Managing up – managing their HOD’s (managing upwards) – that end up making production worse. This delays decision-making as subordinates are scared to manage up – we think our HODs are gods. You need to be empowered to make decisions – with little knowledge; therefore, then you need to be a strong decision-maker. At the same time, coach more middle managers to know the process more – like now the top management don’t know the process and are managers. This delays decision making” (MM008).*

Another interviewed MM gave areas for middle management coaching as:

MM004: *“Decision making, procedure or hierarchy for escalation protocols to empower for decision-making” (MM004).*

One MM suggested strategy formation as a key area for coaching for middle management:

MM010: *“Strategy formation – goal alignment – leadership in terms of general and people and project management (one of the big things where you can be coached)” (MM010).*

4.6 Summary of the Chapter

The chapter has presented the findings which reflect the role of middle managers in the implementation of growth strategy at a South African Company.

The key findings of this explorative study are presented in four different sections, which reveal the role of middle managers between 2018 and 2020 in the implementation of business growth strategy at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa.

The results show that (a) Middle management performed the sense-making and sense-giving function, interpersonal, informational, and decisional cluster roles during strategy implementation at the pulp and paper manufacturing company; (b) MMs were enablers of key business processes; (b) Middle management played the implementation role during strategy implementation at the pulp and paper manufacturing company; (c) MMs enabled human resources availability; (d) MMs managed multi-disciplinary teams; (e) MMs were active players in the strategy formulation stages; and (g) MMs exerted empowerment given by top managers to enable strategy implementation.

The second objective was to explore how middle managers contributed to the successful implementation of business growth strategy between 2018 and 2020 at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa. The key findings were:

(a) Middle management contributes towards strategy implementation by performing the planning, organizing, leadership, and controlling activities; and (b) Middle management skills are the main factor that enables their contribution to strategy implementation; (c) Coaching could enable better middle management contributions towards strategy implementation.

In relation to the third objective, the results revealed that (a) MMs were supported by the top management team during the strategy implementation; (b) MMs were supported by the availability of resources during the strategy implementation; (c) There was some empowerment of middle management; and (d) Insights arose from MM involvement at the strategy-formulation stage.

In relation to the fourth objective, the study found that most of the middle managers at the pulp and paper manufacturing company were not coached to enable their contribution towards strategy implementation. The study also further found that middle management coaching can enhance the effectiveness, contribution, and participation of the middle management in strategy

implementation at the pulp and paper manufacturing company. The areas that were identified as middle management coaching needs were leadership skills, change management, project management, strategy formulation, and decision-making.

The next chapter focuses on the discussion of the results of this study.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the findings of this study concerning the literature. The discussion of the key findings is founded on the four main objectives of the investigation, namely: (1) to understand the role of MMs in conducting a business growth plan of action between 2018 and 2020 at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa; (2) to decide how MMs contributed to the successful conducting of business growth strategy between 2018 and 2020 at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa; (3) to evaluate how middle managers were supported between 2018 and 2020 in the process of the business growth plan of action implementation at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa; and (4) to examine how middle managers can be coached so as to contribute to improved implementation of strategic growth goals at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa.

5.2 Understanding the Role Middle Managers play in the implementation of Business Strategy

5.2.1 Middle management performs the sense-making and sense-giving role during strategy implementation at a pulp and paper manufacturing company

The study found that the middle management of the pulp and paper manufacturing company plays sense-making and sense-giving roles in carrying out enterprise strategy. Many middle managers stated that MMs are crucial to facilitating organizational changes, improving the knowledge gap between top management and the shop floor, and implementing strategy in the organization.

This coincides with (Boureston, 2019)'s perspective that middle-level managers play a critical role in facilitating organizational changes, mediating knowledge gaps in organizations, and promoting strategic renewal. Local leaders make sense of their experiences and signal the employees to construct shared meaning in the given context. (Linda Rouleau, 2008) posited that the developing research on MMs underscores the significance of their sense-making abilities in deciphering plan changes, sending data, and assembling and diffusing

groundbreaking thoughts. The author further expresses that sense-making is a social course of significant development and reproduction that empowers people through collaborating with others to make altogether, keep up with and decipher their reality (Johnson *et al.*, 2008; Maitlis, 2005).

The findings uncover that MMs clarify their seniors' views by participating in talks, thus defining circumstances, as a prelude to convincing personnel at the base level to cooperate in such expressed changes. MMs comprehend that a shared way of leading change is needed for achieving processes in their working environment. This aggregate cooperation is a method of modernizing functional procedures within a manufacturing organization (Osterman, 2008). Psychogios (2021) states that middle management reflects the importance of a sense-making role in creating social cohesion during strategy implementation (Psychogios, 2021).

