

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Analysing the perceived leadership skills and competencies required by project managers in
KwaZulu-Natal Sappi Saiccor

by

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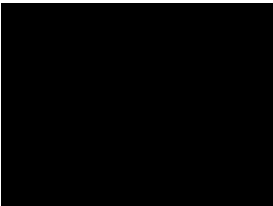
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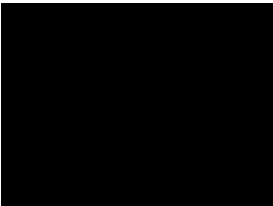
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Abstract

Leadership is described as the procedure by which a person seeks to persuade other group members to achieve collective goals. Leadership is also considered as a procedure by which individuals bring out the greatest qualities in themselves and others. The aim of the research was to analyse the leadership skills and competencies required for managing projects in KwaZulu-Natal Sappi Saiccor. A quantitative method was done to achieve the research's aims. Convenience sampling method was used to collect data by distributing questionnaires to 72 Sappi Saiccor employees who are working within targeted selected departments. Out of the 72 employees, 55 of them participated on this study. This translated to 76% participation response rate which is regarded to be high enough for validity and reliability of the results. The data received were examined utilising statistical software. The first objective was to determine managers perceptions and the leadership competencies required by project managers in KZN Sappi Saiccor. The research found that there is a statistically significant difference among managers perceptions and leadership competencies required by project managers at KZN Sappi Saiccor. The second objective was to examine managers perceptions and leadership skills required by project managers in KZN Sappi Saiccor. The study found that there is a statistically significant difference among managers perceptions and leadership skills required by project managers in KZN Sappi Saiccor. The third objective was to examine different leadership styles and their effect on successful execution of project in KZN Sappi Saiccor. The study found that there is a statistically significant difference among leadership styles and their effect on successful execution of projects in KZN Sappi Saiccor. The fourth objective was to examine the relationship between leadership skills and competencies and demographic variable. These outcomes demonstrate that just the characteristics of managers' perceptions (cognitive activation and personalised attention) clarify variations in leadership competencies, alongside cognitive activation being of greater importance. Research suggests that national culture significantly impacts the efficiency of leadership. According to the literature, a leader's skills have a significant impact on worker competencies. Leadership skills influence competencies to varied degrees. Research suggests that leadership skills lead to greater competencies.

Research keywords: Leadership skills, competencies, leadership styles, projects management, managers perception.

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CHAPTER ONE

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1. Introduction and background of the study

The South African Pulp and Paper Industry, also known as Sappi, is an international pulp and paper manufacturing company that has one of its biggest production subsidiary companies located in KZN Umkomaas called Sappi Saiccor (Sappi, 2023) . It specialises in production of commodity pulp called special cellulose which 90% is exported internationally for further processing to goods like clothing fabric and many other products. To date, the Sappi Saiccor has employed over 1200 employees and 900 contractors. For the company to remain in production, sustainable, and competitive, it undertakes a number of projects yearly with a minimum budget of R200 million (Sappi, 2023). In the past 5 years the company invested in two expansion projects, Project Vulindlela and Project Morris Lite, of a total value above R8 billion (Sappi, 2023). These projects are aimed at increasing production capacity, maintaining machinery for plant availability & reliability, improvement of safety & environmental for keeping government licence to operate and the safety of employees and surrounding environment, and process optimization to run the plant effectively (Barrantes-Guevara, 2013). Each project of any value or size is assigned a leader who is responsible for managing and leading the project from initiation to completion.

1.2. Background of the study

Living in the 4th industrial revolution with rapidly changing organisations and frequent innovation has made competitiveness of the organisation one of the key pillars of its success. As a result, a large number of organisations invest billions of rand in projects to develop and strengthen their value proposition that makes them competitive to other businesses (Barrantes-Guevara, 2013). Change or reinvention in organisations involves project management, this has made it crucial for the success of the strategic objectives of the businesses to keep them sustainable and competitive (Alvarenga, 2020). However, with all the big financial investments put into the project, some of these projects fail to meet their deliverables or complete within a set time and budget. Project success can be viewed in various strategies as demonstrated in figure 1.1 as follows.

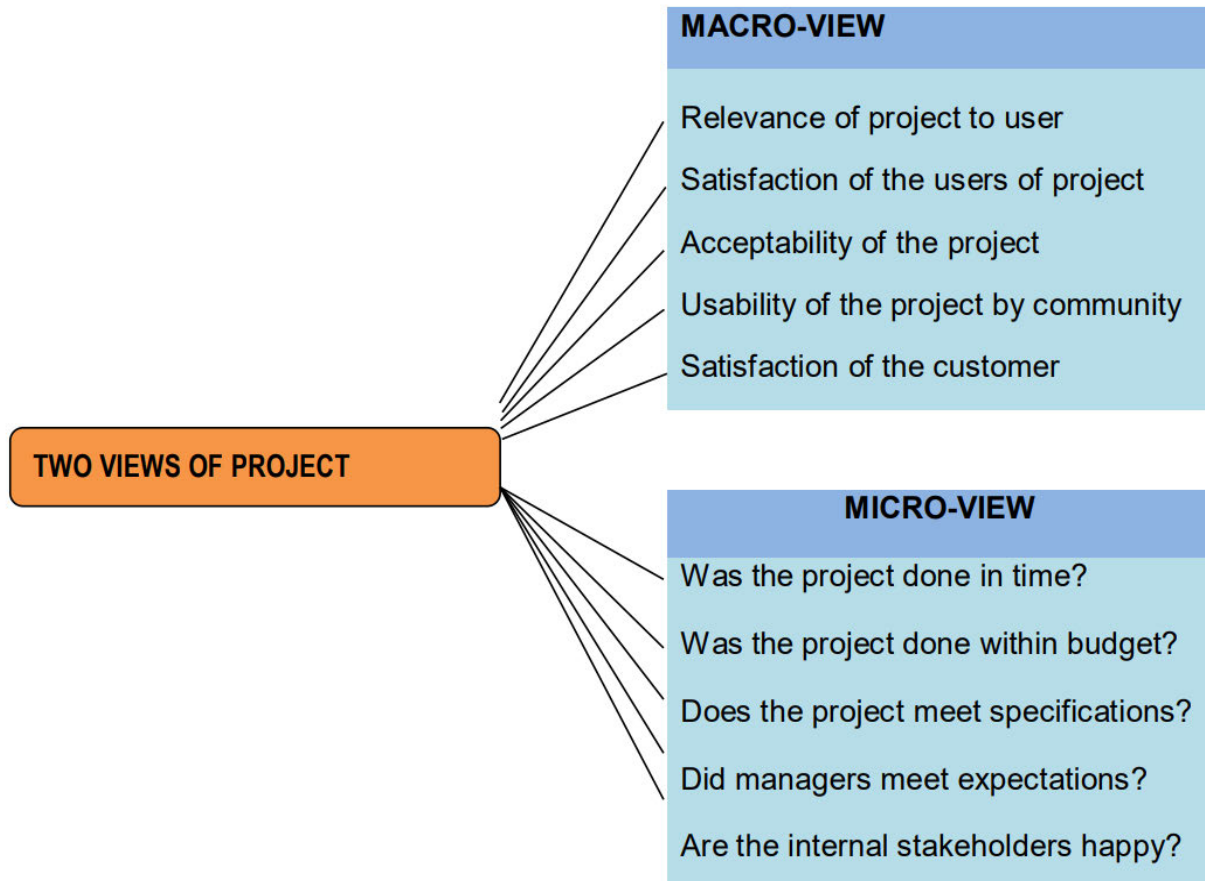


Figure 1.1: Different views of projects success Zhao *et al* (2016)

A number of success factors have been mentioned in the literature as key variables for project success. However, the leadership skill is mentioned as one the most important behavioural project management competency. According to Kiplagat & Migosi (2020), leadership is one of the key skills a project manager must have to successfully execute the organisation's strategic objectives. This is also supported by Vlahov *et al*, (2019) where their research concluded that leadership is the most important behavioural project management competency amongst other behavioural competencies investigated. Also, the study Zhao *et al* (2016) stated that project management leadership is essential for the achievement of initiative. This shows that a leader is viewed as someone who influences and manipulates his followers to make meaningful decisions for success of the project.

In order to fulfil the companies' goals and objectives in today's competitive, volatile market and fast changing business environment, it is required that people in management roles have soft skills

traits on top of technical skills acquired through tertiary institutions. This is because managing people requires but is not limited to intense use of relationship management skills (Vlahov, et al., 2019). Leaders must be able to utilise the available limited resources and creativity to execute projects to fulfil companies goals and objectives. In addition, a study on IT project managers revealed that leaders with soft skills are more likely to manage teams, develop good working relations and build commitment. Hence, soft skills are more crucial than technical skills to the success of the project (Silva de Araújo & Pedron, 2014).

1.3. Research problem

Sappi Saiccor spends millions of rands every year on projects that are meant to support business short- and long-term strategic objectives and goals. The company has project management systems in place to help conduct projects successfully (Zhao, et al., 2016). However, a trend has been seen with shortcomings in plant shutdown projects finishing later than planned leading to unplanned production losses. Implemented continuous process improvement projects not achieving their set deliverables or being over budget at the end of the project. A good example, over the past 3 years, the yearly plant shutdown failed to finish on time 70% of the time. Also, projects conducted are on average overbudget by 30% of the planned budget (Silva de Araújo & Pedron, 2014). At various levels of the organisation, the leaders operating within Sappi Saiccor are vested with enabling powers allowing for effective influence on overall profitability and productivity but based on the poor completion of projects (Chivonne, 2017). One observes the absence of assessments examining leadership competencies and would hypothesise that the lacklustre ability to execute projects successfully can be closely linked to a lack or shortage of human competencies of people leading the projects (Fareed, et al., 2022).

Statistically speaking, 70% of all projects fail (TeamStage, 2022), 66% of large engineering project fail (Consultancy.uk, 2020). According to Project Performance Index (2019), in Addis Ababa, 27% of engineering construction projects showed poor performance.

Traditionally, projects have normally been measured based on the actual time, budget, and quality of the final results vs originally planned (Fareed, et al., 2022). Literature has perceived leadership

as one of the success factors amongst others for projects but there's a gap in detailing how leadership competencies correlate to managing projects successfully. According to (Alvarenga, 2020) on their study to investigate project manager core competencies to project success, they concluded that leadership was ranked one of the top 5 core competencies out of 27 project management competencies that were investigated. This is also supported by Zhao, *et al* (2016) where it was mentioned leadership is regarded as an essential skill in project for people leading the project. Zhao *et al* (2016) stated that project managers contribute a critical role of about 34-47% on the success of the project. However, few critique what leadership skills a project manager should have to be able to add value to the accomplishment of the project.

In earlier studies, leadership styles were not seen as a success factor for project managers leading projects successful (Tunner & Muller, 2005). However, over the years research in leadership styles came to common conclusion stating that transactional leadership styles in complex change projects and transformational styles in engineering projects are highly recommended styles (Aga, et al., 2016). Although leadership was eventually recognised as a success factor in project, there is still not enough study exploring the effect of leadership in the context of project management (Zhu, et al., 2019). Aga *et al* (2016) attested that there's increased knowledge demand of critical success factors that affect project success, one of which is leadership styles in project management. In a study conducted by (Oke, 2013), it was found that different types of project managers professional tend to adopt certain type of leadership style depending on their field of work.

Therefore, there is a research gap in how leadership styles correlate to successful project execution. The researcher intends on investigating the current managerial leadership competencies available within Sappi Saiccor while uncovering the lack of competencies needed for effective project completion.

1.4. Research aim and objectives

1.4.1 Research aim

The main aim of this research is to analyse the leadership skills and competencies required for managing projects in KwaZulu-Natal Sappi Saiccor.

1.4.2 Research objectives

The objectives of the study are:

- To determine managers perceptions and the leadership competencies required by project managers in KZN Sappi Saiccor.
- To examine managers perceptions and leadership skills required by project managers in KZN Sappi Saiccor
- To examine different leadership styles and their effect on successful execution of project in KZN Sappi Saiccor.
- To examine the relationship between leadership skills and competencies and demographic variable

1.5. Research hypotheses

The proposed study will respond to the following research hypotheses:

There is a statistically significant difference among managers perceptions and leadership competencies which required by project managers at KZN Sappi Saiccor.

There is a statistically significant difference among managers perceptions and leadership skills required by project managers in KZN Sappi Saiccor

There is a statistically significant difference among leadership styles and their effect on successful execution of project in KZN Sappi Saiccor.

There is a statistically significant difference among leadership skills and competencies and population variable.

1.6. Significance and contribution of the study

The proposed research will carry an important quantity of data on the body of knowledge related to leadership competencies within Sappi Saiccor engineering projects. The findings of the proposed research will be of particular interest to the leadership board and to the management team of Sappi Saiccor. It will assist project managers to understand the effect leadership competencies have on the successful execution of engineering projects the company invests in. The study will be of benefit to HR in terms of job profiling and recruitment processes for project managers

positions. From a theoretical perspective, the financially constrained and competitive environment the business are operating on these days causes an increasing demand to deliver projects within a set budget, time, and deliverables. As a result, there's been a shift in the research study towards project management competencies. These findings will contribute towards the establishment of competency theories encompassing environmental issues and will enlighten a greater understanding of contextual South African knowledge. Additionally, the findings will assist in developing new competency theoretical models and in explaining poor levels of engineering project executions. Not only will the findings help in increasing project success within Sappi Saiccor, but they will also assist in developing models of project completion for different entities in both the industry and the broader society field.

1.7. Structure of the study

The chapters that make up this dissertation are further broken down into sections and sub-sections.

Chapter one: Introduction

The first chapter of the research lays the foundation for establishing the problem under research. It describes the background of the problem as well as its commitment to the research problem discussed. It further explains the aims of the research. The hypotheses, the significance and contribution of the research were additionally discussed in this chapter.

Chapter two: Literature Review

This chapter will detail publications that have been done by other authors linked to the aim of this research. The review will be categorised into theoretical literature review and empirical literature review to ensure both existing theories and past studies relating to research questions have been reviewed to comprehend the connection among project managers leadership competencies as well as a successful project.

Chapter three: Research Methodology

This chapter will give a complete description of how the study was conducted. It will outline the methodologies as well as research processes that were utilized in the research. It commences with the introduction of the research's measurement instrument, data gathering, and data analysis methodologies. The evaluation assesses the research's validity and reliability, identifying any mistakes.

Chapter four: Results and Discussion

This chapter will provide and analyse the data gathered throughout the research. The research's findings will be laid out and debated in accordance with the different research goals. This chapter will additionally contain the outcomes of the aim and objectives test.

Chapter five: Conclusions and Recommendation

Chapter five will summarize the research, mentioning its background, and its findings and contributions. This constitutes the research's final chapter. The chapter evaluates the study results and draws detailed conclusions on every component of the research. Furthermore, the chapter discusses the limitations of the present research as well as recommendations.

