

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN STRATEGY EXECUTION AT THE SOUTH AFRICAN ARMY INFANTRY FORMATION

by

Keatlegile Masilo Pholoba

A field study

Submitted to the UFS Business School in the Faculty of Economic and Management
Sciences in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

MAGISTER IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

at the

UFS BUSINESS SCHOOL

UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE

BLOEMFONTEIN

SUPERVISOR: Professor M.J. Crous

16 November 2015

Declaration

I, Keatlegile Masilo Pholoba, declare that this research is my own work and that it has not been submitted before, as a whole or in part, either for any degree or examination at any other University.

Keatlegile Masilo Pholoba

Date: 16 November 2015

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge and sincerely thank all who made it possible for me to achieve my goals:

- God Almighty, for it is he who opened locked doors and set the path for me;
- My Ancestors, for all the blessings;
- Professor Helena Van Zyl and the rest of the Business School staff for providing me with the opportunity to acquire knowledge;
- Professor Tienie Crous, for his mentorship and unfaltering support;
- My wife Kgomotso, for being patient, supportive, and loving (I love you Popcorns);
- My family, for the words of encouragement, unconditional backing and being the pillars of my strength;
- SA Army Infantry Formation, Major General Yam for being an advocate of education and a role model;
- Colonel Swart, for your understanding and motivation, it means the world to me;
- Carol Keep, for your relentless efforts and words of wisdom;
- Lt Col Chauke, Staff Sergeants Radzilani and Sibanda, your dedication and professionalism made it all possible for me;
- Sergeant Snyman, Corporals Smith, Mpuru and Ramatlho, for putting up with me every month;
- Colleagues and friends at the SA Army Infantry Formation Headquarters for the full participation and support towards my endeavours;
- My friends and Facebook-friends for your kind words and actions; and
- My late grandfather, Sebapo-Sebapola-Mekgopa, in me your legacy lives still.

Thank you!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
List of Abbreviations.....	ix
List of figures	x
List of tables.....	xi-xii
ABSTRACT.....	xiii
CHAPTER 1.....	1
INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION.....	1-3
1.2. PROBLEM STATEMENT	4
1.2.1. Research question.....	4
1.3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES	5
1.3.1. Primary objective	5
1.3.2. Secondary objectives	5
1.4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	6-10
1.4.1 Employee engagement.....	6-9
1.4.1.1 Key drivers of employee engagement	7-8
1.4.2 Strategy execution.....	9-10
1.5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	10-13
1.5.1 Research design.....	10
1.5.2 Sampling and data analysis.....	11
1.5.3 Ethical considerations	11-13
1.5.3.1 Integrity.....	12
1.5.3.2 Objectivity	12
1.5.3.3 Voluntary participation	12
1.5.3.4 Informed consent	12
1.5.3.5 Use of language and administration process	12
1.5.3.6 Confidentiality and respect	13
1.6. DEMARCATION OF THE RESEARCH AREA	13-14
1.7. LAYOUT OF THE FIELD STUDY.....	13-14
1.7.1. Chapter 2.....	13
1.7.2. Chapter 3	13
1.7.3. Chapter 4.....	13
1.7.4. Chapter 5	14

1.8. CONCLUSION	14-15
CHAPTER 2.....	16
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	16-39
2.1. INTRODUCTION.....	16
2.2. EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT	16-26
2.2.1 Employee engagement definitions	16-18
2.2.2 Employee engagement drivers	18-22
2.2.2.1 Manager-employee relationship.....	18
2.2.2.2 Trust.....	19
2.2.2.3 Autonomy.....	20
2.2.2.4 Shared purpose	20
2.2.2.5 Employee voice.....	21
2.2.2.6 Communication	21
2.2.2.7 Organisational culture.....	21
2.2.2.8 Career growth and rewards.....	22
2.2.3 Employee engagement and performance management.....	24
2.2.4 Employee engagement and strategy execution.....	25
2.3. SUMMARY.....	26
2.4. STRATEGY EXECUTION	26-38
2.4.1 Strategy execution overview	26
2.4.2 Challenges with strategy execution	28
2.4.2.1 Additional challenges with strategy execution	29
2.4.3 Barriers to successful strategy execution	30-33
2.4.3.1 Poor leadership	30
2.4.3.2 Strategic planning	30
2.4.3.3 Goal setting.....	31
2.4.3.4 People barrier	31
2.4.3.5 Communication	31
2.4.3.6 Managing change.....	32
2.4.3.7 Decision making	32
2.4.3.8 Resource allocations.....	32
2.4.3.9 Poor employee engagement.....	33
2.4.4 Drivers of successful strategy execution	33-38
2.4.4.1 Quality of strategic plans	33
2.4.4.2 Leadership	34
2.4.4.3 Employee engagement.....	35

2.4.4.4 Communication.....	36
2.4.4.5 Organisational dialogue.....	37
2.4.4.6 Managing change	37
2.4.4.7 Organisational culture.....	37
2.4.4.8 Organisational alignment.....	38
2.4.4.9 Trust	38
2.4.4.10 Teamwork	38
2.5. CONCLUSION	39
CHAPTER 3.....	40
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	40-43
3.1. INTRODUCTION.....	40
3.2. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	40-43
3.2.1. Research approach	40
3.2.2. Research setting.....	40
3.2.3. Population and sample.....	41
3.3. DATA COLLECTION.....	41
3.3.1. Data collection instrument	41
3.3.2 Data collection procedure.....	41
3.4. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	42
3.4.1. Integrity	42
3.4.2. Objectivity	42
3.4.3. Voluntary participation	42
3.5. DATA ANALYSIS	43
3.6. CONCLUSION	43
CHAPTER 4.....	44
DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION.....	44-86
4.1. INTRODUCTION.....	44
4.2. DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE	44
4.2.1. Data analysis and interpretation	45
4.3. MAIN RESULTS.....	45-78
4.3.1. DEMOGRAPHIC STATISTICS.....	45-50
4.3.1.1. Rank.....	45
4.3.1.2. Age.....	46
4.3.1.3. Gender	48
4.3.1.4. Years serving in the military	48
4.3.1.5. Educational background	49

4.3.1.6 Discussion of demographic results	50
4.3.2 EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT	51
4.3.2.1 Employee engagement questionnaire.....	51
4.3.2.1.2 The purpose of the employee engagement questionnaire.....	52
4.3.2.2 Descriptive statistics of employee engagement	52
4.3.2.3 Discussion of employee engagement results.....	63
4.3.2.3.1 The level of employee engagement in the SAAIF	64
4.3.2.3.2 Challenges in employee engagement in the SAAIF	65
4.3.3 STRATEGY EXECUTION	67-78
4.3.3.1. Strategy execution questionnaire.....	67
4.3.3.2. The purpose of the strategy execution questionnaire.....	67
4.3.3.3. Descriptive statistics of the strategy execution questionnaire.....	68
4.3.3.4. Discussion of strategy execution results	78
4.3.4 INFERENTIAL ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS	81-85
4.3.4.1 T-tests	81
4.3.4.2 ANOVA.....	82
4.3.4.2.1 Rank	83
4.3.4.2.2 Age	83
4.3.4.2.3 Years serving in the military	84
4.3.4.3. Reliability	84
4.3.4.4. Normality	85
4.3.4.5. Correlation.....	85
4.4. CONCLUSION	86
CHAPTER 5.....	88
RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION	88-95
5.1. INTRODUCTION.....	88
5.2. FINDINGS.....	88-92
5.2.1 Employee engagement.....	88
5.2.1.1 Pride.....	89
5.2.1.2 Commitment	89
5.2.1.3 Rewards	89
5.2.1.4 Employee retention.....	89
5.2.1.5 Manager-employee relationship.....	90
5.2.1.6 Effective communication	90
5.2.1.7 Decision-making	90
5.2.2 Strategy execution.....	90

5.2.2.1 Involvement in strategic planning.....	91
5.2.2.2 Rewards and recognition	91
5.2.2.3 Clarity on organisational strategies	91
5.2.2.4 Effective performance appraisals.....	91
5.2.2.5 Communication strategies	91
5.2.2.6 Leadership.....	92
5.2.2.7 Organisational mission and vision.....	92
5.2.2.8 Teamwork.....	92
5.3. RECOMMENDATIONS	93-95
5.4. CONCLUSION	95-96
References	xiv-xvii
Appendix A: Letter of request.....	xviii
Appendix B: Letter of approval	xix
Appendix C: Questionnaires.....	xx-xxii

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

DOD SP	Defence Standard related Decision cycle
SAAIF	South African Army Infantry Formation
SMP	Strategic Management Practice
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1	Engagement and strategy execution model	25
Figure 4.1	Rank dispersion	46
Figure 4.2	Age distribution of sample	47
Figure 4.3	Years in the military.....	48
Figure 4.4	Educational background.....	49