5.2.2 Middle management plays the implementation role during strategy implementation at a pulp and paper manufacturing company

The study found that MMs are the implementers of strategy at the pulp and paper manufacturing company. The strategy is created by top management and then descended to the middle management for implementation. Many middle managers considered themselves as the mediators between the top administration and the shop floor – they drive the objective strategy plans daily through the shop floor.

Johnson *et al.* (2008, cited in Kitoo, 2013) express that MMs are implementers, sensitizers, remediators, change specialists, organizers of critical reactions to occasions, and support and advisor between top administration and lower-level directors. As an implementer of strategic modification, an MM executes the top administration's essential change programmes and strategies. The MM guarantees that asset dissemination and appropriate administration are carried out. MMs screen worker conduct and disclose the system to new workers (Kitoo, 2013).

Nzinga *et al.* (2013, cited in Ramgulam, 2015) have distinguished six essential aspects that MMs carry out in an association's strategic administration process. The researchers noted that MMs are mentors for front-line workers, directing and guiding their activities to align with the company's essential targets. The role that an MM plays is goal-setter, laying out the performance requirements that the labourers should achieve, as aligned with the system. The

third job of the MM is to spur labourers to acknowledge the outlined execution goals. As indicated by Nzinga *et al.* (2013, cited in Ramgulam, 2015), an MM's fourth role is data manager and communicator. The fifth role of an MM is that of an arbitrator who bargains with upper administration on corporate issues such as targets and impetuses; then bargains with workgroups to achieve these objectives (Ramgulam, 2015).

The study found that the middle managers at the pulp and paper manufacturing organization are strategy implementers. MMs have critical roles to play in motivating the workers to realize the set performance strategic objectives. The middle management stated that they coach, train, and boost their respective teams to implement the strategic goals for the organization.

5.2.3 Middle management perform the interpersonal, informational, and decisional cluster roles during strategy implementation at a pulp and paper manufacturing company

The study found that the MMs at the pulp and paper manufacturing company play interpersonal, informational, and decisional cluster roles. Under the interpersonal cluster of roles, the study found that the MM represented the department in corporate events. The second role was leadership, which is related to the motivation and inspiration of the operational staff on the shop floor. Under the same cluster, the study found that the middle management also coaches, supports, and guides their respective teams steering them to the realization of the strategic goals of the organization. The middle management also said they liaise across functional departments and build stakeholder relationships. In addition, MMs play a role under the information cluster through the management's dissemination of communication related to strategy implementation. The study also found that middle management plays a decisional role. The middle managers navigate as negotiators, resource allocators, disturbance handlers, and entrepreneurs.

This resonates with the theoretical framework. Mintzberg's (1973) managerial hypothesis is established on the possibility that supervisors are associated with ten functions, partitioned into three primary clusters: interpersonal, informational, and decisional. Moreover, Mintzberg (1973) characterizes the working exertion of administrators in every function. The practices of those MMs are significant parts of their prosperity. The ten functions are enlivened by private and situational contemplations (Tawk, 2021).

5.2.4 Business key processes are enabling factors in the role of middle management during strategy implementation

The study found that systems and procedures, organization, structure, and processes linked to policies enable the role of middle management for strategy implementation in the pulp and paper organization. The study found that IT systems and investments allow the role of strategy implementation for middle managers. The enterprise resource planning system was also vital for middle management to implement the strategy. The established organizational policies were also found to enable the middle management role in the pulp and paper manufacturing company.

Research results verify that companies that cannot manage their IT investments successfully will generate 40% less than their rivals. Furthermore, a functioning decision-support system can help managers make cross-functional decisions, solve problems more confidently, and better understand the interactions between business units (Ross and Weill, 2006).

Establishing strategic and supportive policies can assist the daily implementation activities in conformity with a support system. Right-formed policies can create coherence between geographically and diversified departments and strengthen formal and top-down leadership. However, policies should be established proactively rather than after an incident (Thompson *et al.*, 2007).

5.2.5 Human resources availability is an enabling factor in the role of middle management in strategy implementation

The study found that human resources availability enables the role of the MM at the pulp and paper manufacturing organization. The study found that human resources are made available through top management. The top management approves the required human resources budget to meet the requirements of the strategic goals for the organization. The selection of the human resources is aligned with the needs of the organization's strategic objectives.

Human capital requirements are determined by the strategy that a company is implementing. Human capital becomes a crucial element in strategy execution, and its administration is seen as a strategic control lever in the strategy's effective delivery (Nedim Čelebić, November 2016).

Human resources are linked in two (2) directions: First, available resources considerably impact the validity and effectiveness of plan execution in making it meaningful. A company's human resources must be sufficient to allow for a strategy to be implemented. The relevance of management efficiency and present, especially elite, leaders is highlighted here. Managers' core beliefs, opinions, views, goals, and personalities, not only their skills, have a considerable impact on the strategy formulation and selection and its implementation. Aside from that, different methods necessitate different types of behaviours from managers (Nedim Čelebić, November 2016).