1.8. Chapter summary

The chapter provided an overview of the South African Pulp and Paper Industry, focusing on Sappi Saiccor in KZN. The researcher pointed out despite substantial investments, projects success frequently face challenges. Leadership emerges as a critical factor influencing project success, with various studies highlighting its pivotal role in steering projects towards their objectives. The chapter identifies a gap in understanding leadership competencies specific to project management within Sappi Saiccor, prompting the research aim to analyse these skills and their impact on project execution. The research's objectives were set, as well as the hypotheses were presented. Signification and contribution of the study were additionally discussed, as well as the structure of this study. The next chapter will provide a further extensive and systematic overview of literature relevant to the topic of this proposed research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter detailed research that have been done by other authors related to the aim of this study. The review was categorised into theoretical literature review and empirical literature review to ensure both existing theories and past studies relating to research questions comprehensively covered. The aim was to understand the correlation between project managers leadership competencies and project success, providing a solid foundation for further investigation into the critical aspect of this study.

2.1. Review of key Concepts in the literature

2.1.1. Competencies

In the early stages of its study, the concept of competency was regarded as a term which assisted humans in displaying behaviours alleviating discomfort triggered by a person's biological or physiological needs (White, 1959). It was later classified as a term used to describe the ability to cognitively express linguistic accomplishment (Schneider, 2019). In the context of the presented research, one observes that competency is not necessarily driven at alleviating the impact of human needs but also at alleviating the impact of corporate needs. In the recent literature review, competence is defined as an organism's capacity to interact effectively with its environment (Lohman, 2012). In details, "competency is any knowledge, skill, behaviour, attitude, or trait that can be shown to distinguish reliably between effective and less effective job performance" (Barry & Albert, 2003, p. 105). Schneider (2019), asserts that the concept has evolved over the years to describe acquired through education. Within this context and under the spotlight of the literature review, it becomes clear that competency and education are strongly linked.

However, according to Fernandez (2022), competence does not simply equate to knowledge but is also intertwined with the right attitude for work. Such description of the concept clearly establishes

the need to apply competences with character since right competences coupled with a poor character may not produce the best results in an executive environment.

The application of competence creates a performance which is defined as the manifestation of competence in any given situation (Basque, 2015). Different competent people may have different but equally effective performances in a given situation. There are therefore several ways to be competent in the same situation. Considering the assertion made by Basque (2015), one also understands that Sappi Saiccor managers differ in personality, however, the outcome of performance still ought to align with the end goal of a project. From the above-mentioned paragraphs, it becomes clearer that past authors have linked competencies to individuals and their characters. As Warier (2014, p. 8) mentions, “Competency refers to the intrinsic knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours of top performers in any field, discipline, industry or institution”. Thus competencies are defined in the context of an individual and refer to the inborn traits and behaviours of an individual.”

2.1.2 Leadership and management

The concepts of leadership and management both contain strong similarities and at times, the two concepts seem to be utilized in an intertwined manner (Liphadzi, et al., 2017). Leadership and management are two concepts that are often confusing. Certain individuals use them indiscriminately and in a manner that lets people think of a leader as a manager and vice versa. According to (Liz, 2002), it is stated that “managers control; leaders aspire” and also questioned if a manager is a leader? As the literature describes, these two roles one can indeed be held by one and the same person, but this is not always the case (Liphadzi, et al., 2017). Table 2.1 below gives a summarised distinction between leadership and management. Irrespective of this, Liz (2002), argues that the person leading the project is critical for the success of the project where the person is called a project manager or project leader.

Table 2.1: Differences between management and leadership

| ACTIVITY | MANAGEMENT | LEADERSHIP |
|--|---|--|
| Planning Creating an agenda | Planning Establishing goals and formulating strategies and plans to reach the goals | Establishing direction Developing a vision, mission, and strategies for change |
| Organising Developing a human network to achieve the agenda | Organising and staffing Developing a structure for the assignment of tasks and resources | Aligning people Motivating people and teams to follow vision |
| Leading Executing the agenda | Managing The complexities of policies, processes, and procedures | Dealing with change Adjust and innovate systems and processes to reach objectives |
| Controlling Checking if the agenda is achieved | Control media Comparing the plan and the outcome of the process or project and taking corrective action. | Steering people In the right direction through motivation and checking control mechanisms; checking that subordinates follow new direction. |

Source: Day and Dragoni (2015)

A closer look at the literature can assist in delineating the differences between the two concepts. In an article written for Forbes magazine, Daskal (2016) recorded 100 definitions of leadership. Surji (2015) asserts that the various definitions ascribed to "leadership" by academics and business scientists had developed a non-useful complexity to its nature. Since people in leadership positions have commanding authority and influence Surji (2015), leadership consequently implies inducing other human beings in performing tasks. Therefore, though one acknowledges the valuable existence of led people, one also acknowledges that people are led to implement guided actions. Leadership is defined as the authority to influence, based on the relationships that the leader establishes with the members of a group (Day & Dragoni, 2015). In more detail, it is defined as “an interactive, interdependent and focused performance system, wherein continuous interaction; influence; dialogue and discussions regarding organisational procedures, performance outcomes, inputs, processes, outputs and feedback takes place within a learning environment” (Liphadzi, et al., 2017). This implies for the leader to communicate effectively with group members, make the team adhere to a common goal and motivate team members to achieve set goals (Elving *et al.*,2008).

Considering the above-mentioned definition of leadership, one asserts the importance of studying the concept of management. According to (Drucker, 1973), the fundamental difference between a leader and a manager lies in the origin of the authority that each exercises within a company: a manager is appointed by his hierarchy, he is a leader imposed on a team. Therefore, being a manager in a company is above all a status and the power of the manager finds its foundation in the hierarchical organization of the company (Chivonne, 2017). A leader, on the other hand, is recognized as such by the members of a team. Being a leader in a company is recognition, not status. The leader draws his power from the relationships he builds with the other members of the group (Drucker 1973).

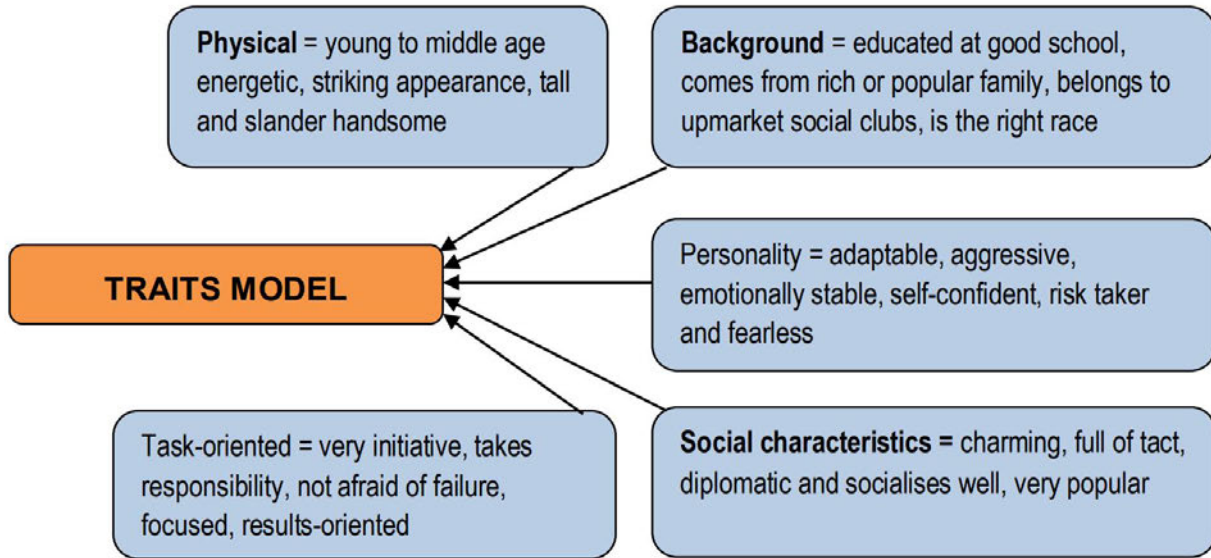
Good managers do not necessarily have to be good leaders, and some leaders do not have a managerial position. Despite everything, a team or a company will need both roles to shine. A manager must support his team members in their day-to-day work and make them excel, while a leader must provide an overview to the team members to bring them into the vision of the company (Drucker,1973). Leaders and managers are therefore crucial in strengthening team effectiveness and collaboration within the work environment. Although management and leadership are two different disciplines, they can be infused to produce highly competent person who is a leader and manager through being “visionary, good at spotting and exploiting opportunities, effective and efficient project methodology systems and project team” (Burke, 2014).

2.1.3. Leadership and management competencies

2.1.3.1. Leadership and management skills and traits

Leadership competencies are defined as “certain personality traits, skills, values, knowledge, capacities and capabilities that facilitate one’s ability to perform leadership tasks” (Wisittigars & Siengthai, 2019, p. 883). In the context of project management, leadership traits are natural characteristics a leader or manager possesses and uses to influence, motivate, and persuade project team members to deliver the objectives of the task or project (Burke, 2014). Hersey & Blanchard (1979) developed a Traits theory model that categorises leadership traits by physical, background, personality, social, and task oriented as shown in figure 2.1 below.

Figure 2.1: Leadership trait theory model



Source: Adapted from Martins (2015)

One asserts the need to have an identification tool assisting at identifying leaders and managers within Sappi Saiccor. Such identification tools could definitely help in allocating the management of projects on the basis of such identification. Regardless of the fact that Sappi has leaders and/or managers, learning to distinguish between these roles could allow one to develop and assess the skills for each of them. (Martins, 2015) delineates the following as key characteristics that leaders and managers should have.

Ability to motivate: Motivation is defined as the extent to which an individual willingly puts effort to achieve a certain goal (Nader, 1988). A true leader motivates his team to achieve tasks despite their level of difficulties (Elving & Hansma, 2008). A leader transmits his/her energy and enthusiasm to their team in order to achieve team results. Similarly, Dhiman and Marques (2017) said that “Motivating employees is a crucial leadership task, as motivation translates employees’ knowledge, skills, and abilities into effort and performance by determining the direction, intensity, and duration of work-related behaviours”. There are several theories that link leadership and motivation tools but the main 4 that comes are considered important by most researchers are goal setting, expectancy, job characteristics, and self determination (Dhiman & Marques, 2017).

Goal setting theory

It is said that specific goals set by a leader motivates high performance from employees. (Dhiman & Marques, 2017). Along with goal settings, feedback sessions are crucial to keep employees and leaders on the same page, which will direct the focus to successful results. In addition to feedback, reward is listed as an additional tool with goal setting that motivates good employees.

Expectancy theory

It assumes that for employees to be motivated, they must be made to believe that their effort will produce good performance which will lead to results that are subjectively important to the task at hand (Dhiman & Marques, 2017). Without believing in their efforts, they won't be motivated to execute task at hand effectively.

Job characteristics theory

It assumes that certain workplace place structures leads the employees to a state of mind that is required for job satisfaction and being motivation (Dhiman & Marques, 2017).

Self-determination theory (SDT)

SDT expands on knowledge of intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation assumes that if employees are treated such that they feel belonging at work with others, they given opportunity of choice in the workplace, and made feel competent then there's probably high chances of employees getting motivated in accepting objectives as their own and delivering good performance (Dhiman & Marques, 2017).

Creativity: Creativity is the thinking process of generating ideas to solve problems and enhance organisations' services or products (Umair & Adeel, 2021). It is essential for a good leader to think outside the box and question the order of things. However, a leader should not only be concerned with his/her own creativity, but also support and develop the creativity of his/her team members as it is critical for any business in this generation. In today's organisations, business problems are more complex and harder to foresee in time. Hence allowing and motivating creativity in

employees has become critical to the success of the organisation unorderd to explore more ideas of developing solutions the business needs (Umair & Adeel, 2021)

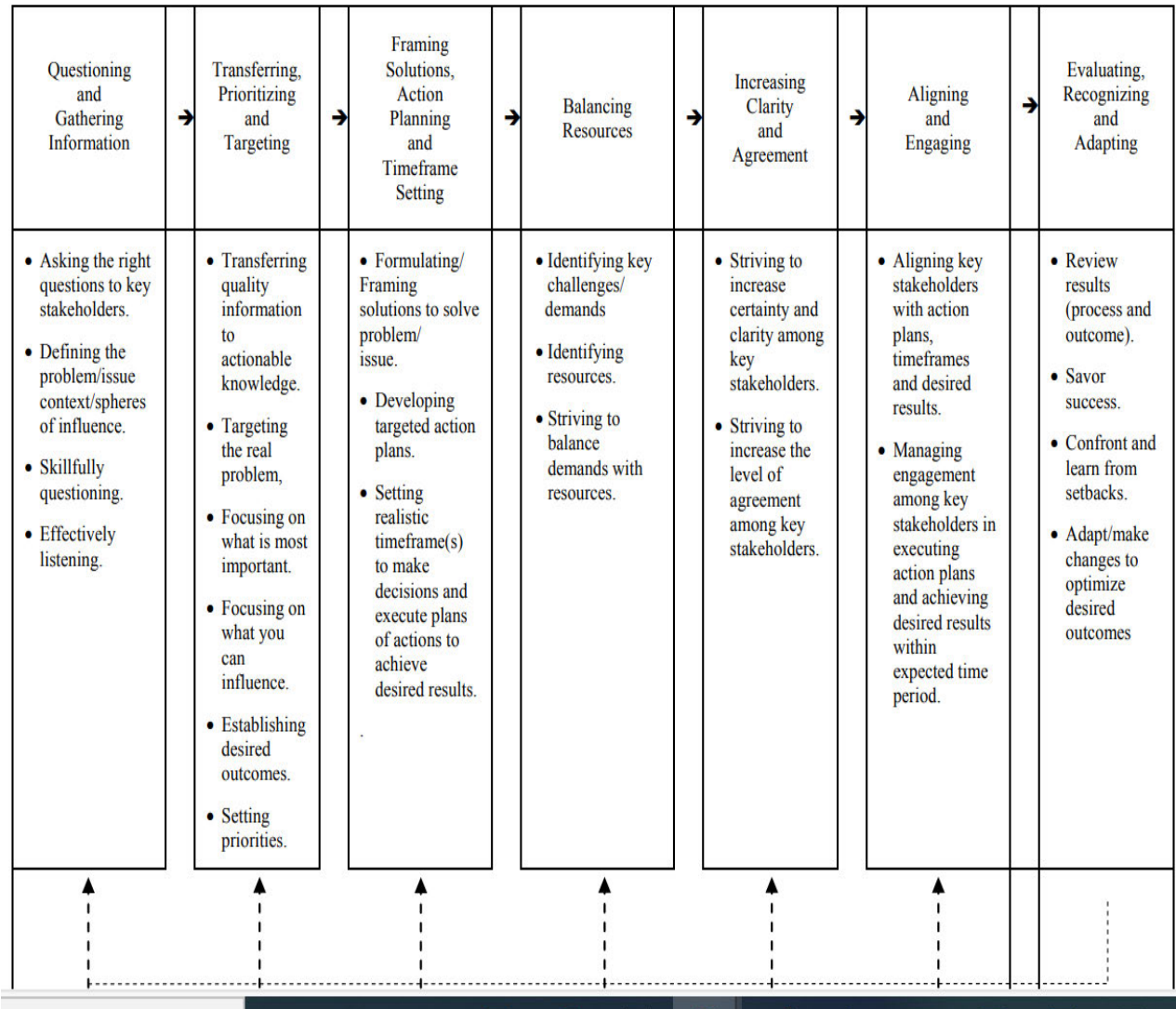
Ability to mentor: Mentoring is defined as an engagement between an experienced and less experienced colleague with an objective of professional development (Dziczkowski, 2013). A leader's soft skills are largely based on their ability to help their team members give the best of themselves (Garton, 2017). This is achieved by, coaching, supporting, counselling, educating team members instead of just assigning tasks (Dziczkowski, 2013). Coaching instils belief and confidence in their mentees which essentially improves the performance of team members. Support comes through mentors or leaders allowing and trusting team members to make their own decisions hence being adapting in being responsible and taking ownership (Dhiman & Marques, 2017). Counselling comes in the form of feedback sessions between a manager and his subordinate which encourage self-awareness in terms of employee decisions and actions. It is crucial that mentors give honest feedback to their mentees as inaccurate/ bias feedback can side track mentees ways of doing things going forward. Mentoring through education is when a mentor develops mentee skills through sharing of knowledge.