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1	Gender distribution of sample.....	48
Table 4.2	I am proud of the work that I do	52
Table 4.3	I look forward to coming to work each day.....	53
Table 4.4	My job means a lot more to me than just money.....	54
Table 4.5	Time flies when I am working	55
Table 4.6	I will stay overtime and finish a job even if I am not paid for it.....	55
Table 4.7	I make important decisions about my work	56
Table 4.8	I contribute to solving problems that arise in my work.....	56
Table 4.9	My ideas are always listened to.....	57
Table 4.10	My job is an important part of my life	58
Table 4.11	I frequently think about quitting my job	58
Table 4.12	I have a good working relationship with my seniors	59
Table 4.13	I communicate well with everyone in my section.....	60
Table 4.14	My supervisors value the work that I do.....	61
Table 4.15	My daily tasks are in line with the strategy of the organisation.....	61
Table 4.16	I trust the information that I receive from my seniors/supervisors	62
Table 4.17	Engagement levels of each questionnaire item	63
Table 4.18	I understand the vision and mission of my organisation.....	68
Table 4.19	I am involved in the creation of strategic goals	68
Table 4.20	My day to day activities are linked to strategic goals	69
Table 4.21	I am an asset to the organisation.....	70
Table 4.22	My performance at work is always recognized	70
Table 4.23	I have the necessary skills to do my job well	71
Table 4.24	I get rewarded for good performance.....	72
Table 4.25	Most people in my organisation are hard workers.....	72
Table 4.26	I am well trained and developed to do my job well.....	73
Table 4.27	I trust and believe in my leaders	73
Table 4.28	I do not have the necessary tools I need to do my job	74
Table 4.29	I want to achieve great things for myself	75
Table 4.30	Teamwork is not important in day to day tasks	75
Table 4.31	Organisational strategies are clearly communicated	76
Table 4.32	Change is good as it promotes growth in the organisation	77
Table 4.33	Strategy execution results of each questionnaire item.....	78
Table 4.34	T-tests on gender	81

Table 4.35 t statistics on employee engagement and strategy execution	81
Table 4.36 T-tests on education level.....	82
Table 4.37 t statistics on education level	82
Table 4.38 ANOVA results	83
Table 4.39 Reliability tests	84
Table 4.40 Normality tests	85
Table 4.41 Correlation coefficient test	86

ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this study is to determine how employees in the South African Army Infantry Formation (SAAIF) can be engaged in the execution of organisational strategies. The problem is that employees in the SAAIF are not adequately engaged in strategy execution processes, and as a result have trouble in understanding strategic plans, objectives, accepting strategic roles and focusing their actions on being committed to the execution of organisational strategies.

This study was conducted at SAAIF headquarters in Pretoria. The empirical part of the study was conducted in July 2015. Data for this research were collected from a sample of 140 respondents. Additionally, the subjects of this study were randomly selected from a population of SAAIF employees at the headquarters in Pretoria. A questionnaire was distributed to respondents in the presence of the researcher and responses were made on a 5-point Likert scales ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

The results suggest that employee engagement levels of the SAAIF are significantly higher when compared to the global and national workforce engagement results, however, as a military organisation, the level of disengaged employees in the SAAIF is a cause for concern. In addition, the study identified a number of barriers and hindrances towards employee engagement and the successful execution of strategies in the SAAIF.

Furthermore, the study shows that there is a significant positive correlation between employee engagement and strategy execution. Based on the results of this research, it can be concluded that, employee engagement affects how organisations are able to execute strategic plans, which ultimately affects the performance of organisations.

Keywords: *Employee engagement, Strategy execution, performance management, motivation, leadership, communication, strategic planning, employee voice, commitment, recognition, reward*

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

1.1 INTRODUCTION

South African private and government organisations presently require a lot more from their employees than any preceding time in history (De Waal & Pienaar, 2013:1). These modern day organisations require their employees to show initiative, be more committed, proactive and build up a sense of duty and entitlement to the execution of organisational strategies. Organisations today insist on employees who are enthusiastic and dutiful to and engrossed in their work; that is, employees who are engaged with their work (Bakker, et al., 2008:189) in a productive manner. Such an organisation is industrious, it is one in which employees feel safe and trusted, where the individual employee is engaged and is fully prepared to commit to his/her work.

When engaged, employees are fully committed to their work and are prepared to exert themselves and go the additional mile for their organisation to guarantee its success (Sahoo & Mishra, 2012:95). Employee engagement is subtle emotional and rational relationships that an employee has for his/her job, organisation, manager and co-workers that in turn persuade him/her to apply unrestricted efforts to his/her work (Rich et al., 2010:618). Accordingly, engaged employees express themselves physically, emotionally and cognitively.

Employee engagement is about individual behaviours that compliment or surpass organisational goals. Although engagement is a personal and not an organisational decision, it is an approach chosen by organisations to supervise their workforce, rather than a psychological state experienced by employees in the performance of their work (Truss et al, 2013:2661).

Admittedly, organisations prioritise their efforts on external aspects of employee engagement by transforming policies, upgrading physical environments and aligning their performance management systems to changing macro environment conditions. These organisations pride themselves in having superior strategies, abundant resources and excellent strategy execution capabilities; but still fail to engage employees appropriately. As a result, these organisations operate with a confidence deficit that causes a sharp decline in commitment and in the engagement levels of employees (Suri, 2014:54).

According to the Gallup Meta-Analysis (Gallup, 2012: para 11) conducted on 73,752 employees across 141 countries, only 13% of employees are actively engaged, which means that only one in eight employees is engaged worldwide. In essence, actively disengaged employees outnumber engaged employees two to one. The study further indicates that in South Africa, only 9% of employees are actively engaged. Given the high demand of engaged employees by organisations and the alarmingly low current engagement levels in organisations, there is an urgent need for dramatic improvements in engagement levels in the South African workforce.

When organisations fall short of transforming strategy into results, many managers point to a feeble performance culture as the fundamental cause. However, modern research on strategy execution tells a different story. A plausible solution is that culture which supports execution must recognise and reward other areas of concern such as performance, teamwork, ambition and engagement.

According to (Sull & Ruelas-Gossi, 2010:61), only 9% of managers contend that they can entrust their colleagues with other functions to execute strategies. Evidently, when managers cannot rely on employees to execute strategies they recompense with a multitude of dysfunctional behaviours that stymie execution.

When people know the score, they play harder. The vision of any organisation serves to align employees to the organisation and to point them towards the future. This alignment fosters a strong sense of shared purpose, which leads to high sustainable performances across the organisation.

Additionally, employees are able to overcome challenges for the long-term benefit of stakeholders, customers and society. Above all, alignment with all these elements is critical to demonstrate the cultural appropriateness of employee engagement as a means to achieving organisational objectives.

However, translating strategies into goals and cascading those goals down the organisational hierarchy is not as simple as it might seem as indicated in a study conducted in 2010, by Sull, Homkes and Sull. Strategy execution equals alignment (Sull, et al., 2015:60). Failure of organisations to execute strategies signals a collapse of the process required to connect strategy to actions at every level in the organisation.

Strategy execution encompasses the interpretation of strategic goals into performance objectives. Additionally, it is an arrangement of disciplines and systems built into the performance culture of an organisation. Consequently, for organisations to perform, employees must be deeply engaged in this culture of performance. Organisational strategy is everyone's responsibility. An organisation's ability to execute its strategy successfully is a result of its ability to socialise employees to its strategy.

The ever-popular vision and mission statements have in most cases failed to engage employees in the strategic goals of the organisation or that of its greater purpose. This research seeks to identify factors that are attributable to low levels of employee engagement and the challenges that lead to the failure of executing organisational strategies in the SA Army Infantry Formation (SAAIF) headquarters.

It is true that low levels of employee engagement in the SAAIF headquarters have a negative effect on individual and organisational performance and as such affect the organisations' ability to execute planned strategies. With this in mind, the study seeks to unravel root causes of the problem statement and identify possible solutions and to give feasible recommendations.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The problem is that employees in the SAAIF are not adequately engaged in strategy execution processes. As a result, employees have trouble in understanding strategic plans and objectives, accepting strategic roles and focusing their actions on being committed to the realisation of organisational strategies. In brief, the absence of tangible strategic actions from the SAAIF employees has an adverse effect on the execution of formulated organisational strategies.

1.2.1 Research questions

The above raises the following research questions:

- Why are SAAIF employees not adequately engaged in the execution of strategies;
- What is the foundational theory underpinning employee engagement and strategy execution;
- What drives employee engagement;
- What are the drivers of successful strategy execution;
- What are the levels of employee engagement in the SAAIF;
- What are the challenges regarding the engagement of employees in the SAAIF; and
- What are the challenges regarding strategy execution in the SAAIF?

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1.3.1 Primary objective

The primary objective of this study is to determine how the SAAIF employees can be engaged in the execution of organisational strategies.

1.3.2 Secondary objectives

The secondary objectives of the study are to:

- To discuss employee engagement and strategy execution from the literature;
- To determine drivers of employee engagement from the literature;
- To determine drivers of successful strategy execution from the literature;
- To determine the levels of employee engagement in the SAAIF;
- To identify drawbacks in employee engagement in the SAAIF;
- To identify impediments in strategy execution in the SAAIF; and
- To make recommendations on how the SAAIF employees can be engaged in executing organisational strategies.

1.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.4.1 Employee engagement

The earlier work of Kahn unearthed the concept of engagement and conceptualised it from an individual perspective as personal engagement. The above researcher shed light on the psychological conditions that influence variations in individual engagement levels in the workplace.

Kahn revealed that engagement levels in individuals differ and subsequently suggested three psychological conditions that are necessary for employee engagement, namely, availability, meaningfulness and safety (Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2014:62).