Second, effective strategy execution necessitates alterations and adaptations in people-management systems and processes to develop the information, other attributes, and behaviour necessary for optimal strategy execution. Those initiatives and processes should act as change agents and catalysts. It is sometimes stated that without dramatic reconfiguration of core human resource functions, the goal is destined to be nothing more than hyperbole; and the same can be said for a strategy aimed at achieving the mission's objectives. As a result, the possibilities for change and development of various systems are nearly limitless (Nedim Čelebić, November 2016).

As per Čelebić and Kulovic (2016), the procedure that an association carries out decides the requirement for HR. HR becomes a vital component in executing the strategy and its administration; HR being an essential management switch in effectively executing the methodology. The current assets decide the credibility and accomplishment of procedure execution in hiring personnel based on the required skill (Čelebić and Kulovic, 2016). An association should have good HR for a procedure to be carried out. The quality of management and managers, particularly preeminent managers, is of special significance. Essential qualities, mentalities, discernments, desires, and character of leaders, not just their skills, fundamentally impact the idea, the decision of technique, and its execution (Osterman, 2008). Other than that, various procedures require other conduct of administrators. Effective implementation of a methodology requires changes and modifications in projects and frameworks of HR. Information and different characteristics and conduct are thus expected for fruitful execution of the procedure (Osterman, 2008). Such projects and frameworks should become initiators and powers of progress.

5.2.6 Multi-disciplinary teams are an enabling factor for the role of middle management in strategy implementation

The study found that the multi-disciplinary teams are enabling factors for strategy implementation for middle management at the pulp and paper manufacturing organization. The multi-disciplinary teams play a crucial role in terms of cross-functional effectiveness in implementing the strategy.

According to Montgomery (2019), a multidisciplinary team refers to individuals with diverse but complementary experience, qualifications and skills that contribute to accomplishing a company's strategic goals or objectives. There is increasing recognition in the workplace that productivity and effectiveness are linked to team-based work and that focusing only on improving individuals within an organization is not an ideal approach (Montgomery, 2019).

According to Grant (2016), multi-disciplinary teams can improve profitability, efficiency and quality of decision making, which are enablers of effective strategy implementation (Grant, 2016).

Alexander (2021) states that research shows that multi-disciplinary teams perform up to 30% better in high-diversity environments; these teams further enable higher levels of engagement and trust (Alexander, 2021).

5.2.7 The involvement of middle managers at strategy formulation stages can enable the middle management role in strategy implementation

The study found that the involvement of middle management at strategy formulation stages can enable the middle role.

The literature demonstrates that middle managers have in previous years been barred from significant critical discussions by top supervisory group individuals (Mintzberg and Quinn, 1996). Such middle managers have been given the strategic arrangement to fulfil without significant contribution to planning the strategy (Khan, 2017). In business firm history, strategy plans have been the duty of the higher classes in the top supervisory crew within most businesses. This has prompted inadequate results and dissatisfaction in the working environment among MMs requested to execute the strategy (Higgins, 2005). This approach can repress the flow of novel thoughts and advancement.

There is a developing interest and exploration considering the significant role of middle managers in strategy-making (Balogun, 2003; Floyd and Lane (2000). Considering this foundation, in contemporary strategy making, there is a growing appreciation that all personnel can think intelligently (Mintzberg and Quinn, 1996; Livian, 1997), with MMs currently seeking independence and obligation in their positions. Strategy-making is presently more vote-based than it has customarily been (Mintzberg and Quinn, 1996); however, it seems that there is more than the top supervisory crew can do (Rouleau, 2005). There is greater accent on culture, correspondence, schooling, and preparation to give staff the ability to think, examine, and follow through with plans in their role (Roney, 2004). MMs are urged to be dynamic players. The accent is now on MMs playing a significant role in gathering data on client and market patterns, passing this data on to the association, and liaising with inner organizers to improve innovative critical thoughts (Unsworth *et al.*, 2013).

5.2.8 The middle management empowerment on decision-making can enable their role in strategy implementation

This study found that middle management's empowerment in decision-making can enable their role in strategy implementation. This study also found that the top management team tends to micromanage the middle management team. By comparison, the top management team has good intentions of assisting the middle management in executing various projects and directives that have been set. Nevertheless, this type of conceptualization often results in a deficiency of productiveness and indecision. The study found that top management teams' micromanagement as resulted in delayed strategic decisions. The study also indicated that there is currently an overreliance for decision-making on the top management team.

Completely engaged personnel use sound judgment and resolve issues. The way to accomplish better-designated choices is to engage workers by fostering their administrative abilities to enable them to act. It is not difficult to let personnel know their options; however, this by itself is not sufficient (Enwereji and Uwizeyimana, 2019). Empowerment means that supervisors must give their personnel both the tools they need to settle on best choices, and the right degree of direction and inclusion from above as they do such. Providing the ideal degree of leadership at the perfect times is a fundamental initiative ability that often does not immediately fall into place for directors (De Smet, Hewes, and Weiss, 2020).