Benefits of mentoring include improved skills, decreased stress levels, improved insights and awareness (Dziczkowski, 2013). In support of this, a study done in the teaching department in Canada showed that 96% of less experienced teachers and 98% of experienced teachers agree on having benefited from mentoring (Holloway, 2001). Also, a recent study on the relationship between mentoring and leadership showed that mentoring yields improved personal and professional skills (Pickett, 2022). From a project perspective related to this study, it was found that employees who joined the project with an onboarding mentorship program turned out to be more effective at an early stage compared to employees who joined through conventional methods (Fagerholm, et al., 2014)

A few theories that have been developed to support learning through mentoring are proximal development by Lev Vygotsky, guided participation by Barbara Rogoff, and scaffolding concept by Jerome Bruner (Dziczkowski, 2013).

Problem solving: Can be defined as “reaching a desired outcome using the appropriate amount of quality information which is transferred to actionable knowledge and plans of action within a reasonable timeframe (Kerns, 2016, p. 62)”. Knowing how to solve problems is a key skill at all levels of the decision-making process (Drucker, 2002). Similarly, Wisittigars & Siengthai (2019), state that problem solving is one of the key competency for a leader during times of crisis. A leader must be able to solve different problems, at the strategic and conceptual levels. For example, the ability of highlighting important organizational goals and employing strategies to identify any obstacles that might stand in the way of the team in achieving corporate goals can be seen as a ‘problem solving’ tool (Drucker, 2002). Furthermore, (Kerns, 2016), attest that problem solving is crucial competency for a leader when faced with difficult situations. In literature, there are several frameworks that have been developed for problem solving (Kerns, 2016). One example developed by Kern (2016), is presented below in figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2 Problem solving framework



Source: Dhiman and Marques (2017)

Risk taking: A leader understands and knows how and when to take risks, but also when to support team members when they take risks . The most effective leaders know to make changes that establish progress and relative responses to the market's evolving demands (Drucker, 2002). In today's time organisations face problems that require businesses to be innovative in order to stay competitive. As a result, leaders are sometimes forced to take risky decisions. Therefore, risk taking has become an important skill required by leaders (Zhang, 2021). However, the problem with risk taking is that there's always uncertainty hence the outcome can never be guaranteed (Hamburger, 1990). To effectively improve taking risks, a leader must define clear goals, plan for

failure, and understand their strengths and limitations (Dhiman & Marques, 2017). In addition, a project leader must have the ability to analyse the risk and effects in order to make an informed decision (Hamburger, 1990). Analysing the risk involves the following steps i.e. identify the risk, define potential rewards, assess probability of success and failure, establish contingency plans, then finally evaluate potential outcomes (Hamburger, 1990).

Charisma: It is said that charismatic leaders have personal characteristics that allow them high influence on their follower (Nader, 1988). Charismatic leaders are innovative, creative, and inspire in their followers an unquestioning loyalty and devotion without regard to their own self-interest. Charisma is most evident during states of crisis, emotional disturbance, or when organizations are transitioning (Smith, 2015)

Ability to delegate: Competent managers do not necessarily always do the work themselves as it is impossible to do everything on their own in a project space: they simply delegate the tasks to the right person (Elving *et al.*,2008). Their role is to know exactly who to assign tasks to based on team members competency to do the job and not to monopolize the work.

Communication: Communication is taken as one of the most important competency of a project manager/leader as 80% of his time during the project is spent communicating (Wisittigars & Siengthai, 2019). It is vital for a project leader to communicate effectively to ensure messages are received with understanding.

Part of communicating involves giving feedback. Any effective manager devotes time to the members of his team to allow them to develop their skills (Elving & Hansma, 2008). This can be best achieved through clear and relevant feedback in order to identify development opportunities. Subsequently, other feedback and coaching sessions will guide and help each member of the team to transform these opportunities into assets. Communication contributes to an organization's effectiveness, and is an essential requirement to attain organizational aims and objectives. Organizational communication and feedback activities reflect a leader to member exchange leading to an individual's commitment and motivation in the workplace (Smith, 2015).

2.1.3.3. Leadership styles

Leadership style is an approach in which a leader presents himself to his subordinate in order to influence them to achieve their main objective (Burke, 2014). It is said employees and companies' performance is impacted in a good a bad way by the organisation's leadership style and culture (Smith, 2015). The nature of project management is different from your day-to-day normal organisation business management. The leadership style that's been proven to work effectively in normal business management may prove not be effective in a project management environment. This point is supported by (Muhammad, et al., 2015) when they mentioned that no leadership style is guaranteed to be good or bad but it depends on the situation hence it is important for leaders to know what leadership approach to follow or adopt based on their situation. Hence, the researcher intends to identify which leadership styles are perceived effective and ineffective when it comes to managing projects at Sappi Saiccor.

With regards to leadership styles aligning with competencies within Sappi Saiccor, the researcher highlights the significance of work motivation by discussing Theory X and Theory Y. The concepts of 'Theory X and Theory Y' were created by Douglas Mc Gregor and they are designed to explain work motivation (Morse *et al.*, 1970). On one hand, in theory X, the motivation of workers is sustained through strong supervision, penalties and external rewards. On the other hand, in theory Y, workers are motivated by job satisfaction (Morse *et al.*,1970).

Considering theory X and theory Y, the researcher seeks to enquire if the Sappi managers can be motivated to complete projects within budget and on time through the influence of theory X and theory Y. Within this context, the research will explore whether an authoritarian leadership style can prove Theory X to be effective when it comes to completing projects on time. Furthermore, the same research will seek to enquire if a participative leadership style could promote job satisfaction and leadership competencies. The research will however not be limited to Theory X and Theory Y leadership style but will also explore.

2.1.3.4. Participatory Theory

Participation in leadership theory was developed by Vroom and Yetton (1973) with the aim of closing the power gap between the managers and their team members within the organization by

giving subordinates more responsibility in terms of task ownership, solving problems, and making decisions (Jawah, 2014). Participative leadership style, also known as democratic leadership, is defined as a leadership style where a leader collaborates with his team to come up with a solution and decide on an action plan as a team (Khassawneh & Elrehail, 2002). Similarly referred to as a leader who does not give instructions but guidance on tasks and also performs with the team and allows collaborative and independent culture within the team (Muhammad, et al., 2015). A democratic leader always keeps team on the loop about what's happening within the tasks or organisation, involves them on decision making and problem solving. to as.

The primary purpose of participatory theory consists in improving a better functional organization by allowing all workers to be involved through participatory decision- making. In this concept, all decisions are implemented by a group and accountability is shared by the group. The participative theory is distinguished by the following characteristics: 'encouragement of staff, partnership and communication with external stakeholders (Arifah, et al., 2018). According to (Khassawneh & Elrehail, 2002), high organizational performance, employee job satisfaction, and commitment results from participative leadership. However, this is dependent on the structure of the organization as it was found that for the more complex the organization, the more there's a shortfall between leaders and team members which leads to ineffectiveness of participative leadership (Khassawneh & Elrehail, 2002). Overall, this leadership style seems good, but in the context of the project, the biggest disadvantage of participative leadership style is that decisions take longer to be made as more people are involved in decision making, which can lead on affect project schedule (Cunningham, et al., 2015). Considering such a theory, it is worth looking into how participative leadership can affect the success of projects in an organization like Sappi Saiccor.

Table 2.2 : Pros and cons of democratic leadership

| Pros | Cons |
|--|---|
| Effective problem solving and multiple solutions generated | Time consuming and can be overwhelming for the leader |
| Promotes different ideas and creativity | Decision making delays due to lot of discussions (indecision) |
| Equal rights, fair treatment, job satisfaction, and commitment | Lack of accountability |
| More accurate decisions | Possibility of conflict with the team |
| Effective communication | |

Source: Zhang (2021)

2.1.3.5. Autocratic leadership style

Autocratic leaders can be summarized as one that is categorized to use power to delegate to employees without giving much explanation, make decisions independently without getting input from team members, and have less trust from team members to conduct required tasks independently (Muhammad, et al., 2015). According to Cunningham *et al* (2015, p. 35), autocratic leaders “are organized and controlling transactional leaders who take on full responsibility for the project”. Leaders applying this style are usually able to meet projects dead lines as one of its advantage is that decisions are made quickly by the manager not team and tasks are managed effectively through clear delegation and structure (Cunningham, et al., 2015). There’s a clear division between a leader and followers as the leader gives precise instructions of the tasks and timeframe. However, in the past few decades this style has been criticized as studies show organizations with autocratic leaders tend to have high resignation rates and absenteeism due to subordinates having low job satisfaction (Muhammad, et al., 2015). This style can be applied successfully in a team with small numbers where the leader is knowledgeable about the tasks, team members, and there is much time available for decision making. A good example of autocratic leadership is in the emergency section of the hospital where the lead doctor makes decisions quickly alone and instructs his team on what to do to help him achieve the goal of saving the patient's life.

Table 2.3: Pros and cons of autocratic leadership

| Pros | Cons |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Good control and overview of tasks | Low employee job satisfaction and commitment |
| Clearly defined structure | High turn over, talent is not promoted and recognized |
| Time effective, no long discussions | Employee ideas and creativity are suppressed |
| Employees know what they must do | Poor leader-subordinate relationship |
| Creates discipline on employees | Independency of employees is limited |
| Quick decision making | |

Source: Zhang (2021)

2.1.3.6 Transformational theory

Transformational leadership style is interpersonally oriented i.e. leaders set high standards for their subordinates and help them achieve through motivation, commitment, inspiration, and encouragement which essentially transforms or develops subordinates in terms of performance, skills, and knowledge for the benefit of the organization (Jawah, 2014). A transformative leader avoids influencing subordinates with power or position of authority (Smith, 2015). Arifah *et al* (2018) cite four themes characterizing transformational leadership, which are also known as four I's of transformational leadership." **Cognitive activation** where leaders articulate the way they communicate to subordinates to improve effort, problem awareness & solving, and creativity on them (Smith, 2015). Intellectual leaders are strategic thinkers able to visualize and conceptualize threats and opportunities to the business. **Inspirational motivation** where leader drives vision that is inspiring to followers and gives trust to them by assigning difficult tasks with high expectations (Aga, et al., 2016). For a leader to be able to inspire, they must poses ability to stimulate enthusiasm, instill confidence, emotionally motivate and empower team members (Smith, 2015). **Idealized affects** where leaders are perceived as role models (Aga, et al., 2016). **Personalised attention** is where the leader understands the strengths and weaknesses of their followers to optimize their performance through providing support, encouragement, and coaching to team members (Aga, et al., 2016). According to Smith (2015), individualized consideration can be used

through assigning tasks, effective communication, and unique treatment of each member to suit individualized needs, subordinates mentorship and counseling (Smith, 2015).

According to (Aga, et al., 2016), there are studies that showed transformational leadership style has positive impact on the successful completion of projects. However, they also state other studies transformational leadership style is not strong in project management as opposed to generic organizational management. Additionally, earlier researcher attests against the above by stating there isn't enough literature to support positive or negative influence of transformational leadership style on project success (Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006). However, a recent study states that transformational leadership style is favorable for projects especially since they require more communication (Zhu, et al., 2019)

Table 2.4: Pros and cons of transformation leadership style

| Pros | Cons |
|---|---|
| Increased subordinate's commitment, trust and loyalty. | Risk of influencing unrealistic expectations leading to employee burnout. |
| Increased organization performance. | High potential for power abuse and manipulation |
| Improved subordinate job satisfaction and morals leading to reduced turnover costs. | Difficult to measure effectiveness. |
| Enhanced innovation and creativity | Requires a high level of emotional intelligence. |
| Improves organisational ethical levels | Requires good communication skills. |
| | Requires continuous feedback |

Source: Piccolo and Colquitt (2006)

In addition, the primary qualities that constitute the cornerstone for successful transformation leadership style are idealized affect, cognitive activation and personalised attention.

2.1.3.7 Idealized affect

The leader upholds rigorous standards of ethics and morality and instills glee, reverence, and trust in his or her adherents. According to Smith (2015), leaders continually advance their views and ideals using persuasion. Idolized affect occurs when a leader exhibits commitment and assurance while deciding crucial choices in an environment of danger. Exemplary behaviour encourages

learners to take moderate dangers and solve complicated challenges, leading to increased responsibility and confidence.

2.1.3.8 Cognitive activation

Cognitive activation emphasizes fostering fresh thought and inventiveness in the following: Cognitive activation occurs whenever a leader inspires people's ingenuity to seek out novel and more effective ways of addressing issues than previously used approaches (Aga, et al., 2016). Much emphasis has been put on pushing adherents to continually seek out novel perspectives and to "think outside the box" when confronted with problems throughout ordinary responsibilities. According to Smith (2015), leader inspires people to look outside the box and question their traditional approaches to solving issues. Challenges to the current situation quo improve adherents' reasoning ability. This approach develops new concepts and disclosures in consumers, enhancing their achievement requirements.

2.1.3.9. Personalised attention

Personalised attention focuses on recognizing and meeting the particular requirements of the following via mentoring and training efforts. Aga *et al* (2016) define personalised attention as a procedure in which leaders recognize the distinctive characteristics of each individual, align their present requirements with the requirements of the business, and offer support, guidance, and development possibilities. Successful administrators must be concerned about individual requirements and address them on an individual level. Individuals have varying talents, expertise, requirements, and aspirations (Smith, 2015). Establishing a personal relationship with customers is crucial for properly meeting their needs. The leader fosters an atmosphere of encouragement and kindness by actively listening to individuals and identifying their qualities, flaws, and growth opportunities.

2.1.4.1 Managers perceptions

Managers perceptions is a task-oriented managers skills that pertain to reward-based achievement incentives. Managers perceptions push people to achieve established targets by defining work responsibilities. Managers perceptions compensate staff for completing tasks and gaining influence through these interactions. According to Piccolo and Colquitt (2006), a strong emphasis

is given on accomplishing targets, collectively with a reasonable transfer incentive mechanism for exceptional achievement and discipline for insufficient achievement. Zhu *et al* (2019) define managers perceptions as an interpersonal interaction where duties are settled upon and defined among both leaders and subordinates, with the goal of rewarding achievement and avoiding penalties. This research examined the core traits that serve as the foundation of successful managers perceptions transformational leadership is active management with exceptional, constructively interaction, inactive administration by exceptional.