Many authors espoused Kahn's own engagement concept later on and although well researched, the construct of engagement lacks a universally accepted definition that distinguishes it from similar constructs.

The most recent definition of the construct is found in the Kenexa work trends report of 2012. In the report, engagement is "the degree to which employees are motivated to add to organisational success and are prepared to apply discretionary effort to accomplishing undertakings important to the achievement of organisational goals".

Kahn (1990:692) on the other hand, originally outlined employee engagement as the reining of an organisation's employees to their employment roles; in engagement, employees articulate themselves cognitively, emotionally and physically throughout role performances.

A comparison between the earlier version and most recent definitions of engagement reveals a number of conceptual similarities. First, engaged employees are those who fully commit to their work roles. Secondly, engaged employees perform at high performance standards. Lastly, the commitment shown by employees when engaged ultimately results in high performances aimed at achieving organisational goals.

Given the above, it is evident that the end state of employee engagement is to achieve organisational goals. The most basic of human needs is to believe in a cause, a purpose or goal. This is affinity. Without affinity, employees put their bodies to work but not their minds and hearts (Mathis, 2013:35).

Additionally, if employees do not find affinity at their workplace, they are most likely to look for it elsewhere, thus creating situations where employees are less enthusiastic about their work. Galvanising workers to be challenged and engaged is to get them drawn in a worthwhile cause and with good reasons for pursuing it (Mathis, 2013:35).

Employees are likely to pour their efforts into their work if they have a sense of affiliation with the organisation. As with affinity, if employees do not feel affiliated to an organisation they will look for the affiliation elsewhere. Additionally, people feel committed to what they have helped create.

Furthermore, giving employees participation opportunities affords them pride, ownership and a profound sense of fulfilment that inspires their creativity. The autonomy that employees seek, is not the freedom to do whatever they wish, but rather to execute defined decision. In summary, autonomy is the eventual utilisation of hearts and minds. “It challenges the caring (affinity) to take collective form (affiliation) and produce results through creative methods (autonomy)” (Mathis, 2013:36).

1.4.1.1 Key employee engagement drivers

Mehta and Mehta identified the following key drivers related to employee engagement:

- Integrity and trust—leaders and managers ought to communicate easily with employees and abide by their words;
- The scope and nature of the job— it is important that employees find their work demanding enough to actuate engagement;

- The line of vision between employee's performances and organisational success—employees should have a clear understanding of how to contribute to the organisation's performance;
- Career growth prospects—employees ought to have an absolved career path and individual growth;
- Pride—employees should feel honoured by being affiliated with their organisation;
- Co-workers and team members—affinity with co-workers significantly heightens employee engagement levels;
- Good manager-employee relationships—managers and employees must connect at a certain level to establish a working relationship;
- Communication—feedback, mentoring and counselling are required to enable engagement.
- Fair reward, recognition and incentive schemes;
- Clear job expectations;
- Adequate tools to perform work responsibilities; and
- Motivation (Mehta & Mehta, 2013:209-210).

Although the above-mentioned drivers can enhance and improve engagement, it must be duly noted that engagement is intrinsic. The employees make the choice to be engaged.

Thus, despite the fact that employee engagement requires emotional affiliation, it also demands a rational element as the employee determines whether to be engaged given his/her individual situation (Piña-Ramírez & Dávila, 2014:6).

In summary, employee engagement is a fluid construct as it varies over the path of an employee's tenure at a workplace and his/her entire career because of various actions and factors.

1.4.2. Strategy execution

Organisations that achieve their goals in the long term "plan their work and work their plan" (Watson,2005:4-5). Evidently, the realisation of organisational strategies is accomplished through disciplined approaches to setting and executing strategic directions through the effective utilisation of resources, processes, capital and people.

Over time, the construct of strategy obtained its prominence in the military arena and became popular in the business world at a time when a military career was an ideal qualification for a manager. As with the military, strategy was a high-level function fit only for the mind of the supreme leader and a small group of the brightest and best. As a result, the planning of organisational strategy was generally a secretive operation that occurred at irregular intervals.

The stigma around strategic issues in general created knowledge backlogs around strategy as a management discipline. Today the challenge with organisational strategies is to deliver.

Despite gallant efforts in strategic planning and execution, there is still far-flung discontentment with operating results (Angel, 2008:1). Part of the above given problem is the persisting disjuncture between strategic objectives and execution. Building execution into strategy begins with the understanding and recognition that all parts of the organisation, and most importantly its people must be involved in the process of developing and setting organisational goals.

There are few leaders who accept the idea of making strategy execution every employee's job. It is true that organisations can unleash the power of collective judgement by consulting broad groups of employees in the planning process. Angel avers that; "this approach has the added benefits of creating support for change which is required for successful execution" (2008:3). The role that leaders play in strategy execution is critical, simply because it involves transforming strategy into reality. Strategy execution, as part of the strategic management process is the most difficult aspect of management in public and private organisations.

According to Katoma (2011:32), there are 'six silent killers' of strategy execution namely: 1. "a top-down and laissez-faire senior management style; 2., unclear strategic intentions and conflicting priorities; 3., an ineffective management team; 4., poor vertical communication; 5., weak coordination across functions, businesses or borders; and 6. inadequate down-the-line leadership skills development".

Leaders who are well trained and developed will engage employees on all levels to ensure the successful execution of organisational strategies. First, such leaders will discuss expectations from strategic objectives. Secondly, they will give details on how to get the expected results. Thirdly, employees will get rewards for producing the sought results. Fourth, if employees are unable to execute the strategic actions, managers will engage them through coaching, further training and development or by giving them another task. Lastly, it is crucial to mention that for all of the above-mentioned to occur, employees must be engaged in setting goals for their own roles, as they will be able to identify with how their own role contributes to the overall strategy. "This is usually the missing piece in the puzzle of execution" (Dawson, 2014:4).

1.5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.5.1. Research design

This empirical study will employ quantitative research methods to determine how employees in the SAAIF headquarters in Pretoria can be engaged in the execution of organisational strategies.

Quantitative research is the systematic empirical investigation of observable phenomena through statistical, mathematical or numerical data or computational techniques (Sekaran & Bougie, 2009:107).

The research will make use of primary data to be collected at the SAAIF headquarters in Pretoria. A cross-sectional survey will be undertaken in order to effectively address the research questions of the study.

1.5.2. Sampling and data analysis

The population of this research is limited to the headquarters of the SAAIF employees in Pretoria (population: 240 employees). The sampling frame to be used for the research is the roll-call books of the different sections within the SAAIF. Additionally, a complex probability design will be used for the research.

Stratified random sampling will be utilised for the research with respondents stratified into mutually exclusive groups denoted by rank. Rank in the military denotes the responsibility of respondents and management level. Admittedly, the compositions of functional structures in the SAAIF mean that the number of rank grouping differs amongst the respondents with other rank groupings being larger or smaller than the other one. A disproportionate stratified random sampling procedure is preferred for the study. Additionally, adopted from Sekaran and Bougie (2009:295) generalised scientific guidelines for sample size decisions, 140 respondents will be chosen from the different sections that make up the headquarters at SAAIF to participate in filling out structured survey questionnaires.

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) data analysis programme will be used in the coding of the quantitative data. Data analysis will be conducted using statistic techniques that are suited for measuring relationships such as the correlation coefficient, chi-square and multiple regression analysis.

1.5.3. Ethical considerations

Ethical issues arise from our interaction with other people, other beings (such as animals) and the environment, especially at the point where there is the potential or actual conflict of interests. In many cases, what is right for one person might not be right for other people? In some cases, doing the right thing might involve placing the greater good ahead of specific benefits that might accrue to one. Mouton (2009:239) opines, “In many cases, ethical choice involves a trade-off or compromise between the interests and rights of different parties.

The following ethical considerations will apply in the research:

1.5.3.1 Integrity

The researcher will adhere to the highest research standards, teachings and practice. Additionally, at the conclusion of the study, an indication of the limits of the research findings and methodological constraints will be noted.

1.5.3.2 Objectivity

The researcher as an employee of the SA Army Information headquarters will avoid bias in the experimental design, data analysis and interpretation of the research results. Furthermore, participants will be informed about the benefits, requirements and importance of their objective and truthful participation in the survey.

1.5.3.3 Voluntary participation

Given the nature and makeup of the military (command and control/ordering of troops) participation in the survey will be of a voluntary nature. No coercion of participants will be allowed.

1.5.3.4 Informed consent

All participants will be fully informed of the purpose, rights and benefits of the research. Inclusively, participants will be fully informed of the expectations sought from their participation.

1.5.3.5 Use of language and administration process

In light of the diverse literacy and educational levels of the SA Army Infantry Formation employees, basic, clear and concise English will be used in the questionnaire. Admittedly, there are members who cannot write or read in the SA Army Infantry Formation; objective one-on-one assistance will be offered to ensure inclusive participation in the survey.

1.5.3.6 Confidentiality and respect

The confidentiality of the participants and their responses will be promoted at all times during and after the survey. Anonymous questionnaires will be administered in order to ensure valid, objective and reliable responses to questions.

1.6. RESEARCH DEMARCATION

The aim of the research is to determine how employees in the SAAIF headquarters in Pretoria can be engaged in the execution of organisational strategies. SAAIF employees (senior, middle-level managers and operative employees) will be the target population of the survey to be undertaken.