Indeed, effective empowerment does not translate to leaving personnel to their own devices. The mentor is the prime administrative example that engages individuals to settle on appointed choices well. Mentors are involved yet not mandated and not needed to instruct individuals; instead, they give direction and guidelines while permitting others to make sound choices. This approach might seem normal (Enwereji and Uwizeyimana, 2019). However, such a training management style does not come into focus easily. This instructing style requires harmony between information received and given and the level of social activity. Setting standards regularly makes empowerment troublesome. A few associations view such as a shortcoming, a surrendering of control. In associations where compensations for progress are at variance with disciplines for disappointment, empowerment can be perilous for workers and supervisors alike (De Smet *et al.*, 2020).

Additionally, instruction is tedious. Preparing workers to take on decision-making obligations requires an impressive direct investment in administrative training (De Smet *et al.*, 2020). Directors and personnel need time to settle into work in these new connections. This can hinder the direction and limit supervisors who need to mentor (De Smet *et al.*, 2020).

Associations whose leaders effectively engage others through training are almost four times as likely to use sound judgment and to score financially than those whose leaders do not. Enabled personnel are more drawn in, work diligently, and become more faithful to the organization (De Smet *et al.*, 2020).

A functioning decision-support system can help managers make cross-functional decisions, solve problems more efficiently, and better understand the interactions between business units (Ross and Weill, 2006). Strategic authority is viewed as a leader's ability to encourage personnel to make choices that bolster the goals of the company (Heifetz and Laurie, 2009; Collins and Montgomery, 2005).

5.3 Exploring how Middle Managers contributed to the successful Implementation of Business Growth Strategy at a Pulp and Paper Manufacturing Company

5.3.1 Middle management contribution towards strategy implementation by performing the planning, organizing, leadership, and controlling activities.

The study found that middle management relies on various activities when implementing a pulp and paper organization strategy. The study found that the middle management performs certain activities, which include preparation and conducting development plans for their teams, planning, organizing, and controlling activities which contribute towards strategy implementation. The study also identified that the planning of projects plays a crucial role in strategy implementation. The preparation and carrying out of development programmes also contribute toward strategy. The middle management uses leadership to direct employees and applies action planning to contribute toward the strategy implementation. Twelve of the most applied technique execution exercises can be characterized into four general groups: planning, organizing, leadership, and controlling (Tomaž Čater, 2015). Various examinations on factors influencing strategic execution show that administrator support and their job itself are vital components (Tomaž Čater, 2015).

5.3.2 Middle management skills are a main factor that enables their contribution to strategy implementation

The study found that middle management skills contributed to strategy implementation. Most of the middle management in the pulp and paper manufacturing company rely on their experiences, technical skills, and leadership skills to influence strategic implementation objectives for the company.

The implementation levers for strategy implementation describe managerial skills as highly individual and arbitrary. The managerial skills concern managerial perceptions and behavioural activities. These skills are vital to successfully managing the strategy implementation process.

MasterClass (2022) avers that a middle manager needs a set of competencies, skills, and strengths to serve successfully in his role. These skills include communication capabilities, leadership abilities, organizational competency, and technical skills (MasterClass, 2022).

The Institute (2022) states that a study reported soft skills as the most critical ability for middle management in strategy implementation (Institute, 2022).

5.3.3 Coaching could enable middle management's contribution towards strategy implementation

The study found that facilitation is one of the major strategies that could enable the middle management's contribution toward strategy implementation. The top management team would facilitate the coaching to the middle management team. The coaching leadership would allow for the middle management's main contribution toward strategy implementation. The study found that the top management team would guide the middle management on strategy implementation.

Keil (2020) convinces that coaching can help middle management innovate in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous world. He further attests that coaching benefits include improved and more rapid learning, advanced critical skills, development in team-management performance, sustainable organizational change, and upsurges in managers' self-awareness (Keil, 2020).

Karen (2022) states that coaching advances middle management's performance through improved engagement and partnership (Karen Hopkins, 2022).

Coach training is a powerful way of harnessing skills amongst all employees. Leadership development is no longer reserved for those at the top. It would be wise to consider cascading a coaching style of management across all levels. This means training leaders in the art of active listening and deep questioning, allowing leaders to create a space to think critically and creatively; upskilling leaders to consider multiple perspectives and options (Business, 2020).

The mentor is the prime administrative example that really engages individuals to settle on designated choices well. Active mentors, not order-focused, do not instruct individuals; instead, they give direction and guidelines on choices, guaranteeing responsibility (Ika"valko, 2005). This approach might seem like sound judgment. However, the capacity to enable others is an ability, and the training style requires harmony between the recurrence of input and the level of inclusion. Norms and standards frequently challenge empowerment (De Smet *et al.*, 2020).