2.1.4.2 Active management with exceptional

The managers continuously watch subordinates' actions for faults, departures from norms, and failures. According to Aga *et al* (2016) proactively managing involves carefully tracking the performance of supporters and taking measures to prevent issues from occurring. Managers may regularly assess a worker's ability to solve problems as difficulties emerge. The managers Instantly rectifies employees who do not use efficient solutions strategies. The manager is also viewed as a watchdog, implementing remedial actions. when violations of established norms are identified.

2.1.4.3 Constructive interaction

The manager-follower engagement is prepared, with a focus on incentives for achieving specified goals. The manager secures cooperation from subordinates on work requirements and incentives. Both sides decide on criteria for success, and achievements are either acknowledged or penalised. According to Farmer (2005), encouraging behaviour mechanisms involve managers clarifying the demands of performance to give followers confidence that they will get valuable incentives for excellent work.

2.1.3.7 Inactive administration with exceptional

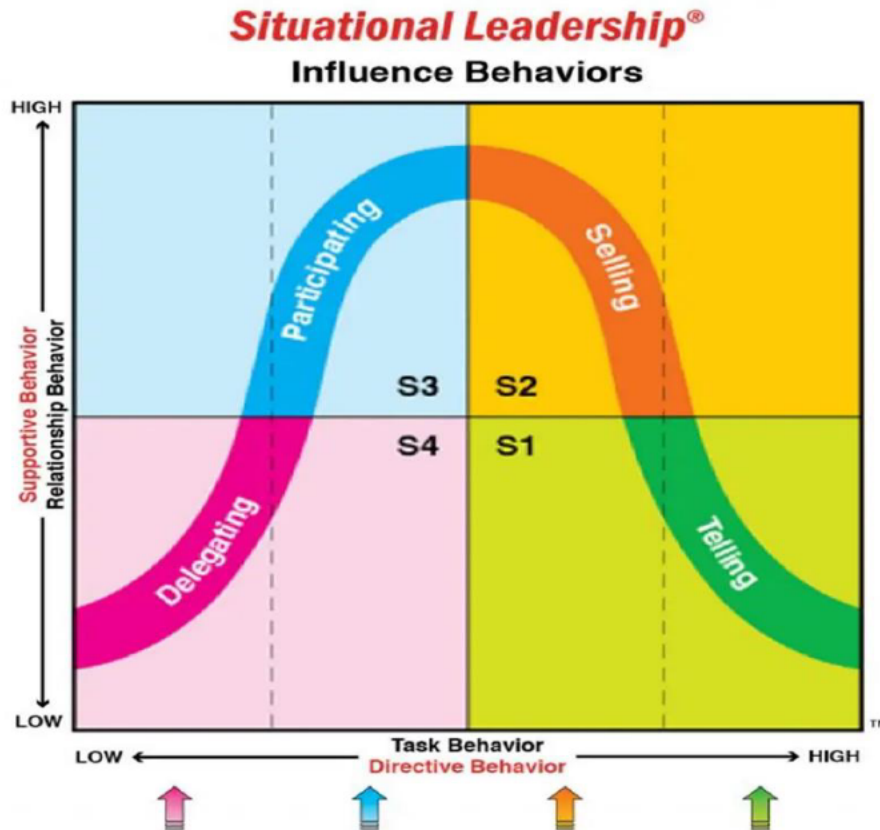
Afshinpour, *et al* (2013) identifies inactive administration by exceptional as a form of inactive administration. Farmer (2005), also defines inactive administration by exceptional as a procedure in which the manager adopts an inactive, reactionary strategy, waiting for mistakes to happen without adopting corrective action. The manager prefers to maintain the present situation rather than establish fresh requirements or processes. An instance is when a manager offers an adherent an inadequate grade without considering past work accomplishment.

2.1.5 Situational Leadership style

In situational leadership style, leaders decide on adapting to a leadership style depending on the situation or circumstances to empower subordinates moral and satisfaction on top of meeting main organization goals and objectives (Afshinpour, et al., 2013). This style stems from the fact that there are situations a manager gets faced with which may be conflicting or difficult to the point that the manager finds themselves changing their approach in resolving the issue at hand (Liz, 2002). Farmer (2005) adds that there is no leadership style that works equally effectively in all situations, hence the need to use situational leadership style. According to Farmer (2005), the core competency of a situational leader is diagnosis i.e. a leader must analyze and measure the situation in terms of performance of the team, their commitment and competence (knowledge, skills, experience). Once a diagnosis has been completed, a leader may then select an appropriate leadership style to apply. In addition to diagnosis, (Shahmandi, et al., 2011), adds that flexibility and partnering are other core competencies of a situational leader. Leaders must be flexible enough to adjust to changing situations e.g. soccer coaches. Flexibility may be challenging situation when a leader is faced with multiple issues and has to make decisions quickly and innovatively (Afshinpour, et al., 2013). Partnering implies the ability to collaborate and lead different or new teams that come with different types of skills and personalities.

Situational leadership has two pillars, which are directive and supportive. Directive pillar is linked to task behaviors and supportive pillar is linked to team members (Shahmandi, et al., 2011). Farmer (2005, p.485), explains in details that “Directive behavior is characterized by the leader giving detailed rules and instructions while monitoring closely that they are followed. The leader decides what is to be done, how it is to be done and when. Supportive behavior is characterized by the leader listening, communicating, recognizing and encouraging. The behavior rests on mutual respect and trust, understanding and openness and close human contact and warmth.”. This is also presented figure 2.3 below which shows that the action outcome of the leader depends on how they’ve analyzed the situation.

Figure 2.3: Situational leadership theory model



Performance Readiness®

| HIGH | MODERATE | | LOW |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| R4 | R3 | R2 | R1 |
| Able and Confident and Willing | Able but Insecure or Unwilling | Unable but Confident or Willing | Unable and Insecure or Unwilling |
| Self Directed | | Leader Directed | |

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Source: Farmer (2005)

Project sometimes faces problems that are unforeseen, which may be categorized as a crisis. During this time and both pre and post crisis, it is said that task orientated situation leadership plays a vital role in assisting resolving the problem being faced (Wisittigars & Siengthai, 2019).

Table 2.5: Pros and cons of situational leadership style

| Pros | Cons |
|------------------------------|--|
| Results in focused employees | It requires a lot of effort from the leader and can be stressful |

| | |
|--|---|
| Encourages flexibility | Grading followers is not easy |
| Improves overall productivity | This can cause confusion due to frequent changes in style |
| Increases trust between manager and subordinates | It's more useful for short term focus vs long term goals |
| Centred around employees | It may be inefficient (time consumption) depending on the situation |

Source: Wisittigars and Siengthari (2019)

2.1.6 Chapter summary

The literature reviewed had examined various aspects of leadership competencies and their impact on project success. It provided a robust framework for understanding the evolution of the competency concept, linking it to both individual and organizational performance. Competencies were recognized not merely as knowledge or skills but as a combination of traits, attitudes, and behaviours that contribute to effective performance in an organisation. Empirical studies reviewed in this chapter underscored the practical implications of these theoretical concepts. The research highlighted that the application of competencies is not a one-size-fits-all approach; different situations and project environments may require different competencies. Moreover, the distinction between leadership and management roles is critical. Effective project leaders must balance the strategic vision and inspirational qualities of leadership with the organizational and control aspects of management. In conclusion, the literature allowed identifying key concepts, theories, and empirical findings that informed the subsequent phases of this research, by understanding the multifaceted nature of competencies and the conditions under which different leadership skills, traits, and styles were most effective.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

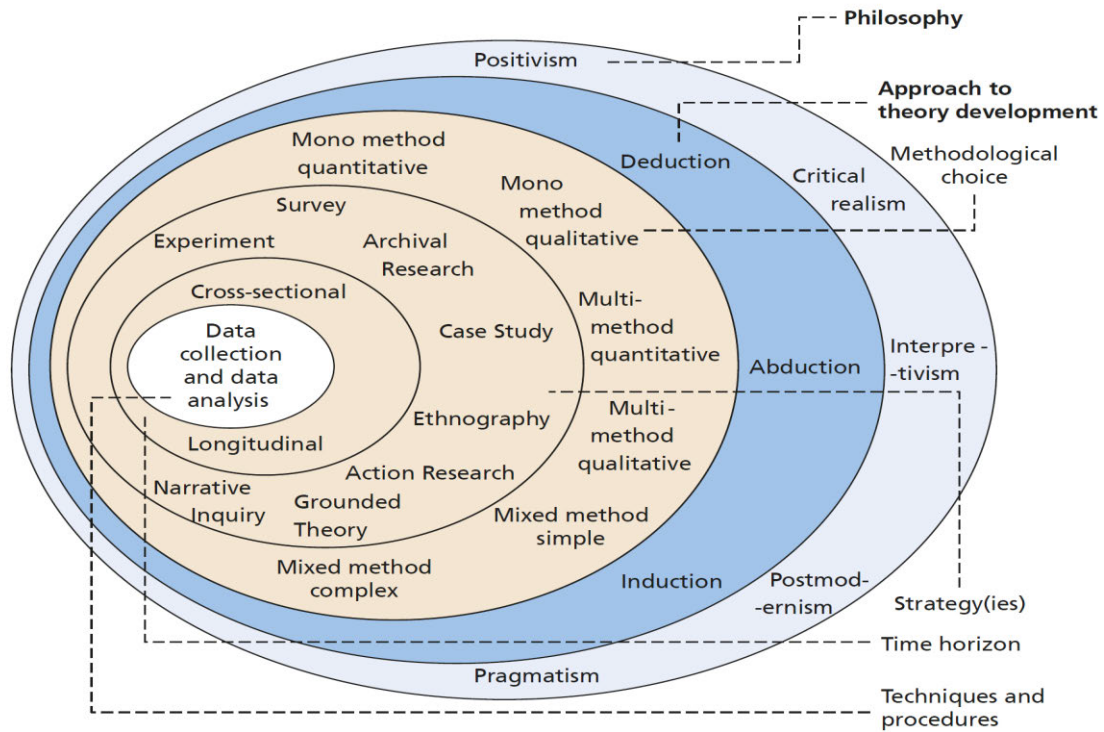
Introduction

This chapter describes the research methods used to obtain primary data. The chapter starts with an explanation of the research philosophy and paradigm, sample methods, data collecting, and data processing, and concludes with reliability as well as validity. The research was conducted using descriptive and inferential methods of research. Quantitative data were gathered to provide an understanding of people's opinions of competencies with different leadership skills.

3.1. Research philosophy and paradigm

The research paradigm concept was first introduced by Thomas Kuhn in 1962 where he defined it as philosophical way of thinking (Ugwu, et al., 2021). The concept was further developed in the years after it was now defined as a point of view, or beliefs, or principles or assumptions an individual had about certain knowledge which eventually shaped how a researcher interpreted their research questions (Saunders, et al., 2019). This forms the outermost layer of the research onion presented in figure 3.1. These philosophical assumptions can be characterized into three i.e., ontology, epistemology, axiology as presented in figure 3.1. Furthermore, Heisterkamp (2022), agrees that these are good tools for understanding similarities and differences between researchers point of views. According to Ugwu *et al*, (2021), it is important for a researcher to be aware of the research paradigm guiding them to construct their research approach, as this can impact later stages of the research if not considered. A brief explanation of these concepts follows on the next page..

Figure 3.1: Presents the research onion



Source: Saunder, et al (2019)

The different layers depicted in Figure 3.1 provide guidance on the researchers philosophy, research methods to be used, and available data collection tools.

Epistemology

It's a philosophy that refers to the study of knowledge by assuming that knowledge is already available for the researcher to discover, or that knowledge is dependent on people's perspectives (Saunders, et al., 2019). The researcher sought to understand theories developed by others and provide an explanation defining meaning to them (Heisterkamp, 2022). Furthermore, the answers to the questions could be drawn from the pull of available knowledge (Ugwu, et al., 2021).

Ontology

Refers to the study of the nature of individual beliefs and reality, or people's existence and behaviours as they are (Saunders, et al., 2019). Similarly, other researcher stated that ontology

focused on the nature of the what an individual is researching (Ugwu, et al., 2021). (Heisterkamp, 2022) states that ontology sought to understand why things exist.

Axiology

Refers to philosophical study of values and ethics, values on how they influence or impact other people and ethics on understanding the good and bad of human actions. (Heisterkamp, 2022). Based on this explanation, it could be concluded that the research questions of this study were not axiological in nature.

Classification of paradigm

Within the research paradigm, there are a number of philosophies used to classify research paradigm, but there's no agreement or rule for a set number of the classifications (Ugwu, et al., 2021). According to Saunders *et al.* (2019) they classify them into five names: positivism, critical realism, interpretivism, postmodernism, and pragmatism.

In this study, the researcher's philosophy was epistemological, as the study intended to investigate existing knowledge through literature, but could heavily depend on individuals perspective, hence the title of the study included the words "perceived". The paradigm classification was positivism, as the data to be collected was based on measurable facts. Going through this analysis was important as Saunders *et al.*, (2019) concluded that understanding components of research paradigms typically led to informed decision on research methodology.

3.2. Research design

Research design is a method by which research is undertaken through resource planning, data collection process, data analysis tools and methods, and research results interpretation (Rosenstein, 2019). In addition, research design can either be experimental, descriptive, or a mixture of both. These all come with pros and cons, hence it is important for the researcher to be guided by the objectives and research questions of the study (Ranganathan & Aggarwal, 2018). Improper research design may lead to conclusions that are not meaningful and valid which, can potentially cause problems if miss used (Rosenstein, 2019). On the other hand, a good research plan needs lead to yielding the most reliable results and conclusions. To achieve this, it is important to focus

on developing clearly stated research questions, hypotheses, and the goals of the study (Toledo-Pereyra, 2012).

Research validity is based on the design of the research, population or sample studied, and how ethical and clean research is undertaken. Research validity can be characterised as internal or external validity. Internal validity refers to research variables that need to be studied for a researcher to conclude on its impact on the research question (Rosenstein, 2019). Therefore, studying research variables that were not linked or related to the research questions could lead to making conclusions that were not valid. Factors that affect internal validity include history, maturation, measurement error, bias participant selection/assignment, experimenter bias, expectation, sensitization caused by pretesting (Rosenstein, 2019). External validity is the extent to which the research results can be applicable i.e. are they only applicable to a group being sampled or generic to the company or industry (Rosenstein, 2019). It is important to determine who and where in your research aims to ensure the external validity of the study. For the purpose of this study, a descriptive research design was adopted as it suitable for unpacking the research questions and objectives reliably and accurately.

3.3. Research methods

In the history of research, there have been three mostly used research methods, namely qualitative, quantitative, and mix of qualitative and quantitative (Techo, 2016). It is important distinguish between different research methods to enable the researcher to choose a suitable research method as they all come with advantages and disadvantages (Johnson & Christensen, 2015). Furthermore, Mulisa (2021) stated that the research method cannot be selected based on the researchers personal liking or preference. Therefore, below the researcher explored situations when each research method was most likely used along with its disadvantages and advantages.