In brief, the study combines the fields of strategic management, employee engagement, organisational behaviour, military psychology and human resource management with strategy implementation constituting an important discipline for the research.

1.7. LAYOUT OF THE STUDY

1.7.1. Chapter 2

This chapter will constitute literature review on employee engagement and strategy execution.

1.7.2. Chapter 3

The chapter will address the research design of the study.

1.7.3. Chapter 4

A quantitative investigation into the levels of employee engagement and strategy execution in the SAIF headquarters in Pretoria.

1.7.4. Chapter 5

Findings will be discussed and recommendations made for improved employee engagement in strategy execution within the SAAIF.

1.8. CONCLUSION

Organisational strategies in military organisations are formed with the individual, communal and global development of society in mind. The sought development warrants national security and peace necessary for the simple conduct of life. Military organisations must succeed in executing strategies not only for their survival and prosperity, but also for the welfare of the society to which they belong. Admittedly, the ability of military organisations to execute planned strategic objectives is far more essential than the strategy itself.

Management functions in a military sense are governed by resource allocations, budgetary responsibilities and the associated management techniques that are all critical in a host of military activities (Hartigan, 2015:149).

Military managers and employees must make timely decisions, understand the overall organisation's intent and most importantly be able to apply through their own actions a clear responsibility to fulfilling organisation's goals.

The SAAIF utilises a Strategic Management Process (SMP) that provides a comprehensive management framework that is aligned with the Department of Defence Standard related Decision cycle (DOD SD) process.

Although the SMP caters for the communication, dissemination and alignment of strategic plans within the SAAIF, the framework in isolation is insufficient to drive home strategic planning outputs. Owing to an increase in the interest shown by the media, society and the global community in the SA Army military operations, command and control is heavily scrutinised by external stakeholders. Admittedly, contemporary military organisations demands an 'edge' command approach from military officers where employees are engaged more actively in strategic issues, thus ensuring that they are engaged and committed to the goals of the organisation.

This research project seeks to identify and address the importance of engaging employees during strategy execution processes with a view to achieving set organisational strategic objectives.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. INTRODUCTION

The intention of this chapter is to review the literature on employee engagement and strategy execution. Knowledge is sought on employee engagement as a concept in executing strategy. The literature review is critical to tapping into the literature that is relevant to this study. Furthermore, the review will allow the researcher to establish an understanding of modern thinking on employee engagement and strategy execution. Moreover, the literature is explored with the aim of understanding how employee engagement links with the execution of strategy in organisations. The drivers of engagement are queried in the chapter to understand the engagement concept better along with barriers to executing strategy and factors that support the successful execution of organisational strategies.

2.2. EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Employee engagement has become a popular construct in organisations in recent years. In the modern economy, organisations are witnessing unparalleled changes in the nature of their work. The modern workforce is more diverse; organisational relevance is global and modern employees change jobs quite often. Overall, researchers and human resources practitioners have heralded work engagement as a means to improving the entire functioning of organisations and that of individuals within organisations (Hoole & Bonnema, 2015:1).

2.2.1 It is important to obtain clarity on the meaning of workforce engagement for the purposes of this research.

2.2.1.1 Workforce engagement was first conceptualised by Kahn (1990:695) as the “harnessing of organisational members” to their official roles in the workplace. The same author also presents engagement as a construct with three distinct dimensions, namely (physical, cognitive and emotional) that are to be activated simultaneously in order to create an engaged environment.

Physically engaged individuals are naturally associated with their work and therefore identify themselves with their respective roles. Emotional engagement entails having sound relations with peers and superiors and feeling emotions towards others. Those who are cognitively engaged are considerably cognisant of their mission and functions in their work environment. In accordance with this viewpoint, an employee can be engaged on any one of the above-mentioned dimensions at any point of time (Soane et al, 2012:532).

2.2.1.2 (Schaufeli, et al., 2002:74) defined engagement as a “positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption”. Vigour is characterised by oomph, mental resilience, the eagerness to commit to one’s work and being present during a phase of struggles. Commitment is described as being so completely absorbed in the work that one develops a sense of responsibility, passion, encouragement and pride. Absorption is fully concentrating and eagerly being involved in the work so much so that the outside environment and passage of time becomes unimportant (Soanea et al,2012:535).

2.2.1.3 Stockely (2014:n.p) defines engagement as “the extent to which an employee believes in the mission, purpose and values of the organisation and demonstrates that commitment through his/her actions and attitude towards the employer and customers”. Largely, employee engagement is seen as a measure of determining an employee’s association with the organisation.

2.2.1.4 Schuck and Wollard (2010:90) after reviewing 140 articles that cited employee engagement defined the concept as “an individual employee’s cognitive, emotional and behavioural state directed toward desired organisational outcomes.”

2.2.1.5 In an organisational context, the construct of employee engagement has been described as “a desirable condition that has an organisational purpose and connotes commitment, passion, enthusiasm, focused effort and positive energy” (Macey & Schneider, 2008:5).

It is against the background of the definitions given above that the study's working definition of engagement can be described as "a positive behaviour of an employee critical in advancing organisational purpose through the achievement of desired organisational goals".

This said, the positive behaviour and attitudes witnessed in engaged employees are harnessed by a number of drivers that are influenced by the culture and context of organisations.

2.2.2 Employee engagement drivers

2.2.2.1 Manager-employee relations

The employee-manager relationship is a decisive driver of engagement. This relationship connects to the employee's contentment or dissatisfaction with their work and the ultimate decision of whether or not to stay in the organisation or go elsewhere (Piña-Ramírez & Dávila, 2014:7).

Cook (2015:34) postulates that employees do not leave companies, they leave managers. Ultimately, the person that most impacts and influences whether an individual is willing and committed to spending discretionary effort is the individual's line manager.

Managers and employees must connect at a certain level in order to establish a working relationship. Additionally, from a managerial point of view, the connection to employees involves individual relations with employees. This allows the manager to understand the employee's concerns, perspectives and agendas. It means being able to listen and value employees' ideas (Cook, 2015:35).

Connected managers share information openly, reasonably, and plainly with employees and seek to build quality relationships with them (Men & Stacks, 2014:315). Thus, high levels of disclosure, transparency, two-way communication, and relationship orientation, which characterises reliable leadership, develops a positive environment where employees feel trusted, supported and involved.

Managerial kind behaviours are cornerstones to desired employee results such as efficiency, commitment, retention, organisational citizenship behavior, and job satisfaction (Vosloban, 2015:761). In brief, this includes the type and amount of supervision and direction leaders give to their employees, being treated right, receiving timely feedback and direction, having a firm working relationship based on mutual respect, and managers seeing employees as individuals (Lieberman, 2015:23).

“People feel better when they are engaged, work better, and live better” (Cheese, 2014:6). Additionally, how employees feel regarding their place of work affects organisational performance. As a result, employees’ trust, satisfaction, commitment, and positive feelings are heightened as employees feel engaged (Men, 2015:6).

Other facets of management-employee relations include the communication of clear goals and expectations to employees, identifying and managing problem employees, and delegating assignments effectively (Lieberman, 2015:24).

2.2.2.2 Trust

Evidently, employee engagement is not what managers impart to their employees; but an emotional, intellectual and physical state that employees give to their organisation. Although leaders and managers cannot immediately influence employee engagement, how they behave, the work setting they build, the backing and encouragement they afford their teams, and the confidence they prompt are evidently all critical (Cheese, 2014:7).

Certainly, trust is an enveloping factor of engagement. Without trust, it is difficult for managers to get employees to work hard and to follow them unconditionally (Robinson & Gifford, 2014:12) and even accept unpopular decisions. Leaders and managers are the important actors in plying trust-worthy leadership, advocating employee voice and permitting purposeful involvement in work and team decisions (Purcell, 2015:24).

2.2.2.3 Autonomy

Empowering employees to do their job with little interference is a strong predictor of employee engagement. The sense of autonomy and purpose connects to employees' ownership of their functions (Piña-Ramírez & Dávila, 2014:7). Therefore, employees have to assume a firm sense of purpose and self-direction in their jobs even if they do not control the final product, or the final decision made.

Furthermore, autonomy is identical to independent behaviour. It is another lever that propels employee engagement into execution. An independent employee usually comprehends that there are choices to be made and feels responsible for the ultimate decisions made. Additionally, he/she is able to perform optimally and acquire wisdom on making decisions and resolving problems while performing their work (Cardus, 2013:31).

It is when autonomous engaged employees encounter obstacles when performing their jobs, that a manager can intervene either through coaching or further developing an employee in an attempt to improve his/her work and problem-solving skills.

Employees who make decisions in their daily activities develop a sense of entitlement over their work, their organisation and life. This emotional connection that employees develop, creates an anchor for engagement, by creating expectations that define organisational purpose.

2.2.2.4 Shared purpose

Shared purpose is another major driver of engagement. Organisational purpose should be clear, engaging and be understood by all employees. More importantly, there should be clarity on how the organisational purpose fits and is linked with employees' job roles. In addition, organisational purpose should be plainly interpreted into goals from the top down, so that employees acquire a line of vision to their role in accomplishing the overall vision and goals (Cheese, 2014:7).