5.4 How were Middle Managers supported in the process of business strategy implementation at the pulp and paper manufacturing company?

5.4.1 The middle management was supported by the top management team during the strategy implementation

The study found that the senior leadership team backed the middle managers. Support came from establishing the strategy and policies for the organization, the availability of resources for the middle management, and the strategy tone from the senior leadership. The study found that top management's commitment to strategic change is a supporting factor for middle management.

Birken (2015) posits that senior managers can show their support for a strategy policy by communicating directly to middle managers their organizational priorities, allocating execution policies and procedures such as human resources and funding to facilitate innovation implementation; and convincing middle managers that innovation implementation is feasible using existing implementation policies and practices. Middle managers can maximize the impact of top management's support for their commitment by communicating with top management the type of support that will be most effective in increasing their commitment to innovation implementation (Birken SA, 2015).

Moreover, senior leaders who exhibit support for change execution can incite positive staff association in the development, and urge MMs to focus on advancing implementation (Brenes *et al.*, 2008).

5.4.2 The middle management was supported by the availability of resources during the strategy implementation

The study found that the availability of resources supported the MM. These are financial, human, and infrastructure-related resources required to execute strategy at the pulp and paper manufacturing company.

Birken (2015) avers that senior managers can show their support for a strategy policy by communicating organizational priority to middle managers by allocating execution policies and

procedures such as human resources and funding to facilitate innovation implementation (Birken SA, 2015).

5.4.3 More support is required from the top management team for middle management empowerment on autonomous decision-making

The study found that more support is required from the top management for middle-management empowerment. The study found that the empowerment of the middle management would reduce the top management team's micromanagement. The middle management would be empowered to make quality cross-functional decisions. The study also highlighted that middle management required decision-making autonomy.

According to Shah (2022), if middle managers struggle to have the autonomy or authority to make decisions, there is a risk of freezing innovation (Shah, 2022).

Fully empowered employees make good decisions and resolve problems. A functioning decision-support system can help managers make cross-functional decisions, solve problems efficiently, and better understand the interactions between business units (Ross and Weill, 2006).

5.4.4 More support is required for the involvement of middle management at the strategy formulation stage

The study found that the involvement of middle management at strategy formulation stages can enable their role. The literature demonstrates that middle managers have been prohibited from significant strategic discussions by top supervisory crew individuals in previous years (Mintzberg and Quinn, 1996). These middle managers have been given the strategy to carry out without having any input in the planning stages. This results in bad outcomes in the practical sense and frustration for the MM in carrying out the predetermined strategy (Maitlis, 2005).

5.5 How Middle Managers can be coached to enable Strategy Implementation at the Pulp and Paper Manufacturing Company

The study found that most of the middle management at the pulp and paper manufacturing company were not coached to enable their contribution towards strategy implementation. The study also further found that middle management coaching can result in middle management's effectiveness, contribution, and participation in strategy implementation at the pulp and paper manufacturing company. The areas that were identified for coaching for middle management were: leadership skills, change management, project management, strategy formulation, and decision-making.

Many employees have created their own ability in a specialized, practical, or proficient space. Taking care of one's occupation competently implies having the correct responses. Assuming that an employee becomes more competent moving up the corporate ladder would be the natural progression; later the management of people could be assigned to this employee (Osterman, 2008). As a leader, one will show others how to work, and assessed their achievement. Order and control would the situations, and the objective has always been to coordinate and foster personnel who understood how the business functioned and had the option to recreate its past triumphs (Osterman, 2008).

In present times, rapid, consistent, and problematic change is currently the standard, and what prevailed in the past is, as of now, not a manual for what will succeed later on. Twenty-first-century administrators do not have the appropriate responses (Enwereji and Uwizeyimana, 2019). "To adapt to this new reality, organizations are getting away from customary order and control practices and towards something altogether different: a model wherein supervisors give backing and direction rather than guidelines, and personnel figures out how to adjust to continually changing conditions in manners that release new energy, advancement, and responsibility" (Enwereji and Uwizeyimana, 2019).

Despite the rapid, problematic change, organizations understand that administrators cannot anticipate the responses required; and that the order-and-control initiative is no longer feasible (Ika-vaiko, 2005). Therefore, many enterprises are advancing toward a training model in which administrators work with critical thinking. Administrators empower personnel improvement by posing inquiries and offering backing and direction, rather than providing requests and making decisions (Ibarra and Scoular, 2019).