3.3.1. Quantitative research method

Quantitative research is a research approach that makes use numeric collected data and analysed statistically to answer the research questions (Marczyk, et al., 2005). Quantitative research tends to be used under a certain circumstance. These include when testing the hypothesis or proving a theory (Techo, 2016). Also, in situations where data to be collected is available numerically, then

the researcher might be compelled to use a quantitative approach (Johnson & Christensen, 2015). Furthermore, a quantitative approach is appropriate if the outcome of the study is expected to be validated or generalised external to the research facility (Mulisa, 2021). This method is also preferred if the participants are available in large numbers and a representative sample can be accessible (Mulisa, 2021).

According to Mulisa (2021), the downside of quantitative research is “higher degree of abstraction, an emphasis on breadth rather than depth, a lack of contextual considerations, and the researcher’s categories do not represent the understanding of true local constituencies”. Whereas on the other hand, the advantages of quantitative research is that it is less time consuming, statistical tools are used to analyse data, and it decreases biasness from the researcher (Techo, 2016). In addition, according to Boru (2018) the biggest advantage of quantitative research can produce generalized results that are reliable for a large population.

3.4. Data collection techniques

Since the researcher decided on using quantitative methods for collecting data, several tools available were explored to choose the appropriate one for the study. According to Saunderson *et al* (2019), quantitative data collection can be done through mono-quantitative study where one tool is used or through multi-method quantitative study where more than one tool can be used. The mostly used quantitative data tools are structured interviews, questionnaires, and structured observations (Bryman & Bell, 2015). These were briefly explained below.

3.4.1. Structured interviews

Structured interviews are a set of closed ended questions that are specific in a manner that they offer a fixed range of answers to the interviewee (Bryman & Bell, 2015). This helps generate quantitative data. According to Saunderson *et al* (2019), these questions must be read out to all participants in the same way they are written down and same tone of voice. This is to minimize bias which can potentially mislead the participants to give answers they would not have otherwise given. The advantage of structured interview questions is that it provides a platform for participants to give information they might not have previously disclosed. (O’Keefe, et al., 2016)

3.4.2. Structured observations

Structured observation, according to Bryman & Bell (2015, p.270), is defined as “s a method for systematically observing the behaviour of individuals in terms of a schedule of categories”. The advantage of this method is that it allows researchers to observe directly the behaviour of the participants, unlike in other methods where data has to be gathered through questioning. However, in the context of this research, this method was not feasible as the projects at Sappi Saiccor takes months simultaneously, making it impossible to observe the behaviour of project leaders. Therefore, this method was not chosen as the technique for data collection.

3.4.3. Questionnaire

Questionnaire, according to Acharya (2010, p.2) is defined as “a document containing questions and other types of items designed to solicit information appropriate to analysis”. It's a useful tool for quantitative research in collecting data in a non-experimental study (Mathers, et al., 2009). Similarly, Saunders *et al* (2019), state that questionnaires are mostly used in descriptive research studies, such as organisational practices, which aligned the intent of this study. Furthermore, questionnaires can be done for the entire targeted population or a sampled group in the targeted population (Mathers, et al., 2009)

Based on the information stated above and considering that the researcher aimed to validate the study findings externally, given that Sappi is an international company, a questionnaire seemed to be the most suitable quantitative technique for collecting data compared to the other techniques. Additionally, a questionnaire was chosen over structured interviews as quantitative techniques because of its advantages over structured interviews. These include lower administrative costs,, doesn't require much time to complete, avoids issues faced when participants don't show up for interviews, and it is convenient for respondents (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

3.5. Collection and data analysis

Research data can be said to be either primary or secondary data, depending on its nature and how it was collected (Creswell & Creswell, 2018)

3.5.1.1. Primary data

Primary data is the original data collected in a study through quantitative research and subsequently interpreted to address research questions (Windle, 2010). Similarly, according to Saunders *et al* (2019), primary data is the data collected for the sole purpose of the study being conducted. In this study, data was collected through a questionnaire, presented and analysed in the following two chapters. The research questionnaire was divided into two sections to ensure all research questions were addressed.

Section 1.

Section 1 primarily concerned demographic information about participants while also ensuring their identity remains anonymous in accordance with ethical clearance. This information included their gender, age range, racial group, education level, management position, and years of working experience. The objective was to statistically determine whether there was a correlation between these categories listed above and the way participants responded to research questions. Additionally, this was aimed to validate the credibility of answers of the participants responses based on their accumulated knowledge from experience and education.

Section 2.

Section 2 was formulated using a Likert scale to answer the research questions. Likert scale is defined as a unidimensional and non-comparative technique used to collect data on research participants about their knowledge, beliefs and perceptions (Taherkhani, 2023). This is done by rating participants' level of agreements and disagreements on several questions posed to them. The first set of questions were aimed to identify leadership competencies required by project managers. The second set were aimed to understand what leadership traits were considered important and which ones were less important for a project manager. The final set aimed to understand which leadership styles were perceived to be more relevant for project managers.

3.5.1.2 Secondary data

Secondary data analysis includes data collected from work done by other people on a specific research topic (Windle, 2010). This data is taken from different sources like but not limited to descriptive and experimental studies then used to interpret or support collected data from the primary data of the research study (Windle, 2010). The book by Baum (2021) explains a few

reasons why it is important to use secondary data including saving time and costs in data collection, ensuring data is of high quality and standard from credible sources, and it allows research to compare similar research data concepts from different countries. In this study, literature data relevant to the research questions was reviewed, collected, and explained in chapter 3. This data was used to explain or support some of the trends seen in the result analysis in chapter 4.

3.5.2. Data analysis

The data was analysed using the SPSS programme version 15.0. The unprocessed data was adjusted to ensure that it was error-free. Modification needed to be done to facilitate capture in the SPSS software. Every survey was checked and tallied to confirm that all relevant fields were completed correctly by those who responded. Surveys were investigated as well to ensure that the necessary minimum number of respondents was met for the specific demographic. Different analyses were carried out on the acquired data.

3.5.2.1 Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics were generated in the format of tables of frequencies to acquire the participant profiles and characterise the data's essential characteristics. The frequency tables listed components along with counting marks to track how frequently they appear.

3.5.2.1.1 Frequencies and Percentages

Frequency is a measurement of the number of periods an occurrence occurs in one classification in particular (Mulisa, 2021). A particular classification is gender, which consists of both men and women was calculated to present the frequency with which participants identified as men. The method was additionally made available to women. Percentages were calculated as the percentage of men and women among the total number of responses. In this investigation, the frequencies were employed to define the sample profile. Percentages have a dual role in data display. They reduced the data by lowering all numbers to a standard range of 0-100. Second, data was presented in a common manner for comparative purposes.

3.5.2.1.2 Inferential statistics

To determine the impact of biographic characteristics on leadership skills as well as competencies, inferential techniques that included the T-test as well as ANOVA were used. Correlation studies were conducted to explore the link among leadership skills and competencies. Measurements of central tendency along with dispersion have been determined for leadership skills aspects and leadership competencies parameters. Multiple regression studies determined that leadership skills significantly predicted total leadership competencies.

3.6. Target population and target participants

Target population “is the universe of units from which the sample is to be drawn” (Zehnalová & Kubátová, 2019, p. 90). Saunder *et al* (2019), further explained that “units” could be people or objects or occurrences that have similar characteristics relevant to the objectives of the study. On the other hand, a sample is a group of units within a population which is large enough to represent the complete target population (Acharya, et al., 2013). One of the constraints that researchers encounter when conducting research that involves people as participants is that it is difficult and practically impossible to collect data from the whole target population because of difficulties in identifying or contacting all members of the target population or due to large size of the population (Stratton, 2021). Sampling is employed in situations like these to get a group of individuals who will be representative of the entire target population.

There are two types of sampling techniques, namely, probability and non-probability sampling (Acharya, et al., 2013). Probability sampling is a technique whereby each participant in the target population has an equal probability of being selected (Stratton, 2021). On the other hand in non-probability sampling, participants are either selected by the researcher (purposeful sampling) or referred to the researcher (snowball sampling), or researchers make participants aware of the study then they decide and volunteer to participate (convenience sampling). A +80% response rate is required for convenience sampling to ensure reliability of conclusions drawn from the results (Stratton, 2021). In contrast, Mellahi and Harris (2016), argues there’s no specific minimum allowed response rate, however most literature seem to specify response rates that are within a range of 50% to 80% as acceptable for credible results. To improve the credibility and validity of results of convenience sampling, the guidelines recommended by Stratton (2021) were followed for this study.

For the purpose of this study, convenient sampling was done. Sappi Saiccor managers were the target population. These managers can be classified as employees who have direct people reporting under them and their salary grade is rated from Grade 7 to 1 or lower to top management respectively. The researcher intends to circulate questionnaires to 72 employees at Sappi Saiccor who are in management positions that deal with projects as part of their scope of work. The targeted department was engineering (maintenance and project), and production as most high value projects with big business impact are conducted in these departments. Table 3.1 below shows the distribution of target population.

Table 3.1: Profile of participants, Author, 2024

| Designation | Quantity |
|---------------------|----------|
| First line managers | 7 |
| Shift managers | 21 |
| Shift control | 13 |
| Technicians | 22 |
| Senior technicians | 14 |
| Total | 72 |

Convenient sampling was selected as all participants are known by the researcher, have close access to the researcher, and have a high probability of willingness to participate in the study as this is stated as one of the reasons why this sampling method should be used (Dornyei, 2007). The selected group includes everyone who has led small to big scale projects in the department of engineering and production. Therefore, the validity of the result will be very reliable and accurate if a high response rate is received.

3.7. Pilot study

A pilot study is critical while research is dependent on self-administered completed surveys to ensure that the final few items function properly and that the questionnaire as a whole runs smoothly. Pilot research projects allow researchers to evaluate the effectiveness and structure of

information. Prior engaging targeted population for the study, a pilot test was done at Sappi Saiccor with 10 employees within the project department using the questionnaire that was used to collect data. This was done to uncover potential measurement errors, detect unclearly phrased products, as well as most significantly, monitor communicative behaviours. Minor changes were made to the questionnaire that proved to cause some confusions the participants prior to performing the study.

3.7.1 Validity

For the purposes of this research, validity was determined using face as well as content validity. Face validity is a characteristic of a test designed for assessing anything (Mellahi & Harris, 2016). Content validity, on the other hand, ensures that the questionnaire's content adequately represents the construct being measured. A pilot test was carried out to discover problems with measurement, clarify things, and examine gestural responses. The pilot test used 10 workers from the sample demographic. The survey was meant to be basic and simple to utilise.

3.7.2 Reliability

Bryman and Bell (2007:731) define reliability as the stability of a concept's evaluation. Reliability evaluation was utilised to assess every construct's internal coherence, assuring a high level of generalisation among the items being tested. The research used Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha to determine dependability (Mellahi & Harris, 2016). The key component of validity in terms of data collection is reliability. The procedures employed by other scholars must deliver equivalent outcomes. The statistical techniques utilised to examine the component issue, as well as the results of the research, are given in Chapter 4.

3.8. Ethical Considerations

Ethics in simple terms is defined as “an inquiry into what is right and wrong, and what is valuable and important” (Bos, 2020, p. 31). Bos (2020), further explains that in the research space, several research ethics issues have been raised over the past few years. These include but are not limited to scientific fraud, questionable research practices, harm of participants (Bos, 2020). As a result,

a code of ethics has been enforced on research studies that involve participants like people and animals (Saunders, et al., 2019).

In terms of ethical considerations, this study complied with UKZN ethical rules i.e., getting a gate keepers letter from the organisation (Sappi Saiccor) of interest where research will be conducted and ethical clearance from UKZN allowing the researcher to collect research data. The researcher then shared both these documents with all the participants for their own information. Along with this, a consent form was given to each participant for them to read and sign as a way of agreeing to participate in the research under the ethical terms and conditions stated on the consent form.

Chapter Summary

The research's aim and sub objectives were outlined. Descriptive studies were employed to characterise the variables in the research. Explanatory studies were conducted to clarify the link among variables studied. The research was quantitative in character because of the use of an organised survey. The investigation took place at Sappi Saiccor where questionnaires and consent forms were handed in person to individuals selected to participate participating in the study to be collected roughly after two weeks from the day of handing them over. The data was analysed using the SPSS programme version 15.0. Descriptive statistics were employed to characterise the fundamental characteristics of the data. Inferential statistics were utilised to analyse the association among leadership skills and competencies. A pilot study also conducted at Sappi Saiccor withing project department tested the research instrument's reliability.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter starts by providing a comprehensive data analysis that gives an understanding of the results of the research, followed by a number as well as graphic representations of the data and a discussion of conclusions. This chapter discusses the presentation of extensive analysis and data derived from Sappi Saiccor employee surveys. The data was analysed utilising descriptive statistics, which included distribution tables of percentages as well as frequencies. The research's hypotheses were tested utilising inferential statistics, namely Pearson correlation analysis. Cronbach's Alpha was applied to confirm the survey's reliability, and factor analysis was utilised to determine its validity. Multiple regression analysis was done to determine the most significant connection among the variables examined. The results of each hypothesis are described underneath.

4.1 Hypothesis one

There is a statistically significant difference among managers perceptions and leadership competencies which required by project managers at KZN Sappi Saiccor.

The empirical findings indicate a statistically significant association among broad leadership competencies that is transformational and its characteristics by project managers at KZN Sappi. Results from correlations have been stated:

- Overall managers perceptions and leadership competencies ($r=0.501$; $p < 0.05$);
- Ideolised affect and leadership competencies ($r=0.343$; $p < 0.05$);
- Personalised attention and leadership competencies ($r=0.445$; $p < 0.05$); and
- Cognitive activation and leadership competencies ($r=0.501$; $p < 0.05$)

Mellahi and Harris (2016) found a statistically significant connection among overall managers perceptions and leadership competencies. A correlation of $r = 0.646$ was found. According to Linton and Berson's (2005) research, personalised attention has a better correlation with leadership competencies. This example mentioned a correlation of $r=0.64$ ($p < 0.01$). Bos (2020), found a

favourable correlation between cognitive activation and leadership competencies ($r=0.130$, $p<0.5$). Other studies' conclusions support those of this research.

Empirical findings indicate a statistically significant connection among overall managers perceptions, two of its qualities (those who have management through exceptions and constructively interaction), and leadership competencies. Some of the following connections were identified in this research:

- Overall managers perceptions and leadership competencies ($r=0.403$, $p<0.05$);
- Active management through exemptions and leadership competencies ($r=0.360$, $p<0.05$); and
- Constructively interaction and leadership competencies ($r=0.442$, $p<0.05$).

Saunders *et al* (2019), found a statistically significant connection among overall managers perceptions and leadership competencies. A Pearson correlation of $r = 0.582$ was found. Bell (2007:731) mentioned that, manager perceptions have a limited link with work leadership competencies. A correlation of $r= -0.08$ for $p<0.05$ was found. Mellahi and Harris (2016) suggest that active management by exemption has a negative effect on leadership competencies. A correlation of $r= -0.244$ for $p<0.1$ was found. The research found a substantial association among active management by exemption ($r=0.230$; $p<0.05$) and leadership competencies.