2.2.2.5 Employee voice

It is when organisational purpose is clear and when objectives translate into individual actions, that employees can develop a voice. Employee vocalism is the manner in which employees are able to consult, communicate, and shape decision-making, as well as raise worries that challenge the status quo. An employee with an empowered voice is one whose views are sought, whose ideas are heard and knows that his/her opinions matter and therefore can attribute to making a difference in the organisation. A strong culture of listening and of responsiveness permeates the organisation, ultimately enabling effective communication.

2.2.2.6 Communication

Organisations should follow open-door policies with regard to communication. Therefore, there should be both downward and upward internal communication with the employment of appropriate communication medium. Internal communication is essential for establishing a culture of transparency between employees and management, and also commit employees in the priorities of the organisation. It is true that if employees have a say in the decision-making process and are heard by their managers, engagement levels are likely to increase.

Furthermore, internal communication advances the level to which an employee is attentive and engaged in the performance of his/her role.

Communication promotes productivity by outlining organisational roles and duties (Mishra, et al., 2014:184). What is surely true is that communication and the alignment of employees to a mutual cause, upholds values that shape the behavioural norms of the culture the organisation espouses.

2.2.2.7 Organisational culture

Vision, strategy and values serve as the foundation for defining the culture within an organisation. Therefore, alignment with all these elements is critical to demonstrate the cultural appropriateness of employee engagement (Oh, 2015:27).

2.2.2.8 Career growth and rewards

Employee engagement stretches beyond the external and financial incentives. However, drivers such as incentives, salaries and rewards are still important in the current working world. Total rewards, defined by the not-for-profit World at Work as “the programs, practices, elements, and dimensions that collectively define an organisation’s strategy to attract, motivate, and retain employees” play a key role in engaging employees (Piña-Ramírez & Dávila, 2014:8).

Additional to rewards, an employee who discovers opportunities for development and growth within an organisation will develop a firmer sense of loyalty to that organisation. Career development and growth is an aspect of the retention strategy used by most organisations. Managers are responsible for paying detailed attention to the career development requirements of employees in an effort to set realistic future expectations.

Career management and development influences the engagement of employees and helps retain the most gifted of employees by providing opportunities for personal development and is therefore a pivotal driver of engagement. The issues around long-term career prospects and promotion opportunities are relevant in engagement as they relate to an employee’s intention to remain in the workplace. An employee who discovers opportunities for development and growth within an organisation, will develop a stronger sense of loyalty to that organisation (Piña-Ramírez & Dávila, 2014:8).

In summary, the results of a study conducted in 2013 by Vosloban reveal employees’ awareness, regarding engagement, as a concept. These employees were able to allot definitions to engagement and mention what was required to be loyal, to be happy and motivated to do their best job. The employees cited commitment, career advancement, willingness to execute, enthusiasm and training as critical factors. Furthermore, team spirit, gratification, bonuses, open career development paths, total rewards and recognition programmes, salary increments based on performance; acknowledgement of a great job; a pleasurable work environment, good relations and exchanges with managers and co-workers, dedication and trust,

were also pointed out as drivers for engagement by the employees (Vosloban, 2015:763). As has been noted, engaged employees experience an undeniable purpose and meaning in their work, by willingly imparting intellectual effort, experiencing upbeat emotions and important connections to others in an effort to advance the organisation's objectives' (Walker, 2012:95).

Engaged employees are described as builders who want to identify the expectations of their roles so that they can meet and surpass those expectations. They perform at higher than average levels and yearn to apply their talents and abilities at work, through passion, drive and innovation in order to move the organisation forward (Sahoo & Mishra, 2012:98). It is ascertained that engaged employees account for lesser absenteeism, stay with the organisation longer and are better off being active and more productive (Kataria, et al., 2013:61).

According to Sharma and Raina (2013:5) an engaged employee is one who is hardy, has a strong internal locus of control and is capable of coping with challenges. Moreover, engaged employees exhibit a positive attitude towards peers, customers, and the organisation, are willingly involved, and experience their work as engaging and something to which they can devote their full concentration (Kataria, et al., 2013:59).

It is a fact that engaged employees accomplish organisational requirements, whereas "Disengaged" employees are highly uncooperative and attempt to weaken the organisation's reputation by ingraining negativism into their co-workers. "Disengaged" employees are not only disengaged; they also show little passion, putting less energy and time into their work with meagre results. Thus, it is equally important to comprehend how disengaged employees affect organisations.

Disengaged employees view their jobs as trading time for compensation, doing nothing beyond the minimum effort required to complete their tasks. They show slight creativity or passion, generally going through the motions of finishing their duties. Employees when not engaged do not see their jobs as long-term associations with organisations that employ them. Admittedly, disengaged employees also affect other employees as they disperse negative energy in the workplace.

They can bring about dire effects on the positive contributions of other employees and consequently affect organisational effectiveness negatively.

Conversely, employee engagement is a fundamental driver for organisational success. The impact of engagement or disengagement on employees can become evident through productivity and organisational performance.

2.2.3 Employee engagement and performance management

Performance management is a field synonymous with management that affects employee engagement (Piña-Ramírez & Dávila, 2014:7). Performance management consist of objectives as well as how work is disseminated to achieve organisational objectives. It constitutes resource allocation, work-life balance, workplace flexibility, and measures employee's procession in achieving organisational goals (Piña-Ramírez & Dávila, 2014:7).

Furthermore, performance management functions as a platform that links employee's performance and conduct in meeting organisational goals. It spurs managers to focus on roles and obligations of employees and to involve them in goal-setting processes. It also promotes an acceptance of challenging objectives, recognizes, and encourages contributions that exceed expectations.

Employee engagement alone does not guarantee the sucessful execution of organisational strategies. For example, it is possible to have employees absorbed in their workplace but not in executing strategies, which is in most cases attributable to the fact that most employees simply do not know what is expected of them.

Thus, it is impossible to get employees in any organisation to think big or act in a strategic manner, if they are constantly asked to just do their jobs. Employees must understand the big-picture workings of an organisations and the overall purpose it serves. In performing their duties, employees must have the necessary resources to enable them to perform. These resources should be sufficient, be given in the timeframe required, be adequate for the completion of their tasks and promote autonomy during work performances.

2.2.2.12 Employee engagement and strategy execution

It has been argued that engagement is not a strategic topic for an organisation but can nevertheless support strategy. The model below indicates how engagement can be linked to strategy execution.

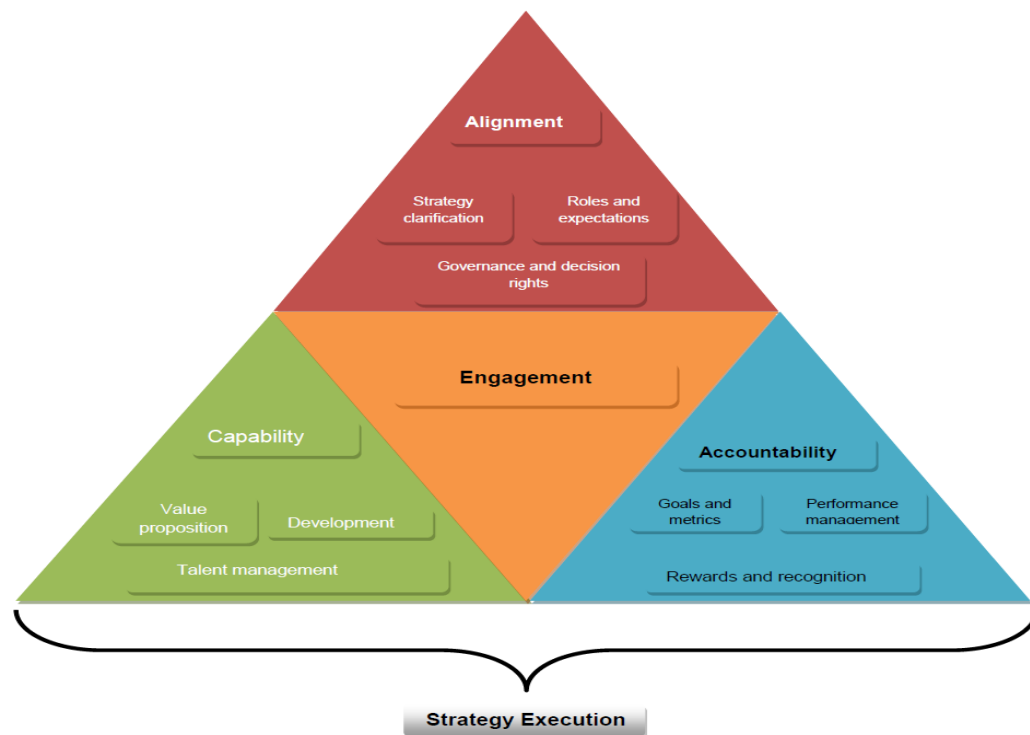


Figure 2.1: Engagement and strategy execution model (Source: Sibson, 2015)

‘The engagement model depicted in Figure 2.1’ above indicates that effective and sustainable strategy execution is contingent upon work focusing on four critical areas of: alignment, capability, accountability and engagement’ (Sibson Consulting, 2015).

Strategy is not the same as goals; goals can be crafted into strategy but they are not strategies. Similarly, having an engaged workforce as a goal is not strategic. While engagement can be part of how an organisation succeeds, it is only part of the solution. Admittedly, the strength of employee engagement is that it is universal in its application; however, strategy execution is unique and cannot be viewed from a general perspective.