In this complicated world of enterprise, overseeing human resources is fundamental to an association's prosperity (Gurav and Muldakar, 2011; Núñez-Cacho and Grande, 2012). Organizations consistently seek competitiveness. Instructing is one of various human asset advancement procedures that can assist firms in making themselves invaluable contenders. Diedrich (1996) and McCracken and Heaton (2012) posit the significance of instructing personnel and enterprises, seeing training as a significant device for professional advancement. A developing number of organizations use training (Chong, 2008; Moen and Allgood, 2009; Richard *et al.*, 2002) because the training answers the needs and requests of the work environment (Sherman and Freas, 2004). Training is likewise successful in other ways, for example, in working on lacklustre performance (Gravina and Siers, 2011) or dissipating conflicts in the work environment (Anderson, Rayner and Schyns, 2009). In addition, instructing can speed up professional learning (Parker, Hall and Kram, 2008) and guarantee sustainable administration (Boyatzis, Smith and Blaize, 2006).

Viable authority is significant for hierarchical endurance and development, particularly in today's robust worldwide business climate. Instructing is an arranged intercession, being part of an administration improvement methodology aligned with authoritative strategic goals (Rezvani *et al.*, 2017). Customarily, training has zeroed in on individual empowerment and accomplishments. Associations are starting to depend on group training to upgrade hierarchical execution (Rawlins, 2008). Although associations rely upon groups to accomplish their objectives, numerous leaders are dubious of how to ideally lead their groups to improve execution (Nutt and Backoff, 1992).

The advantages of a middle managers' training programme are as follows: (1) Middle managers will become problem solvers; (2) Middle managers will discover how to utilize soft abilities to improve on complex circumstances; (3) Middle managers will realize when and how to utilize the devices available to them; (4) Middle managers become capable of laying out distinct objectives; and (5) MMs will be prepared for development in a practical sense (Accenture, 2020).

5.6 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter elaborated on the critical outcome of the report in the literature, based on the four main objectives of the study. The key findings of this explorative study were presented in four different sections in line with the research objectives; and the discussion elaborated on the MMs' function of sense-making and sense-giving, the interpersonal, informational, and decisional cluster roles; the need for MMs to be involved in strategy formulation; and how coaching can be used effectively for the improvement of the MM function, thus successfully seeing through the strategy implementation, in a practical way.

The next chapter focuses on the thesis conclusion and recommendations from this study.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the main findings of this study. The chapter presents the conclusion before offering recommendations. Lastly, the areas for future research are suggested, and conclusions are drawn.

6.2 The General Overview of the Study and Summary of the Findings

The primary objectives of the study on the role of MMs in the execution of growth strategy at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa were:

- (1) To understand the role of MMs in the implementation of business growth strategy between 2018 and 2020 at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa.
- (2) To explore how middle managers contributed to the successful implementation of business growth strategy between 2018 and 2020 at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa.
- (3) To evaluate how middle managers were supported in business growth strategy execution between 2018 and 2020 at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa.
- (4) To examine how middle managers can be coached so that they can contribute to the successful implementation of strategic growth goals at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa.

The study further sought to respond to the following key questions:

- (1) What role did middle managers play in the implementation of business growth strategy between 2018 and 2020 at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa?
- (2) How did middle managers contribute to the successful implementation of business growth strategy between 2018 and 2020 at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa?

(3) How were middle managers supported in enterprise growth strategy execution between 2018 and 2020 at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa?

(4) How can middle managers be coached so that they can contribute to the successful implementation of strategic growth goals at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa?

The study focused on the views of middle managers between 2018 and 2020 at a pulp and paper manufacturing company involved in strategy implementation. Purposive sampling was used to select fifteen middle managers with lived experience of how the strategy was implemented and put into action at the pulp and paper manufacturing company as a case of research interest. Data were collected using individual and semi-structured interviews with MMs. Data were analysed utilizing thematic data analysis to derive themes that show the role of middle managers between 2018 and 2020 in executing growth plans of action at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa.

The key findings of this explorative study were presented in four sections in line with the research objectives. The first objective was to understand the role of middle managers in the implementation of business growth strategy between 2018 and 2020 at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa. The key findings were: (a) Middle management perform the sense-making and sense-giving role during strategy execution at the pulp and paper manufacturing company; (b) Middle management play the implementation role during strategy implementation at the pulp and paper manufacturing company; (c) Middle management perform the interpersonal, informational, and decisional cluster roles during strategy implementation at the pulp and paper manufacturing company; (d) Business key process is an enabling element in the role of MM during strategy implementation; (e) Human resources availability is an enabling factor in the role of MM in strategy execution; (f) Multi-disciplinary teams are an enabling factor for the role of middle management in strategy execution; (g) The involvement of MMs at plans of action formulation stages can enable the MM role in strategy implementation; and (i) The MM empowerment on decision-making can enable their role in strategy implementation.