4.2 Hypothesis two

There is a statistically significant difference among managers perceptions and leadership skills required by project managers in KZN Sappi Saiccor

There is a substantial disparity in opinions regarding managers perceptions ($F=2.681$; $p<0.05$), idealised affect ($f=3.221$; $p<0.05$), and personalised attention ($f=2.188$; $p<0.05$) between leadership skills. The study found a substantial correlation between leadership skills' opinions of managers' perceptions ("inactive administration by exceptional") and leadership skills ($f=3.551$; $p<0.005$). This was in line with literature review of this study which can be summarised as follows specific to this objective. Effective communication, problem-solving, risk-taking, charisma, and delegation are vital leadership skills. Additionally, the ability to adapt these leadership skills to specific project requirements is essential for achieving project objectives and fostering a motivated

and committed team. Understanding these dynamics helps in developing better leaders and improving project outcomes.

4.3 Hypothesis three

There is a statistically significant difference among leadership styles and their effect on successful execution of project in KZN Sappi Saiccor.

There is no significant difference among leadership styles and their effect on successful execution of project in KZN Sappi Saiccor. However, according to literature data, transformational leadership, characterized by motivation, inspiration, and personalized attention, has been shown to positively impact project outcomes by fostering high standards and developing subordinates' skills and knowledge (Smith, 2015). Furthermore, while some leadership styles, such as transformational and participative leadership, are generally associated with positive project outcomes, their effectiveness can vary depending on the project's context and the organization's structure (Aga et al., 2016). This could explain why there was no significance correlation amongst leadership styles as projects and organisation nature differ to some extent.

4.4 Hypothesis four

There is a statistically significant difference among leadership skills and competencies and populations variable

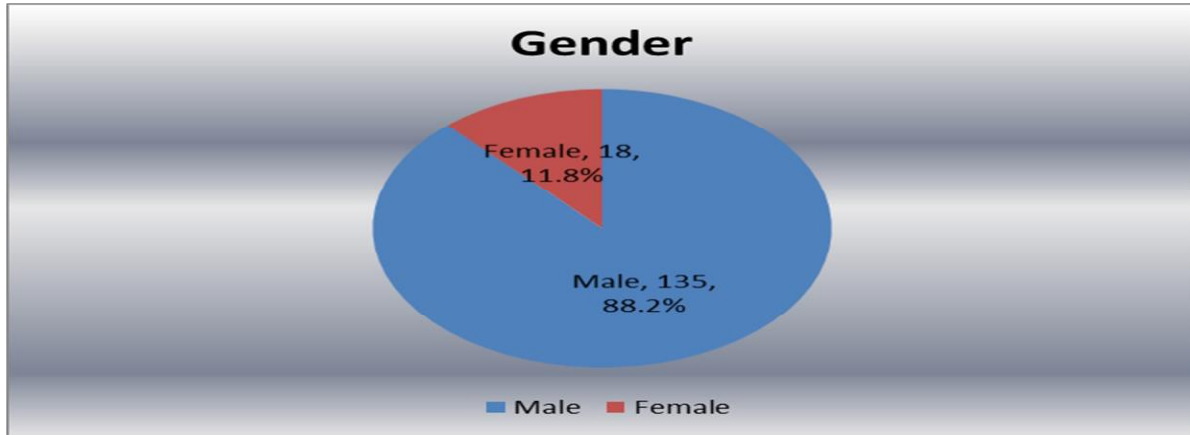
The outcomes demonstrate that just the characteristics of managers' perceptions (cognitive activation and personalised attention) clarify variations in leadership competencies, alongside cognitive activation being of greater importance ($R^2=0.29$). According to prior studies done by Mellahi and Harris (2016), participants stated greater fulfilment with leadership style alongside the competencies ($M=6.30$), following the idealised affect ($M=4.9825$) as well as population ($M=4.4075$). According to Flanigan *et al*, (2017), in terms of gender, women tend to adopt more democratic leadership styles, while men often exhibit more autocratic tendencies. These

differences influence team dynamics and effectiveness differently. Whereas, when it comes to age and experience, younger leaders may have different leadership competencies compared to older, more experienced leaders. Age can influence leadership style and effectiveness. Lastly, educational background, more educated individuals often correlates with more developed leadership competencies, impacting decision-making and strategic planning abilities.

4.5 Description of the Sample

Figure 4.1 presents the sample description with regard to population characteristics.

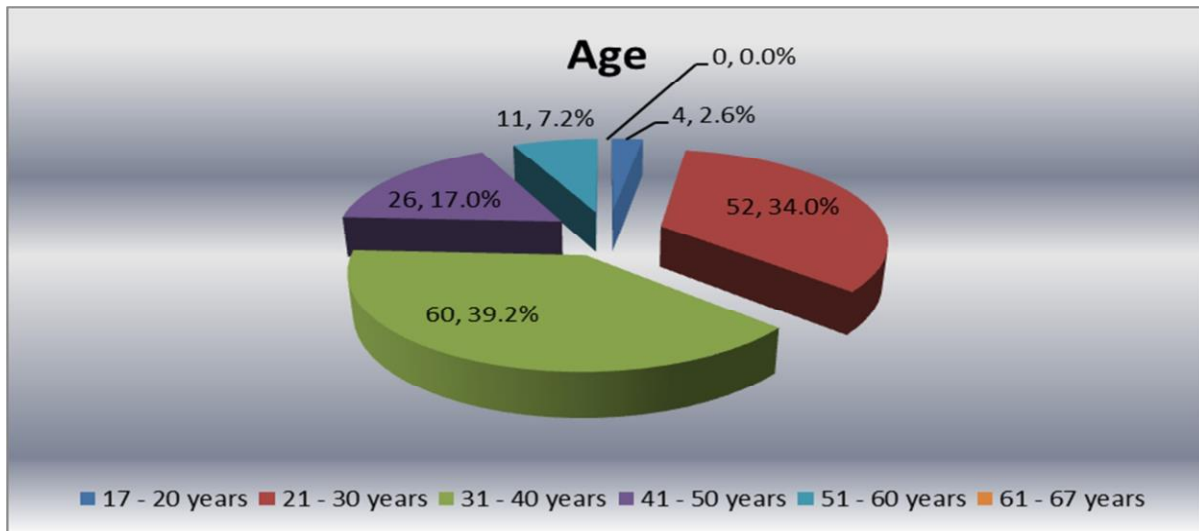
Figure 4.1: Frequency distribution - Gender



Source: *Author's Estimation*

The largest proportion of those interviewed was males (88.2%), with females accounting for 11.8%. This was by no choice but the nature of the organisation as Sappi Saiccor. However, this was inline with Association for Project Management statics which stated that roughly 72% of project managers are males and most men hold senior positions compared to woman (Drake, 2016)

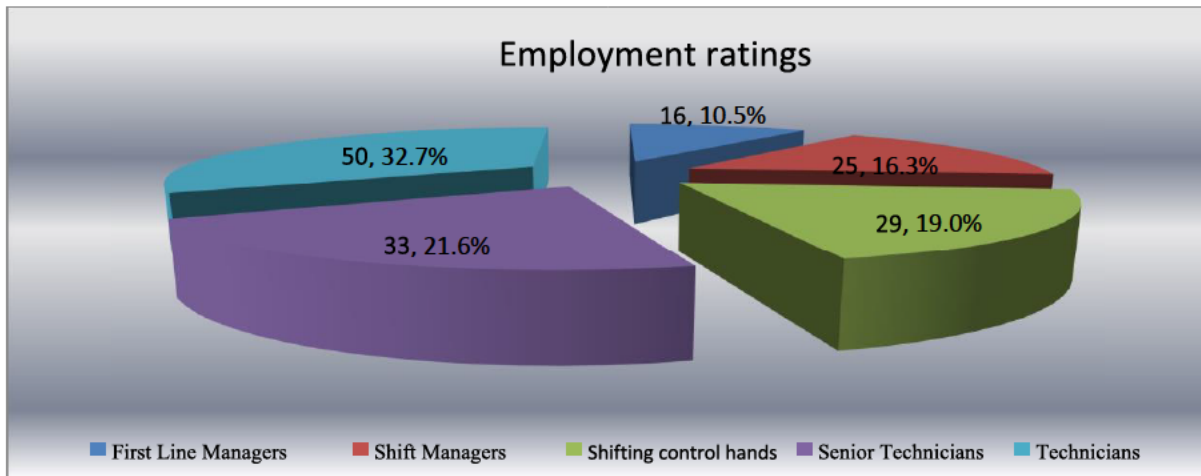
Figure 4.2: Illustrates the age distribution of the participants.



Source: *Author's Estimation*

The largest proportion of the respondents (73.2%) were among the ages of 21-40, following by the 41-50 category (17%), the 51-60 category (7.2%), and the 17-20 group (2.6%).

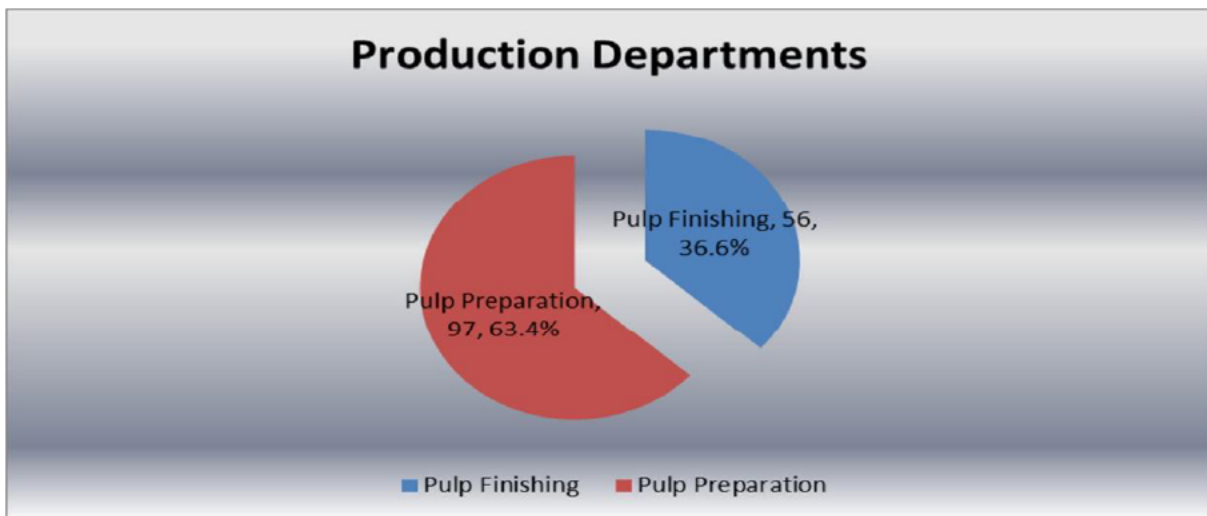
Figure 4.3: illustrates employment ratings.



Source: *Author's Estimation*

In terms of employment ratings, technicians (32.7%) were the most common, then followed by senior technicians (21.6%), shifting control hands (19%), shift managers (16.3%), and first-line managers (10.5%). Figure 4.4 shows the allocation to productions departments.

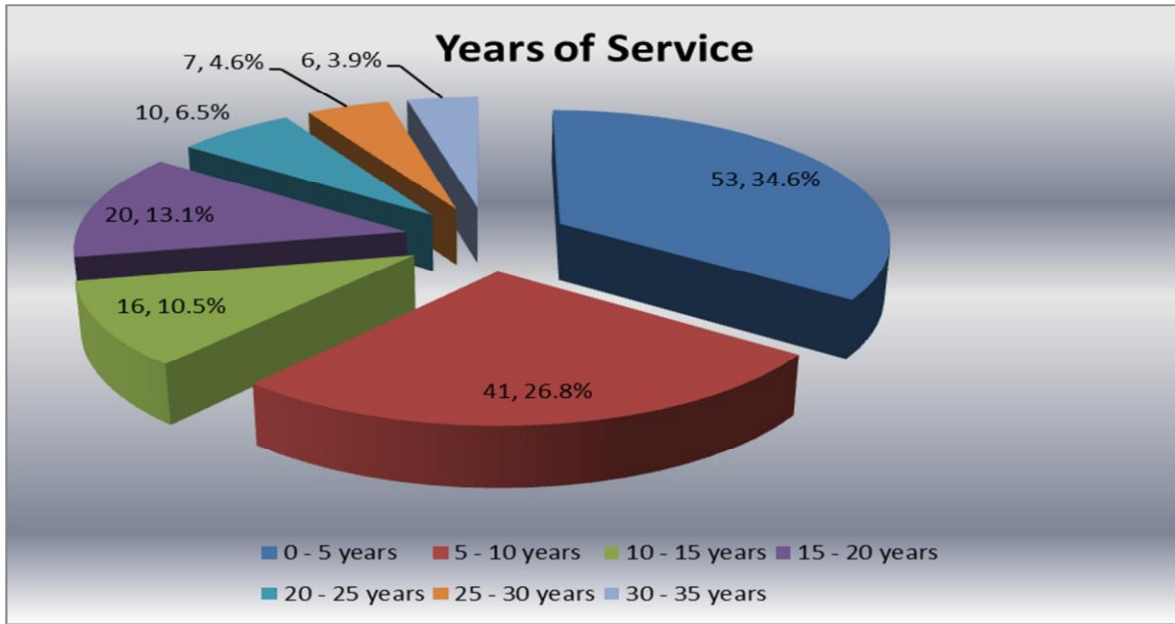
Figure 4.4: Frequency distribution by departments



Source: Author's Estimation

The pulp processing department had the most participation, (63.4%), next to the pulp completion department, (36.6%).

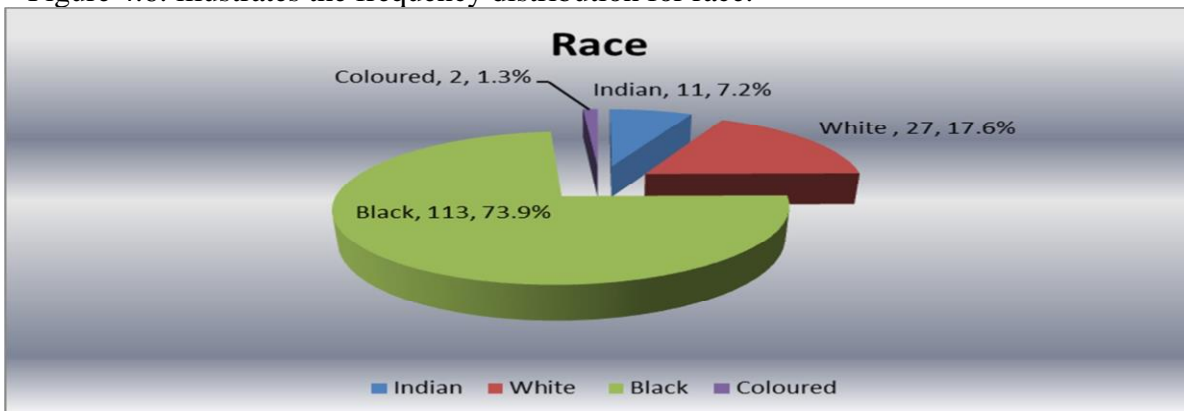
Figure 4.5: Frequency distribution by year of Service.



Source: Author's Estimation

The greatest percentage of those participating (61.4%) had less than 5 to 10 years of service, followed by the 10 to 20 years category (23.6%), the 20 to 30 years category (11.1%), and the 30 to 35 years category (3.9%).