Strategy execution and engagement have to be aligned for engagement to become a potent tool in executing the strategies of a given organisation. In most cases managers and employee's perspectives on organisational strategies are different. When both parties study strategic documents, they might all concur on the priorities, but each view will be perceived through an individual lens. Admittedly, the unaligned versions of priorities may be completely unplanned, it is difficult to interpret strategy from paper into action, unless if there is a mutual interpretation of the priorities and a mutual picture of strategy.

Therefore, strategy execution requires a buy-in, in the form of compliance through the attitudes of commitment, trust and identification with the exertion of the effort to achieve strategic objectives from employees.

2.3. SUMMARY

In summary, the successful execution of strategies can be achieved through the uniform efforts of both the employee and manager. An engaged employee is more likely to be clear about the direction and strategy of their organisation; can play their part in achieving organisational goals; is confident in the capabilities and competencies of senior management; trusts and respects his/her immediate manager; feels that his/her ideas, suggestions and criticism are listened to; has the opportunities to make the best use of his/her potential; feels that he/she is treated fairly; and feels valued and recognised (Walker, 2012:106).

2.4. STRATEGY EXECUTION

2.4.1. Strategy execution overview

Strategies are formulated to accomplish organisational purposes. Strategic purposes include vision, mission, strategic intent, goals, focus and strategic objectives. Strategy, in its simplest form, can be described as the preferred and selected path to follow to reach organisational goals and objectives. The vision (where we want to be) and the mission (who we are and what we do) and the shared values (how we want to travel) guide this path.

A strategy is a plan to move the organisation from its current situation to its required future position through the achievement of specific objectives by means of specific selected actions (Olivier, 2015:21-22).

It all begins with strategy and it is critical. Strategy identifies the domain (markets, customers, technologies, logistics, products) in which the strategy execution game is acted out. Execution is a barren feat without the guidance of long and short-term strategic objectives linked to strategy (Hrebiniak, 2005:19).

Thus, strategy and execution are inseparable, but distinct and immediately connected (Childress, 2013:14). Admittedly, when separated, strategy and execution do not work. Strategy execution is the process of doing what the strategic plan has laid down in order to achieve what the strategic plan aims to achieve.

The significance of strategy execution to accomplish organisational objectives is increasingly recognised today (Olivier, 2015:20). Nevertheless, successful execution seems to remain problematic. Furthermore, gaps exist between strategic planning and execution and as a result, required benefits stated in strategic plans are seldom realised.

Strategy execution is part of strategic management and is a never-ending process. It is a unique, disciplined journey involving the whole organisation (Childress, 2013:15).

MacLennan (2011:11), defines strategy execution as the “process of indirectly manipulating the pattern of resource and market interactions an organisation has with its environment in order to achieve its overall objective”. Strategy execution is a discipline that should be practiced regularly (or continuously) (Olivier, 2015:35). Strategy consists of seize opportunities that assert the strategy while aligning with other parts of the organisation on a regular basis (Sull, et al., 2015:66).

Strategy is realised through action; by doing, by getting teams aligned, employees engaged, initiatives underway and products out into the market.

Although strategy execution is regarded as an ongoing or endless process, it consists of finite elements called strategic initiatives or projects to achieve specific objectives (Olivier, 2015:35). Without effective execution, understood as a process of putting plans into action, it is not possible for an organisation to evolve (Kathuira, 2012:6). According to Hamm (2011:39), execution is all about results. Execution is marked by measurement and feedback and by continually keeping score, learning and making improvements or corrections.

2.4.2. Challenges with strategy execution

Strategy execution is not only difficult but also not understood well, as it is intertwined with many organisational processes. It takes a long time to perfect, involves many stakeholders, and often must reflect the decisions made by others. It therefore requires discipline, persistence and patience (MacLennan, 2011:25).

The unfortunate part about strategy execution is that most managers view it as less meaningful in comparison with other strategy processes, such as strategy formation and planning. However, even a well-formulated strategy is of no use if nothing ever actually happens (Amason, 2011:216). Certainly, management literature has over the years, focused mainly on new ideas on strategy planning, but has truly disregarded execution. Strategy execution is not almost as comprehensible as the formulation of strategy. A good deal is known about planning than doing, about strategy planning than planning to make strategy work (Hrebiniak, 2005:3).

Successful strategy execution requires sturdy, often uneasy choices based on elementary logic and understandable principles (Simmons, 2010:134). Being effective at strategy execution requires extraordinary set of skills and personality attributes. It requires managers to be able to connect concepts and solid actions, to see both the detail and the large picture. It involves enthusiasm for the creative innovation of planning, the order of delivery, and thought to detail for completion. Few people possess the personality traits and learning styles required to cover this diverse range of requirements (MacLennan, 2011:25).

Execution is critical to success, representing a disciplined process of linked activities that allow an organisation to adopt a strategy and make it a success. Without a deliberate approach to strategy execution, organisational goals cannot be achieved. Developing such a coherent approach, however, represents a formidable challenge to management (Hrebiniak, 2005:2).

The strategy execution process alone requires extraordinary abilities, as it appears to be a much more difficult task than strategy formulation. Even though execution is vital to strategic success, making strategy a success presents an arduous challenge. A number of factors, including politics, inactiveness, and resistance to change, normally get in the way of executing strategies successfully (Hrebiniak, 2005:2).

2.4.2.1 In addition to the above-mentioned, the following factors are identified as common challenges to executing strategies:

- formulating a model to direct the execution of strategic decisions and actions;
- understanding how the formulation of strategy impacts the execution of strategy;
- effectively managing change, including cultural change;
- understanding the influence of power and positively using it for the successful execution of strategies;
- developing organisational structures that facilitate the promotion of information sharing, organisational alignment and accountability;
- creating effective controls and feedback mechanisms; and
- exerting execution-biased leadership (Hrebiniak, 2005:17-18).

Though a priority, strategy execution can also be a predicament if not amply developed and committed to (Bigler & Williams, 2013:95).

Succinctly, execution problems can cost an organisation dearly. Money and time could be wasted, and an organisation may face serious setbacks because of its inability to respond to market or customer demands (Hrebiniak, 2005:16-17). Moreover, there are known barriers to successful strategy execution.

2.4.3. Barriers to successful strategy execution

A number of barriers have been identified in the modern literature as common impediments to successful strategy execution in most organisations. The first and probably the biggest barrier to strategy execution is that of poor leadership.

2.4.3.1 Poor leadership

It is true that most leaders often do not see execution as their job. Consequently, the conventional view is that leaders “think out” the strategy, while management along with lower-level employees implement it. Thus, unless organisational leadership commits to strategy execution, most organisations will be caught up in the operational whirlwind – the urgent day-to-day job trap (Olivier, 2015:28). Poor leadership is revealed by a lack of purpose, unclear direction, a lack of resources, slow progress and poor group cohesion.

2.4.3.2 Strategic planning

The second barrier to strategy execution concern is with the strategic plan itself. Most strategic plans are vague, incomplete and so unbalanced that they cannot possibly deliver success. Additionally, a strategic plan without clear roles, responsibilities and accountabilities is very difficult to execute. A strategy without a supporting strategy map for clarification often hinders understanding and execution. Other weaknesses include too many objectives in the plan without focus and strategy execution being treated as an afterthought and not an integral part of strategy formulation (Olivier, 2015:29).

2.4.3.3 Goal setting

As mentioned above, without clear goal setting, it is difficult to assign responsibilities and monitor the actual performance of employees.

It is easy for managers to fail at this crucial task by concentrating on improper performance indicators or managing scorecards that have a surcharge of immaterial measures. No doubt, a formal repeatable strategy execution system is required to monitor performance. Additionally, a guideline or model to execute strategy is required to allow the continual monitoring, tracking and reviewing of performance.

This lack of a proper strategy execution or performance management system also creates a barrier to strategy execution. Performances and rewards motivate employees to perform better.

2.4.3.4 People barrier

Poor motivation of employees or a lack of motivation hinders the successful execution of strategies. This barrier is the “people barrier”. It is when employees do not believe in the formulated strategies. Admittedly, when organisational goals do not inspire passion and a call for action, employees are less likely to perform optimally. In summary, this barrier exists when there is a disconnect between individual and organisational goals; when there is cultural resistance and when strategy execution is not viewed as everyone’s job, but that of a particular department, function, team or person. In brief, without sufficient drive or internal energy, the strategy execution journey will not be sustainable.

2.4.3.5 Communication

Communications matters present the biggest threat to executing strategies successfully. Communications troubles happen more regularly than most managers admit. In most cases, strategic goals are pursued with little regard for the impact of execution factors.

2.4.3.6 Managing change

However, execution factors, such as people issues and corporate culture, should be incorporated into the strategy up front. Strategic initiatives normally involve managing matters differently. Nevertheless, it is human nature to lean to the familiar and refuse change. No matter how good the organisation's current strategy is, there will always be booms and changes that will emerge in unexpected places. As a result, adapting strategy to change is another difficult imperative; with change being constant, at often times employees do not know how to respond to the change (Simmons, 2010:30).

2.4.3.7 Decision making

Another common cause of problems in strategy execution is appalling decision making, at the point of strategy creation itself either in terms of hapless design or impractical aims, or through the selection of mismatched communication media with which to convey the plans and processes through the organisational hierarchy (Flood, et al., 2000:125).