The second objective is to explore how middle managers contributed to successfully implementing a business growth strategy between 2018 and 2020 at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa. The key findings were: (a) Middle

management contributed towards strategy implementation by performing the planning, organizing, leadership, and controlling activities; (b) Middle management skills are the main factor that enables their contribution to strategy implementation; and (c) Coaching could enable middle management contribution towards strategy implementation.

Concerning the third objective, to evaluate how middle managers were supported in the process of business growth strategy implementation between 2018 and 2020 at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa, the key findings were: (a) The top management team supported the middle management during the strategy implementation; (b) The availability of resources supported the middle management during the strategy implementation; (c) More support is required from the top management team for middle management empowerment on autonomous decision making; (d) More support is required for the involvement of middle management at the strategy formulation stage.

In relation to the fourth objective, to examine how middle managers can be coached so as to contribute to the successful implementation of strategic growth goals at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa, the key findings were: (a) The study found that most of the middle management at the pulp and paper manufacturing company were not coached on their contribution towards strategy implementation. The study also further found that middle management coaching can be enabled for effectiveness, contribution, and participation of the middle management in strategy implementation at a pulp and paper manufacturing company; (b) The areas that were identified for middle management coaching were leadership skills, change management, project management, strategy formulation, and decision-making.

As alluded to earlier on, there are four limitations of this study. Firstly, the study's results cannot be generalized to all pulp and paper manufacturing organizations. The study selected participants using purposive sampling, thus representative of the population. However, the results are transferable to similar contexts to demonstrate strategy implementation in a pulp and paper manufacturing company. Second, the study has adopted a middle management view to explore strategy implementation at a pulp and paper manufacturing company. This way, the view of non-middle management employees at a pulp and paper manufacturing company was excluded. Without the perspective of other key players in strategy implementation, the study provides only a partial view. Third, the study used a small sample. This limitation was mitigated by focusing on an in-depth and rich understanding of the relevant issues from the

viewpoint of actors with lived experiences. Fourth, the interviews were conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic; COVID-19 safety protocols limited in-depth interactions with the participants.

6.3 Recommendations

The study recommends the following:

- The pulp and paper manufacturing company should cease the top-down and exclusive strategy formulation process and adopt a more participative and consultative process. This is to ensure contribution from various actors who are critical to strategy execution. Broad stakeholder consultation is also key to improving the quality of assumptions informing the plan from both internal and external perspectives.
- There is a need to empower middle management's decision-making skills to drive strategy implementation meaningfully.
- Middle management must build strategic skills to meaningfully drive the strategy implementation process to the lower-employee levels for day-to-day action.
- There is a need to build middle management leadership skills, change management, project management, strategy formulation, and decision making through coaching, to drive strategy implementation meaningfully.
- There is a need for the pulp and paper manufacturing company to create a coaching culture within the organization, which means that every middle manager has the opportunity to benefit from a coaching engagement – whether it be formal one-on-one coaching, group/ team coaching, manager as coach, or coaching as part of a leadership development programme.

6.4 Areas for Further Study

There are three areas of future research which are:

- Future research must be more inclusive in soliciting the views of low-level and non-middle managerial employees from the head office and regional offices, who are also vital to implementing the strategy at a pulp and paper manufacturing company. As the

current study adopted a middle-management perspective by selecting managers and directors as participants, the views of lower-level employees at a pulp and paper manufacturing company are missing; yet these employees are all actors in strategy execution. Inclusion of views of the lower echelons will ensure full coverage of the diverse views of people at different levels of the organization.

- Future studies may adopt a longitudinal study design to observe and capture data as and when the strategy is implemented, rather than being retrospective. This design is likely to address the challenge of participants recollecting accurately events and activities which occurred in the distant past.

6.5 Conclusion of the Study

The study concludes that middle management played various roles in strategy implementation at the pulp and paper manufacturing company. Middle management perform the sense-making and sense-giving role during strategy execution at the pulp and paper manufacturing company, Middle management play the implementation role during strategy implementation at the pulp and paper manufacturing company, Middle management perform the interpersonal, informational, and decisional cluster roles during strategy implementation at the pulp and paper manufacturing company. The study also concludes that the strategy implementation was successful. Business key processes, human resources availability, multi-disciplinary teams are an enabling element in the role of middle management during strategy implementation at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban.

The study found that middle management contributed towards strategy implementation by performing the planning, organizing, leadership, and controlling activities, the study further found that middle management skills are the main factor that enables their contribution to strategy implementation at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban.

The study found that middle management was supported by the top management team during the strategy implementation; and that middle management was supported by the availability of resources during the strategy implementation at a pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban.

However, the challenge that middle managers faced during strategy execution was that the middle management did not have the autonomy to make strategic decisions. Middle management required support from the top management team to have more freedom to make strategy implementation decisions with minimum micromanagement. The second challenge that the study concluded was that the middle management was not involved in strategy formulation stages, which impacted the strategy implementation stages. The study further concluded that there was no structured, facilitated coaching for middle management at the pulp and paper company. The study found that the growth strategy was successfully implemented at the pulp and paper manufacturing company in Durban.