Figure 4.6: illustrates the frequency distribution for race.



Source: Author's Estimation

Blacks made up the largest percentage of (73.9%), then followed by Whites (17.6%) and Indians (7.2%).

4.6 Descriptive statistics

Table 4.1 displays the descriptive statistics, which include the means, standard deviations, lowest and highest ratings for the research variables and their corresponding dimensions.

Table 4.1: Descriptive statistics for the research variables and their respective dimensions.

| | N | Lowest | Highest | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|-----|--------|---------|--------|----------------|
| leadership skills | 153 | 1 | 5 | 2.7925 | 0.66565 |
| leadership skills (Active Management with Exceptional) | 153 | 1 | 5 | 3.6928 | 0.84771 |
| leadership skills (Constructively interaction) | 153 | 1 | 5 | 3.4150 | 0.86563 |
| leadership skills (Inactive administration by exceptional) | 153 | 1 | 4 | 2.7092 | 0.64473 |
| leadership skills | 153 | 2 | 5 | 3.2341 | 0.61540 |
| leadership skills (Ideolised affect) | 153 | 1 | 5 | 2.9132 | 0.68163 |
| leadership skills (Personalised attention) | 153 | 1 | 5 | 2.9967 | 0.87968 |
| leadership skills (cognitive activation) | 153 | 2 | 5 | 3.1653 | 0.70045 |
| leadership skills | 153 | 2 | 5 | 3.0298 | 0.62812 |
| Leadership competencies | 153 | 2 | 5 | 3.47 | 0.601 |

Source: Author's Estimation

The outcomes of participants' opinions on the leadership skills shown by their managers indicate the following:

Subjects assessed by their manager to be demonstrating leadership skills on occasionally to frequently ($H=2.7925$). The standard deviation ($SD=0.66565$) indicates a diversity in their replies. Respondents with the lowest score of 1 reported that their managers do not use this skill, while

those with the highest rating of 5 perceived their managers to constantly use it. According to the aspects of leadership skills, managers use active Management with Exceptional (H=3.6928) on occasion verging on quite frequently, Constructively interaction (H=3.4150), and personalised attention (H=2.7092).

Broad leadership skills (H=3.2341) indicates that managers use this approach occasionally. The standard deviation (SD=0.61540) indicates a variety in replies. Several people observed that their managers adopted this method rarely (L=2), whereas others saw it as a consistent practice (H=5).

The largest standard deviation was for personalised attention (SD=0.86563), which was followed by inactive administration by exceptional (SD=0.64473). Responses varied from not at all (L=1) to frequently (H=5) for active Management with Exceptional and constructively interaction, with the highest rating of 4 (very often) for inactive administration by exceptional.

In summary, leadership skills reveal that managers used this technique occasionally (H=3.0298). The standard deviation (SD 0.62812) indicates a variance in replies. A few people reported that their managers adopted this method sometimes (L=2), whereas others saw it as a consistent practice (H=5). According to the aspects of leadership skills, managers occasionally, if not frequently, exhibit Idealized affect (M=2.9132), individualised concern (H=0.29967), and cognitive activation (H=3.1653). Personalised attention had the biggest standard deviation of (0.87968), followed by cognitive activation (0.70045) and ideologized impact of (0.68163). Respondents reported considerable leadership competencies (H=3.47). The standard deviation (SD = 0.601) indicates a variety in replies. A few individuals were unsatisfied (L = 2), whereas other people were highly contented (H = 5).

4.7 Inferential Statistics

The research's hypotheses were tested utilising inferential statistics. This includes T-tests, F-tests.

4.7.1 Hypothesis One

There is a statistically significant difference among managers perceptions and leadership competencies which required by project managers at KZN Sappi Saiccor.

a) Leadership skills and competencies

Table 4.2: Pearson Correlation Analysis outcomes for leadership skills, their characteristics, and competencies.

| Variables and Proportions | Leadership competencies |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Managers perceptions | 0.501* |
| Idealized affect | 0.343* |
| Personalised attention | 0.445* |
| Cognitive activation | 0.501* |

*p<0.05

Source: Author's Estimation

There is a statistically significant difference among managers perceptions and leadership competencies ($r=0.501$; $p<0.05$). There is a statistically significant connection among idealized affect ($r=0.343$; $p<0.05$), personalised attention ($r=0.445$; $p<0.05$) and cognitive activation ($r=0.501$; $p<0.05$) as well as leadership competencies, accordingly.

4.7.2 Hypothesis two

There is a statistically significant difference among managers perceptions and leadership skills required by project managers in KZN Sappi Saiccor. Table 4.2 shows the Pearson Correlation Analysis outcomes for managers perceptions, their characteristics, and leadership skills.

Table 4.3: Managers perceptions and leadership skills

| Variables and Proportions | Leadership skills |
|--|-------------------|
| Managers perceptions | 0.403* |
| Active Management with Exceptional | 0.360* |
| Constructively interaction | 0.442* |
| Inactive administration by exceptional | 0.109* |

*p<0.05

Source: Author's Estimation

There is a statistically significant difference among active Management with Exceptional ($r=0.360$; $p<0.05$) and constructively interaction ($r=0.442$; $p<0.05$) as well as leadership skills. In addition, there is no statistically significant connection among inactive administration by exceptional ($p>0.05$) and leadership skills.

4.7.3 Hypothesis three

There is a statistically significant difference among leadership styles and their effect on successful execution of project in KZN Sappi Saiccor. Table 4.4 shows the Pearson Correlation Analysis outcomes for leadership styles and their effect on successful execution of projects.

a) Leadership styles and Gender

Table 4.4: T-test Leadership styles and Gender

| Variable | t | p |
|-------------------|-------|-------|
| Leadership styles | 0.170 | 0.865 |

*p<0.05

Source: Author's Estimation

There is no statistically significant difference in leadership styles among males and females.

Table 4.5: T-test Leadership styles and Grade

| Variable | F | p |
|-------------------|-------|-------|
| Leadership styles | 0.362 | 0.835 |

Table 4.5 shows the outcomes of leadership styles and their characteristics in terms of grades.

*p<0.05

Source: Author's Estimation

Table 4.4 shows that there is no statistically significant difference in leadership styles among different job Grades.

Table 4.6: T-test Leadership styles and Age

| Variable | F | p |
|-------------------|-------|-------|
| Leadership styles | 0.772 | 0.545 |

Table 4.6 displays the outcomes of Leadership styles and their aspects based on age.

* $p < 0.05$

Source: Author's Estimation

Table 4.6 show that there is no statistically significant difference in leadership styles as well as their characteristics across the different age categories.

Table 4.7: T-test Leadership styles and Years of service

| Variable | F | p |
|-------------------|-------|-------|
| Leadership styles | 0.428 | 8.859 |

* $p < 0.05$

Source: Author's Estimation

Table 4.7 show that there is no statistically significant difference in views of leadership styles based on workers' years of service.

Table 4.8: T-test Leadership styles and Race

| Variable | F | p |
|-------------------|-------|-------|
| Leadership styles | 0.279 | 0.840 |

*p<0.05

Source: Author's Estimation

Table 4.8 demonstrates that there is no statistically significant difference in views of leadership styles as well as its components between different races.

Table 4.9: T-test Leadership styles and Departments

| Variable | F | p |
|-------------------|--------|-------|
| Leadership styles | -0.241 | 0.810 |

*p<0.05

Source: Author's Estimation

Table 4.9 shows that there is no statistically significant difference in views of leadership styles and their components between different races.

4.7.4 Hypothesis four

There is a statistically significant difference among leadership skills and competencies and population variable.

The reliability statistics for leadership skills are shown in Table 4.10.

| Cronbach's Alpha | N of Items |
|------------------|------------|
| .909 | 20 |

Tables 4.11 as well as 4.12 show the results of the research's multiple regression analysis.

| Model | R | R Square | Modified R Square | The standard error in the prediction |
|-------|--------------------|----------|-------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1 | 0.501 ^a | 0.251 | 0.246 | 0.522 |

1: The indicators: (constant), leadership skills - Cognitive Activation

| Model | R | R Square | Modified R Square | Standard Error in the prediction |
|-------|--------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| 2 | 0.540 ^b | 0.291 | 0.282 | 0.510 |

2. The indicators: (constant), leadership skills - Cognitive activation, leadership skills - Personalised attention

Table 4.12 Model conclusions

| Model | R | R Square | Modified R Square | Standard Error in the prediction |
|-------|--------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 | 0.501 ^a | 0.251 | 0.246 | 0.522 |
| 2 | 0.540 ^b | 0.291 | 0.282 | 0.510 |

Source: Author's Estimation

The model summary indicates that there are two models. In model 1, the leadership skills feature of cognitive activity was included. This is because this variable explained the bulk of the variation in competencies. Model 2 included the leadership skills factor for personalised attention.

The R Square in model 1 indicates that 25% of cognitive activation affects competencies. Adding personalised attention to model 2 resulted in just a 4% rise in R Square, indicating that cognitive activation plus personalised attention represented 29% of the variance in competencies. All other variables were removed since they had no impact on competencies. This is also true for Modified R Square, which measures the model's high level of fitting.

4.8 Reliability and Validity

4.8.1 Reliability

Chronbach's Alpha was utilised to determine the internal consistency reliability of leadership skills and competencies. The reliability of the data is presented in Table 4.10. The reliability statistics of 0.909 are seen to be acceptable. Also, out of 65 participants that were chosen to partake in this study, 55 of them were able to give feedback from the questionnaire, making the response rate 85% which is considered to be acceptable in making the results reliable.

4.8.2 Validity

The surveys utilised in this research have been determined surveys for which their psychometric characteristics have been discovered to be extremely favourable.

4.9 Discussion of the findings

The key points or highlights of the results and findings, as discussed in Chapter Five are briefly discussed and recommendations are given. The recommendations and conclusions are based on the researcher's understanding and interpretation of the meaning from the data that was collected.

4.9.1 Managers perceptions and leadership competencies

Leaders are individuals in an organization or project who are responsible for setting the vision for the project and aligning the vision with the project's objectives. Managers perceptions are also responsible for directing the project and influencing the direction in which the project should move. They are responsible for ensuring that the project stays on the right track in the midst of political interference and conflicts that may arise. The qualities that are expected of leadership competencies, as per the findings discussed in the previous chapter include risk taking, charisma, ability to delegate, communication and serving as a role model in the organization.

Communication

The findings show that effective communication is a trait of an effective leader. It can also be seen that communicating the right information to the right person at the right time limits delays in the project, and leads to project success. A conclusion is hereby made that having a formal communication plan/structure in a project and taking and distributing minutes from meetings on time to the right people, will keep the project team aware of their deliverable, which will contribute to the smooth operation of the project. Communication should be understood as effective only when the right message in the right format is given to the right person at the appropriate time while using appropriate media.

Recommendation:

Communication plays a major role in delivering projects successfully, hence it is important that a manager perceptions should establish a communication plan during the initiation phase of the project. The main purpose of this communication is to minimize problems that may arise owing to a lack of communication or the unavailability of data and information that is needed to make informed decisions. With a communication plan, in place the right information will go to the right person at the right time, thus reducing any project delays. Communication also refers to the project manager communicating activities to the project team on a regular basis, which will ensure that all the project stakeholders are kept informed. Conversely the concept of communication also applies to the way in which the project manager communicates with the project team; does he/she do it with respect or disrespect? Respect for project team members is critical for the success of a project, depending on levels of motivation amongst project team members. A communication Gantt chart may be the ideal way to control the communication process amongst project administrators.

4.9.2 Managers perceptions and leadership skills

The conclusion that can be made based on the results is that an effective leadership skill should be someone who is self-confident and is able to motivate team members. Another conclusion is that for a manager perceptions to be an effective leader he/she should have good interpersonal skills

and spend time to project team members not only at technical meetings, but also at a social level without compromising project delivery. The leadership skill should be open to the project team members' ideas and be open-minded when it comes to innovation by considering and encouraging the team members to think progressively. Another conclusion that was reached is that the leader should be considerate towards the project team's circumstances. It can also be concluded that a project team leader should show that he/she cares for his/her project team members, and he/she should have the confidence of the team members while he / she shows self-confidence. It is easier for project team members to trust a leader who appears confident and knowledgeable about the work in progress. It is also ideal to have someone who is a role model in the organization as a project leader, because this will bypass the stage in a project where project team members are not sure whether or not to trust the project leader. Building self-confidence is a result of many factors, chief among them are knowledge of the industry, knowledge about the work to be done, proper and appropriate skills, support from senior management, and previous experience in the trade, as this reduces stress and anxiety from the project leader.

Recommendation:

Many times projects in the Sappi Saiccor have failed owing to managers perceptions not having the interpersonal skills that are required to deal with people. This leads to the conclusion that the personality of a project leader plays an important role in the outcomes of a project. It is important that organizations should start to look at the personality of the individuals who lead project teams and not merely consider the qualification, because personality carries more weight than the qualification. Not to undermine the qualification, but the biggest contributing factor to project success is the people who are involved in the project, namely people who do the work. The project leader should be an individual that the team members look up to and trust; be it through a proven record or someone that is a role model in the organization, and has the confidence of the staff. The project leader should be approachable and he/she should be someone who takes into account each and every team member's opinions / contributions to the success of the project. The project leader should also be decisive and make informed decisions and trust the team members when it comes to making decisions on items that involve their specialized trades. It is recommended that current project management specialists who lack the required personality traits should go for training to build these skills which are necessary for successful project delivery. It is also recommended that

research should be conducted to establish as to what extent the persona of the project leadership skill plays a part in the successful delivery of a project.

4.9.3 Leadership styles and their effect on successful execution

The Sappi Saiccor involves diverse skills from different engineering discipline such as electrical engineering, quantity surveying, and environmental science in respect of environmental impact assessments. The concepts that are discussed by these professionals are foreign to an individual with a human resources or event management background, since jargon is spoken by people within certain disciplines. Leadership styles can be concluded that the leadership perceptions should have a technical styles back ground and understand the processes involved in the Sappi Saiccor, but it should also be emphasized that soft skills get the work done. Understanding of the processes will assist the project leader with the programing and sequencing of the activities involved in the construction process. Not understanding the processes and the sequencing will affect the way in which project team members view the project leader, and they will not have confidence in their leader, which may affect the delivery of the project. A leadership perceptions who has a technical background will be able to contribute at technical/design meetings and will easily facilitate progressive thinking. The leader will also understand different innovations that the team presents so that he/she will be able to sell it to the project sponsor. It is better to give the client a more innovative solution than an average solution, which everyone offers in the industry, and having someone who is technical such as a project leader, is advantageous.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that leadership styles should have sessions that are dedicated to value for Sappi Saiccor company, because this will increase their value to the clients, particularly if the project team comes up with innovative ways of doing things that are first within the industry. These sessions are technically driven and it is critical for the managers perceptions to be an individual who has technical experience in the Saiccor company, because if the manager perception adds technical input to the project this will further assist in earning him/her respect and confidence amongst project team members. The technical know-how also helps the manager perception to gauge levels of competency of the team members.