Decision-makers in many organisations do not take into account the role of mid-level managers. Moreover, they underrate the effect of emotions that are transmitted by them to employees, which is associated with their involvement (Haudan, 2007:38).

2.4.3.8 Resource allocation

At the core of successful strategy execution is the allocation of resources and their planned use indicates the importance of pooling resources in organising the execution effort (Radomska, 2014:216).

Rival demands for resources from organisational sections, support functions and external parties require a complex manner of estimating whether the allocation selections made are optimal (Simmons, 2010:137).

2.4.3.9 Poor employee engagement

The last identified barrier to strategy execution is poor engagement or the involvement of management and staff in the total strategic planning and execution process. This is mostly due to poor communication.

Poor strategy communication and the engagement of the people is a very real barrier, as executives fail to establish an open communication (dialogue) climate, involving the people from the planning stage onwards (Olivier, 2015:36).

This is the “vision barrier”. It is when people do not know the strategy and when the strategy is not part of day-to-day operations and dialogue. It is true that when organisational goals are not clearly communicated, and understood by employees, there will not be any connection between leaders, their staff and the organisational purpose. Moreover, without engaging the hearts and minds of people, the hands will seldom do the strategy execution work (Hrebiniak, 2005:12-14).

Conversely, there are drivers to successful strategy execution that can help mitigate the effects of strategy execution barriers.

2.4.4. Drivers of successful strategy execution

The first vital component for successful strategy execution is appropriate strategic planning resulting in a quality strategic plan; without a quality plan, strategy execution will be problematic.

2.4.4.1 A quality strategic plan

A general description of a strategic plan is that it should clearly show the organisation “where we are”; “where to go” and “how best to get there”. In addition, a quality strategic plan should be solid, complete, and strategic, have a clear direction, be inspirational and be easily understood. Additionally, it must be visual, be accepted, exciting, compelling, focused, balanced, integrated and linked to objectives.

In essence, a strategic plan must have a one-page strategy map, create clear links between inputs, processes outputs and outcomes, have a line-of-sight, a clear strategy story, be cascaded down the hierarchy, be realistic, achievable, actionable, measurable and have a scorecard that is clear and complete with initiatives linked to objectives with enough details for performance management.

The contemporary literature suggests that a strategic plan should also include key elements such as an organisational mission, vision (strategic intent), values, external and execution considerations and performance management systems to improve the transfer from planning to execution (Olivier, 2015:44).

2.4.4.2 Leadership

Leadership is also vital to strategy execution (Bigler & Williams, 2013:96). Good strategic leadership is the cornerstone for successful strategy execution (Childress, 2013:108). It is true that leadership affects how organisations respond to execution challenges. A comprehensive analysis of execution decisions and steps generally define dependable leadership and on how it directly or indirectly affects the execution success (Hrebiniak, 2005:20).

Strategy execution does not happen by itself; instead, it is a key responsibility of leaders and as a leadership essential. Leadership must be execution biased.

Kotter (1997:21) identifies eight leadership requirements applicable to strategy execution. These are: 1. to establish a sense of urgency; 2., to form a powerful guiding coalition; 3., to create a vision; 4., to communicate the vision; 5., to empower others to act on the vision; 6., to plan for and create short-term achievements; 7., to consolidate improvements and produce still more change and 8. to institutionalise new approaches.

Therefore, the role of leadership is to provide vision, direction, allocate resources, motivate, mentor and coach on strategy execution processes. In addition, what is required from leaders is strong thinking, directing, encouragement of dialogue; putting forward alternative approaches; assigning organisational resources; holding

one other accountable; and focusing on moving the organisation as a whole forward (Olivier, 2015:52).

For this, leadership needs quality time to move the strategy and organisation forward. However, more and more leaders spend most of their time predominantly in meetings.

Certainly, leadership needs to get actively involved in aligning the organisation to the strategy, engaging the organisation, monitoring it and controlling its performance (Childress 2013:14). The four main jobs of leaders in strategy execution are: 1. to educate employees about the strategy (getting their heads involved); 2., to get them excited about the strategy (getting their hearts involved); 3., to conform local effort to the strategy (getting their hands involved); and 4. to align all organisational systems to the strategy.

Organisational performance in the 21st century requires leaders to have strong internal capabilities such as deep-rooted values, firm organisational beliefs, good communication skills, passion, self-discipline, self-direction, acceptance and demand of accountability and a genuine love for people.

2.4.4.3 Employee engagement

Even with a solid, quality strategic plan and competent leadership, the expected results will prove elusive without rallying employees who perform the daily functions. Employee engagement at all levels of the organisation and at all phases of the process is an essential requirement for effectual strategy execution. Employees like to know and identify with the big picture, how other employees are contributing to it and, most importantly, how they can work on and 'own' strategic execution in their own area (Olivier, 2015:63).

A masterful leader couples talents and capabilities against the strategic demands of the organisation in an engaging humane way, not through bureaucracy or mechanically. Consequently, the triumphant strategy will not succeed without the correct people committed to delivering it (Smith & Ward, 2014:13).

Engagement involves winning the hearts as well as the minds of employees. Furthermore, winning the hearts of employees is about invoking confidence in the strategic direction and generating excitement for what the organisation is doing.

This implies winning the minds of employees is about valuing their standpoint, listening to their perspectives and integrating their insights. A leader's readiness to engage employees in the strategic process is rewarded through engagement and passion for work. Engagement is not a one-time event, but a culture of regular and effective dialogue, quality conversations and good interaction based on trust.

Engaged Individuals with confirming execution principles and behaviour often have intrinsic motivation to execute tasks and take pride in authentic work. They are geared to the real tempo of the business (Bigler & Williams, 2013:100).

2.4.4.4 Communication

Filtering communication down the organisation is a continuous challenge for many organisations. Ensuring that inducements throughout the organisation support strategy execution efforts is a prerequisite and, potentially, a problem. Relating strategic objectives with the daily objectives and worries of personnel at the varied organisational levels and locations becomes a genuine but challenging task. The larger the number of employees involved, the bigger the difficulty of effective strategy execution (Hrebiniak, 2005:9).

Therefore, communication is critical to successful execution. Employees directly impacted by a strategic change must be extremely conversant with the plan and actively involved in its conception and execution. Thus, it is important to establish well-defined objectives, schedule standard reporting times and utilize normal reporting protocols. Leaders and managers must work diligently to achieve commitment among all employees and communicate expectations, status and results throughout the year (Smith & Ward, 2014:10).

It is vital for leaders and managers to engage and involve the entire organisation in executing the organisational strategy. Therefore, it is pivotal for organisational leadership to be skilled in performing and overseeing organisational dialogue.

2.4.4.5 Organisational dialogue

Dialogue entails sharing collective meaning; it is a mutual search for shared meaning and understanding. In brief, dialogue is a deeper and more informal form of communication (Olivier, 2015:76).

Dialogue activities include listening, defining terms, defining the problem, looking for root causes, questioning, challenging assumptions, looking at missing data, looking at both opportunities and risks, developing and evaluating alternative solutions, analysing, interpreting, understanding, learning, linking, integrating, balancing, modelling, hypothesising, decision making and commitment to action. In summary, strategy mapping, line-of-site summaries, strategy-on-a-page roadmaps, graphs and trends promote both dialogue and engagement (Olivier, 2015:77).

2.4.4.6 Managing change

Strategy execution involves change. Managing change requires a lot more than maintaining employees' happiness and subduing resistance to new ideas. Admittedly, knowing how to manage the strategy execution process and managing related changes is central to the execution success. Change is not possible without dedication to the decisions and activities that define strategy execution (Hrebiniak, 2005:6). Making strategy execution a success demands timely feedback about organisational performance and then utilising that information to refine the strategy, the objectives, and the execution procedure itself. In summary, there is a growing culture of strategy and execution, as organisations learn and acclimatize to environmental changes over time, so does new methods of execution.

2.4.4.7 Organisational culture

This culture of change and adaptation depends on successful execution methods. Strategy execution necessitates a culture of accomplishments, ownership and discipline (Hrebiniak, 2005:20). Strategy is reinforced by embedding organisational culture into it, consequently making corporate culture an extension of the strategy.

2.4.4.8 Alignment

Another vital component for successful strategy execution is the alignment of organisational elements, especially within the organisational structure consisting of staff, culture, processes, technology and funds that must be aligned to and support the strategy. Strategy can only succeed if the organisation aligns around it and the resources are appropriately allocated. Alignment is defined as all organisational elements aligned to and supportive of the execution of the strategy (Olivier, 2015:82).

2.4.4.9 Trust

The element of trust enables engagement, which in turn enables successful strategy execution. Covey (2006:30) describes trust in terms of thirteen behaviours, namely: 1., talking straight; 2., demonstrating respect; 3., creating a transparent environment ; 4., fixing the wrongs; 5., showing loyalty; 6., delivering results; 7., improving performance; 8., confronting reality; 9., clarifying expectations; 10., practicing accountability; 11., strong sense of listening; 12., keeping to commitments and 13. extending trust.

The state of trust occurs when employees have confidence in one another, in their reliability and their abilities. Organisational trust depends on self-trust and relationship trust. Trust is also regarded as the heart of a performing, cohesive team.