Therefore, this study will be helpful and offer insights into ways in which the middle-management role can be supported to improve the strategic management process, there having been no such studies conducted at a pulp and paper manufacturing company. Taking lessons from skills development leadership development strategies such as coaching is beneficial. Lessons highlight specific areas of weaknesses that the pulp and paper manufacturing company can work on in its next strategic planning or review exercise.

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APPENDIX A INTERVIEW GUIDE

INTERVIEW GUIDE

I am a student at the Graduate School of Business and Leadership at University of Kwazulu Natal, Westville. (UKZN). I am conducting a research study under the topic; The role of middle managers in the implementation of growth strategy at South African Company.. This study is under the able supervision of Dr. Macdonald Kanyangale. I would be grateful if you could kindly spare few minutes of your time to respond to the following questions. The contents of this study will only be used for academic purposes and will remain anonymous. Your inputs will be highly valuable for this study that is envisaged to be mutually beneficial.

Details of Supervisor:

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Section 1 : Demography and establishing rapport

These questions would be used to build rapport, and to identify the level of experience and ascertain the length of time the middle manager has been in this position.

- Tell me about yourself, your experience and background?
.....
.....
.....
- Tell me about your job and how you came to be in the position of middle manager?
.....
.....
.....
- How long have you been involved with Strategy Implementation?
.....
- According to you, what strategy do you think was implemented between 2018-2020 by the xxxx Manufacturing Company?
.....
- Which Department do you work for?
Finance Production Human Resources Technical Other

Section 2: Questions and objectives

To understand role of middle managers play in the implementation of business growth strategy at a Pulp and Paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa between 2018-2020 implementation.

1. What role did you play or do you play in the implementation of the business growth strategy at xxxx manufacturing company implementation?
2. What factors/systems enabled your role for the successful implementation of the business growth strategy at a Pulp and Paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa between 2018 – 2020 implementation?
3. What do you think could have been done differently to enhance middle managers role in the implementation of business growth strategy at a Pulp and Paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa between 2018-2020 implementation?

To explore how middle managers contributed to the successful implementation of business growth strategy at a Pulp and Paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa during 2018-2020.

1. What was your contribution to the successful implementation of business growth strategy at a Pulp and Paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa during 2018-2020 period?
2. What factors enabled your contribution to the successful implementation of business growth strategy at a Pulp and Paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa between 2018 – 2020 implementation?
3. What do you think could have been done differently to enhance middle managers contribution towards the successful implementation of business growth strategy at a Pulp and Paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa during 2018-2020?

To evaluate determine how middle managers were supported in the process of business growth strategy implementation at . a Pulp and Paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa during 2018-2020.

1. How were you supported in the process of business growth strategy implementation at a Pulp and Paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa during 2018-2020?

2. What systems supported you in the process of business growth strategy implementation at a Pulp and Paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa during 2018-2020?

3. Who supported you in the process of business growth strategy implementation at a Pulp and Paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa during 2018-2020?

4. What do you think could have been done differently to support middle managers in the process of business growth strategy implementation at a Pulp and Paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa during 2018-2020?

To examine determine how can middle managers can be coached to enable them to contribute to the successful implementation of growth strategic goals at a Pulp and Paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa

1. Were you coached to enable you to contribute to the successful implementation of growth strategic goals at a Pulp and Paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa?

2. Can middle managers coaching enable them to contribute towards the successful implementation of growth strategic goals at a Pulp and Paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa?

3. Which areas can middle managers be coached in to enable them to contribute to the successful implementation of growth strategic goals at a Pulp and Paper manufacturing company in Durban, South Africa

Is there anything that you would want to discuss on how the Pulp and Paper company implemented strategy between 2018-2020?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Did middle managers play an important role towards the successful implementation of the Pulp and Paper company implemented strategy between 2018-2020?

.....

Is there anything that you would want to discuss on BARRIERS or FACTORS which negatively affected the role of middle managers at the Pulp and Paper company implemented strategy between 2018-2020?

.....
.....
.....
.....

Is there anything that you would want to discuss on BARRIERS or FACTORS which positively affected the role of middle managers at the Pulp and Paper company implemented strategy between 2018-2020?

.....
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.....
.....
.....

APPENDIX B: ETHICAL APPROVAL (pdf attached)

APPENDIX C: GATE KEEPERS LETTER (pdf attached)

APPENDIX D: TURN IT IN REPORT (pdf attached)

APPENDIX E: SUPERVISOR PERMISSION TO SUBMIT LETTER (pdf attached)

APPENDIX F: EDITORS LETTER (pdf attached)