4.9.4 Leadership skills and competencies

It can be concluded that an effective leadership skills should be an all-rounded individual with a good understanding of situational leadership. He should understand both soft skills and hard skills, which are required to deliver projects successfully, regardless of the nature of the task. The respondents indicated that the personality of the leader is key to the success of the project; the leader should be empathetic, promote knowledge sharing, make time for subordinates, trust subordinates, and should be self-confident and steer the team in the right direction. The results also suggest that the leader should understand and know the tools that are required for delivering projects successfully; he should understand scheduling, cost management, time management, quality management and communication management.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that organizations should take into account both the soft and hard skills that are required from a leader when making appointments for project leaders. Generally, all-rounded-individuals are practitioners who have been in the industry for years and have the necessary expertise and years of experience required to deliver a complex project. But cognisance is taken that the current failure rate of projects at plus or minus 47% - 61% is taking place in an environment where 97% of the project managers in technical projects have the requisite hard skills. This, therefore, talks to the fact that hard skills are not a primary criterion for effective project execution. Hence, the study emphasizes the human element of project execution, since it is people who get the work done and not expert technical knowle

CONCLUSION

This chapter gave an analysis of the data gathered throughout the study's investigation. Different quantitative analysis approaches were used to provide both inferential and descriptive statistics. The outcomes were provided in a combination of tables and charts.

The outcomes additionally revealed significant connections as well as disparities among the research variables.

The outcomes of this chapter are outlined below.

- ❖ There is a statistically significant difference among managers perceptions and leadership competencies which required by project managers at KZN Sappi Saiccor.
- ❖ There is a statistically significant difference among managers perceptions and leadership skills required by project managers in KZN Sappi Saiccor.
- ❖ There is a statistically significant difference among leadership styles and their effect on successful execution of project in KZN Sappi Saiccor.
- ❖ These outcomes demonstrate that just the characteristics of managers' perceptions (cognitive activation and personalised attention) clarify variations in leadership competencies, alongside cognitive activation being of greater importance. The next chapter covers the research's results as well as recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The preceding chapter extensively addressed the statistical data acquired during the questionnaire's completion. In addition, it is required to go over the statistical data in further depth. This chapter presents findings related to the research's aims. It additionally offers suggestions for future research on this linked topic of research.

5.1 Summary of theoretical study

The main objective of this research was to look at the link among leadership skills and competencies. The literature review was designed and structured based on the research's major and sub-objectives. Chapter two offers an in-depth review of the most common leadership skills and competencies theories. The literature explores the impact of leadership skills on competencies. The results of the research reveal that leadership skills affect worker competencies. Furthermore, the data demonstrate that the characteristics of the leadership skills affected competencies to varying extents. Further studies might assist management in better understanding how to improve competencies between workers throughout a company.

5.2 Summary of empirical study

The findings reveal that all three leadership skills have an impact on competencies from managers' perceptions having the most pronounced characteristics. The research followed a methodical structure that included organising, collecting primary and secondary data, analysing the data, interpreting and presenting the outcomes, and ultimately producing a final product.

5.3 Conclusion on research objectives

The overall objective of this research was to analyse the leadership skills and competencies required for managing projects in KwaZulu-Natal Sappi Saiccor. The second chapter featured literature research related to the research's main purpose. Data was gathered from many sources to gain insight into leadership skills and competencies. Hence, the first objective has been accomplished.

5.3.1 Objective one: To determine managers perceptions and the leadership competencies required by project managers in KZN Sappi Saiccor.

The study indicates a statistically significant association among managers perceptions and broad leadership competencies by project managers at KZN Sappi. The variances in replies indicate that managers perceptions and leadership competencies were reproducible. Thus, the objective has been accomplished.

5.3.2 Objective two: To examine managers perceptions of leadership skills required by project managers in KZN Sappi Saiccor

The study found a substantial correlation between leadership skills' opinions of managers' perceptions ("inactive administration by exceptional") and leadership skills. A large portion of managers reported feeling content most of the time. The replies varied, with certain managers feeling neither delighted nor unsatisfied, while others were very pleased or disappointed. Thus, the objective has been completed.

5.3.3 Objective three: To examine different leadership styles and their effect on successful execution of project in KZN Sappi Saiccor.

There is no significant difference among leadership styles and their effect on successful execution of project in KZN Sappi Saiccor. Thus, the objective has been accomplished.

5.3.4 Objective four: To examine the relationship between leadership skills and competencies and demographic variable

The study demonstrates that the R Square in model 1 indicates that 25% of cognitive activation affects competencies. Adding personalised attention to model 2 resulted in just a 4% rise in R Square, indicating that cognitive activation plus personalised attention represented 29% of the variance in competencies. All other variables were removed since they had no impact on competencies. This is also true for Modified R Square, which measures the model's high level of fitting. The modified R² value of 0.282 in Table 4.10 indicates the model's strength of fitting. Thus, the objective was ultimately accomplished.

5.4 Limitation of the study

The research was confined to a survey of literature on leadership skills, leadership styles, and competencies in diverse corporate contexts. The search was limited to Sappi Saiccor, located near Umkomaas on the south coast of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The research examined leadership competencies across manufacturing divisions at a single wood mill under different leadership skills. Sappi is an international company with several production facilities. However, due to contact constraints on participants that fit the criteria of this study, the research was limited to Sappi Saiccor production facility where the research has contact access to potential participants. The researcher recognizes the possibility of encountering limitations of access to data considered extremely confidential within Sappi admin files and recognize the possibility of encountering participants who would refuse to disclose certain information for various reasons. Furthermore, the researcher engages to respect the legality of documents and ensuring that individuals require confidentiality, reputational protection and safety from any form of harm. Therefore, the findings are inapplicable to the entire company.

5.5 Recommendation of the study

It is advised that even more quantitative research be conducted to acquire more knowledge of the ways that leadership skills affect worker competencies. Leadership survey findings indicate a lack of clarity. This is evident from the large percentage of participants who chose the "neither pleased nor unhappy" category. It may be claimed that certain answers were not intended to be succinct. Quantitative research strategies might minimise regions of ambiguity.

Therefore, it is commended that a further study should be conducted on the topic that could include the other 3 Sappi regions in south Africa. This will expand target population hence allows collection of more data. Furthermore, it is recommended that further study be a combination of quantitative and qualitative research method.

Chapter Conclusion

The current study evaluated the impact of the leadership skills and competencies required for managing projects in KwaZulu-Natal Sappi Saiccor. The topics of competencies and leadership skills were discussed. Using exciting and persuasive leadership skills could enhance competencies and company efficiency. Leadership is regarded as one of the most important determinants of an organization's achievement in the present and future. Workers that are content with their jobs are prepared and engaged in contributing to corporate achievement. The manager plays a vital part in preserving team cohesiveness. The empirical data utilised in this research were collected using surveys distributed to paid personnel in the company's manufacturing units.

The ideas mentioned in this chapter offer various measures that senior management may explore to boost worker leadership competencies within the corporation. It's important to explore other factors that may impact competencies. This research will help executives comprehend more thoroughly the leadership attributes that increase worker competencies, eventually contributing to corporate achievement.

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APPENDICES

Appendices A: Informed consent

Information Sheet and Consent to Participate in Research

Date:

Dear Sappi Saiccor Employee

My name is Nkosinathi Clive Muthwa (*student no. 207502967*). I am a Masters candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, School of Business and Leadership.

You are being invited to consider participating in a study that involves research on determining managers perceptions of the leadership competencies, skills, and styles required by project managers in KZN Sappi Saiccor to execute projects successfully. The title of the research is: Analyzing the perceived leadership skills and competencies required by project managers in KwaZulu-Natal Sappi Saiccor. The study will use non-probability convenience sampling technique using a questionnaire as a tool which distributed to Sappi employees who are in management position i.e. grade 7 and below within the production and engineering department “. The study is expected to enrol no less than 50% of employees at Sappi Saiccor who are in management positions within the engineering and production department. It will involve filling in a questionnaire provided to you by the researcher then giving it back to him in person or send it to email address 207502967@stu.ukzn.ac.za before the agreed date. The duration of your participation if you choose to enrol and remain in the study is expected to be 15 to 30 minutes. The study is self-funded by the researcher.

The proposed study will carry a significant amount of data on the body of knowledge related to leadership competencies within Sappi Saiccor engineering projects. The findings of the proposed research will be of particular interests to the leadership board and to the management team in assisting project managers executing project successfully.

The study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (approval number HSSRE/00006122/2023).

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact the researcher at (provide contact details) or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Please note that:

- The information that you provide will be used for scholarly research only.
- Your participation is entirely voluntary. You have a choice to participate, not to participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalized for taking such an action.
- The researcher will terminate your involvement or participation from the study should you not submit answered questionnaire back to him before the agreed closing date.
- Your views in this study will be presented anonymously.
- Your name nor identity will be not disclosed in any form when reporting the results of the final report.
- The records, your personal info, as well as other items associated with the questionnaire will be held in a password-protected file accessible only to myself and my supervisors. After a period of 5 years, in line with the rules of the university, it will be disposed by shredding and burning.
- Note the researcher Nkosinathi Clive Muthwa and the University of KwaZulu-Natal is not liable for paying any cost you may incur as a result of participating in this study.
- If you agree to participate, please sign the declaration attached to this statement (a separate sheet will be provided for signatures)

DECLARATION

I (Name) have been informed about the study Analyzing the perceived leadership skills and competencies required by project managers in KwaZulu-Natal Sappi Saiccor by Nkosinathi Clive Muthwa

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study is to use answer the questionnaire provided by the researcher to help determine managers perceptions of the leadership competencies, skills, and styles required by project managers in KZN Sappi Saiccor to execute projects successfully.

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to.

I have been informed about any available compensation or medical treatment if injury occurs to me as a result of study-related procedures.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study, I understand that I may contact the researcher at 207502967@stu.ukzn.ac.za or [REDACTED]

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Additional consent, where applicable

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview / focus group discussion YES / NO

Video-record my interview / focus group discussion YES / NO

Use of my photographs for research purposes YES / NO

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Witness

Date

(Where applicable)

Signature of Translator
(Where applicable)

Date

Appendices B: Questionnaire

1. Section 1: Demographic details

1.1. Kindly select your gender by filling the correct case with X

| Male | Female | Other |
|------|--------|-------|
| | | |

1.2. Kindly select your age group by filling the correct case with X

| 25 to 35 | 36 to 45 | 46 to 55 | 56 to 65 | Refuse to answer |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|------------------|
| | | | | |

1.3. Kind select your race group

| Black | White | Indian | Coloured | Othe |
|-------|-------|--------|----------|------|
| | | | | |

1.4. Educational levels/Qualification

| Certificate | Diploma | Degree | Honours | Masters | Doctorate |
|-------------|---------|--------|---------|---------|-----------|
| | | | | | |

1.5. Select job title category that best fit your position

| First line managers | Shift managers | Technicians | Technicians | Senior technicians |
|---------------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|--------------------|
| | | | | |

1.6. Select years of experience range

| 1-5 | 6-10 | 10-20 | 21-30 | 31 years and above |
|-----|------|-------|-------|--------------------|
| | | | | |

2. Section 2: Research topic specific questions

2.1. Leadership competencies required by project manager

| | Questions | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly agree |
|---|--|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| 1 | Do you perceive leadership as one of critical competency when it comes to leading projects? | | | | | |
| 2 | Project management experience is important for project leader? | | | | | |
| 3 | A good project leader does things by the book, guidelines, set or rules? | | | | | |
| 4 | Competency of a project leader contribute to project failure in terms of set deliverables? | | | | | |
| 5 | The strength of the project team is more important than that of the leader in successfully executing the project | | | | | |
| 6 | Good communication skills are required for a good project leader | | | | | |
| 7 | The type of leadership style a project leader shows on his team when leading a project has an effect on successful completion of the project | | | | | |
| 8 | Personal characteristics makes determines whether project leader good | | | | | |

Assessing leadership styles perceived to be important for project leader.

| | Assessing leadership styles perceived to be important for project leader | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly agree |
|----|---|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| 1 | A leader that has independent ways of doing things i.e. establishes rules and tends to be clearly outlined and communicated | | | | | |
| 2 | Allows collaboration i.e. sharing of opinions and ideas amongst team members of the project | | | | | |
| 3 | Encourages and inspire project team members to be creative, innovative, and find new ways of doing things | | | | | |
| 4 | Adjust or changes his ways of leading to suit the project deliverables | | | | | |
| 5 | Allows less input from project team members | | | | | |
| 6 | Takes decisions based on morals and values | | | | | |
| 7 | Quick on taking decisions | | | | | |
| 8 | Leader has high tolerance for taking risky decision for the benefit of the project | | | | | |
| 9 | A leader must be able to evaluate the project with it team members and base his decisions on that assessment | | | | | |
| 10 | Must keeps project team members engaged and rewards them for creative work input. | | | | | |
| 11 | Must be intimidating on project team members | | | | | |

Leadership traits importance on project based on your opinion.

| | Rank leadership traits in terms of importance or relevance in leading projects. 1 being the most important and 10 the least | Ranking |
|----|---|---------|
| a) | Communication | |
| b) | Delegation | |
| c) | Coaching | |
| d) | Problem solving | |
| e) | Motivation | |
| f) | Risk taking | |
| g) | Skills management | |
| h) | Collaboration | |
| i) | Creativity | |
| j) | Trustworthy | |
| k) | Charisma | |

Appendices C: Gatekeeper's consent letter

sappi

Sappi Dissolving Pulp

Saiccor Mill

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Lushen Chetty
Manager : Learning
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Lushen.chetty@sappi.com

06 March 2023

To whom it may concern

Subject: Gatekeeper's Consent

I, Lushen Chetty, as delegated authority of Sappi Saiccor Mill, hereby give permission to the primary researcher Clive Muthwa, registered in the Masters of Business Administration studies at the University of KwaZulu Natal, for the following:

1. To engage and conduct a research survey with the employees of the above-mentioned company

The aforementioned is required for the research project entitled:

Leadership competencies for managing projects in Sappi Saiccor Mill

This authorization is based on a mutual understanding that the above-mentioned company's name cannot be revealed in his project. The information provided by the employees or any other means (such as company's archived documents or reports) of the above-mentioned company is purely for academic purposes and cannot be used for any other purpose.

Yours sincerely

Signature of Manager / Owner / Gatekeeper :.....



Company stamp:

Sappi Southern Africa Limited
Human Resources
SAICCOR Mill
P O Box 62, Umkomaas, 4170

Sappi Southern Africa Limited (Reg no 1951/003180/06)
Secretaries Sappi Limited (Reg no 1936/008963/06)

Appendices D: Ethical clearance letter



04 October 2023

Nkosinathi Olive Muthwa (207502967)
Grad School of Bus & Leadership
Westville Campus

Dear NC Muthwa,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00006122/2023

Project title: Analysing the perceived leadership skills and competencies required by project managers in KwaZulu-Natal Sappi Saiccor.

Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 06 September 2023 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid until 04 October 2024.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Health Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hialele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Postal Address: Private Bag 354001, Durban, 4000, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 8350/4557/3587 Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics>

Founding Campuses:  Edgerwood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

Appendices E: Turnitin report

ANALYSING THE PERCEIVED LEADERSHIP SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES REQUIRED BY PROJECT MANAGERS IN KWAZULU-NATAL SAPPI SAICCOR.

ORIGINALITY REPORT

| | | | |
|------------------|------------------|--------------|----------------|
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