2.4.4.10 Teamwork

Teamwork is a functional and cohesive necessity; one in which members trust one another; in which they engage in unfiltered disagreement around ideas; in which they are dedicated to plans and decisions of action; in which they hold one another responsible for executing plans and in which they focus on achieving collective results.

2.5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, execution is central to strategic success. It is true that most managers are more knowledgeable about strategy formulation than strategy execution. This unbalanced knowledge of managers creates problems for organisations when attempting to make strategy work.

It should be noted that managers and employees alike bear the responsibility of strategy execution.

Challenges and barriers that create difficulties in strategy execution include but are not limited to longer periods needed for execution; the required involvement of all employees in the execution process; unclear strategy statements; inadequate sharing of information and dialogue; unclear responsibility and accountability in the execution process; and the failure to manage change, as well as cultural change. Knowing the impediments of successful strategy execution however is not sufficient. Equally important is the ability to identify drivers that are essential in making strategy execution a success. Drivers identified as being crucial to strategy execution include: having a clear and quality strategic plan; good leadership, sound communication processes and channels; comprehensive engagement of employees; alignment of strategic processes; active management of change; a firm organisational culture; and trust and teamwork.

In brief, without a formal regular process for engaging employees and executing strategies, organisations are less likely to achieve their strategies.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the research methodologies utilized in the study. The primary objective of this study is to determine how the SAAIF employees can be engaged in the execution of organisational strategy. The sample consisted of employees of the SAAIF headquarters situated in Pretoria. In brief, the study design, the instruments used to collect data and the methods of analysing data are described in this chapter.

3.2. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.2.1. Research approach

The approach the study followed was quantitative. Quantitative research is described as a formal, purpose and systematic process to explain and test relations and observe cause and effect interactions among variables (Burns and Grove, 2003:43). The study used a descriptive survey to collect information from the sample chosen. Self-administered questionnaires were utilised to collect information which was done personally by the researcher.

3.2.2. Research setting

The study was conducted at the SAAIF headquarters in Pretoria. The Formation headquarters consists of 240 employees responsible for the strategic management of 45 regular and reserve forces Infantry units across South Africa. The appropriate channels of permission were taken prior to undertaking the study (**see appendix A and B**).

3.2.3. Population and sample

According to Burns and Grove (2003:46), a population is defined as “all elements that meet the sample criteria for inclusion in a study”. The population of this study comprised all 240 employees of the South African Infantry Formation headquarters in Pretoria. Adopted from Krejic and Morgan (1970:608) and Cohen’s widespread scientific guidelines for sample size decisions, 140 respondents were chosen to participate in the study. Mouton (1996:18) defines a sample as “elements selected with the intention of finding out something about the population from which they were taken”.

3.3. DATA COLLECTION

3.3.1. Data collection instrument

The study utilised a self-designed questionnaire as the data collection instrument. The questionnaire used was effective as it offered participants anonymity, which in turn enabled the collection of objective, unbiased information, making it easier for the researcher to collect information.

One questionnaire was used which consisted of close ended questions. The language used on the questionnaire was plain, simple English in order to cater for the diverse group of participants. The questionnaire was divided into three parts section A, B and C respectively. Section A was used to gather demographic data, such as rank, age and the level of education of participants. This information assisted the researcher to interpret the results. Section B was used to determine the level of engagement in the workplace while section C dealt with the strategy execution aspects of the study.

3.3.2. Data collection procedure

The questionnaire was personally distributed by the researcher to the participants. Information was collected over a period of a month during late July and early August 2015.

3.4. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The following ethical considerations were applied in the research:

3.4.1 Integrity

The researcher adhered to the highest research standards, teachings and practice. Additionally, at the conclusion of the study, an indication of the limits of the research findings and methodological constraints were noted.

3.4.2 Objectivity

The researcher as an employee of the SA Army Information headquarters, avoided bias in the experimental design, data analysis and interpretation of the research results. Additionally, participants were informed about the benefits, requirements and importance of their objective and truthful participation in the survey.

3.4.3 Voluntary participation

Given the nature and makeup of the military (command and control/ordering of troops); participation in the survey was of a voluntary nature. No coercion of participants was allowed.

3.4.4 Informed consent

All participants were informed of the purpose, rights and benefits of the research. Inclusively, participants were informed of the expectations sought from their participation.

3.4.5 Use of language and administration process

In light of the diverse literacy and educational levels of the SA Army Infantry Formation employees, basic, clear and concise English was used in the questionnaire.

3.5. DATA ANALYSIS

After collecting the data, they were organised and analysed. The analysis of the data was done using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) programme. This was be done through the use of descriptive statistics.

3.6. CONCLUSION

The researcher used a quantitative, descriptive survey design to conduct the study. and personally administered the questionnaire to collect data from the 140 employees of the SAAIF headquarters. Permission to conduct the study was granted by the General Officer Commanding of the Infantry Formation.

This chapter describes the research methodology used to achieve the objective of the study which was to determine how the SAAIF employees can be engaged in the execution of organisational strategy.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses data analysis and the interpretation of findings from 140 questionnaires that were completed by personnel of the SAAIF Headquarters in Pretoria. The main objective of the study was to determine how SAAIF employees could be engaged in the execution of organisational strategies.

4.1.1 In addition, the other objectives of the study were:

- To discuss employee engagement and strategy execution from the literature;
- to determine drivers of employee engagement from the literature;
- to determine drivers of successful strategy execution from the literature;
- to determine the levels of employee engagement in the SAAIF;
- to identify drawbacks of employee engagement in the SAAIF;
- to determine impediments to successful strategy execution in the SAAIF; and
- to make recommendations on how the SAAIF employees could be engaged when executing organisational strategies.

4.2. DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE

The researcher employed a cross-sectional survey to conduct the research. Data were collected using questionnaires that were personally distributed to respondents in Pretoria during July and August 2015.

The purpose of the research was communicated to all respondents prior to the research and consent was given by all participants **(see Appendices A and B)**.

The population of the study was the 240 employees of the SAAIF in Pretoria. Stratified sampling was used to select the sample from the above mentioned population. The sample size consisted of 140 respondents and all questionnaires were returned. The respondents differed in rank, age, gender, educational background and years of service in the military.

4.2.1. Data analysis and interpretation

The results of the research will draw on descriptive statistics on both employee engagement and strategy execution as variables of the study. The SPSS version 11.0 was used to analyse the data.

4.3. MAIN RESULTS

The results will be discussed in four separate sections, namely:

SECTION A: Demographic statistics

SECTION B: Employee engagement

SECTION C: Strategy execution

SECTION D: Inferential analysis and interpretation or results

4.3.1. DEMOGRAPHIC STATISTICS

4.3.1.1. Rank

Figure 4.1: Rank below depicts the different rank groupings of the respondents. The underlying reason why Rank was included in the questionnaire is that Ranks in the military, denote the level of responsibility of employees that could possibly impact employee engagement and strategy execution.

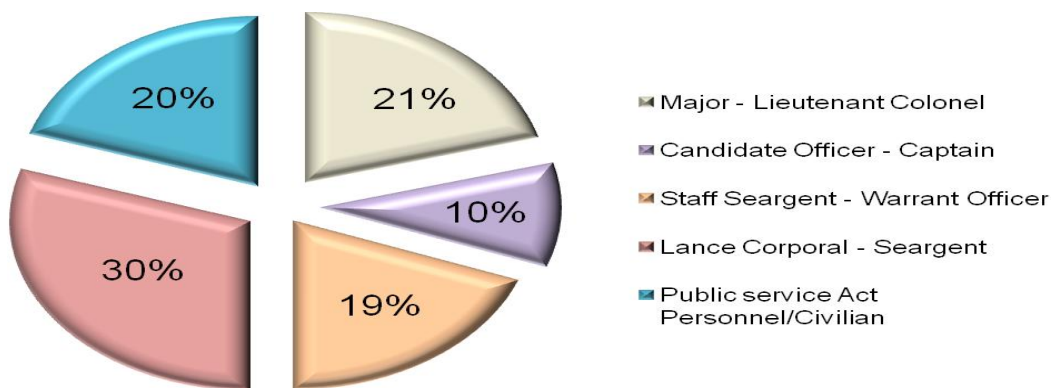


Figure 4.1: Rank dispersion (Source: Compiled by researcher)

From the above, it is evident that respectively 30% (Lance Corporal–Sergeant) and 20% Public Service Act Personnel/Civillian of the respondents are employees operating in the lower levels of the organisation. Traditionally, in the SAAIF, the lower level employees referred to above are the executors of strategies. Additionally, middle and senior level respondents who took part in the survey include: Staff Seargent – Warrant Officer (19%); Candidate Officer – Captain (10%); and Major-Liuetenant Colonel (21%) made up the other 50%.

In brief, the bigger representation of employee levels from the survey comes from lower levels of the organisation, while only respondents with ranks between Major-Lieutenant Colonel operate at the senior level of the organisation.

4.3.1.2. Age

The distribution of respondents ages is explained in Figure 4.2. As discussed earlier, modern day organisations require their employees to show initiative, be more committed, proactive and build up a sense of duty and entitlement to the execution of organisational strategies. The rise of the younger generation of employees adds compexity to an already bewildering work context because these younger employees are increasingly turning to the workplace as a source of social fullfillment.

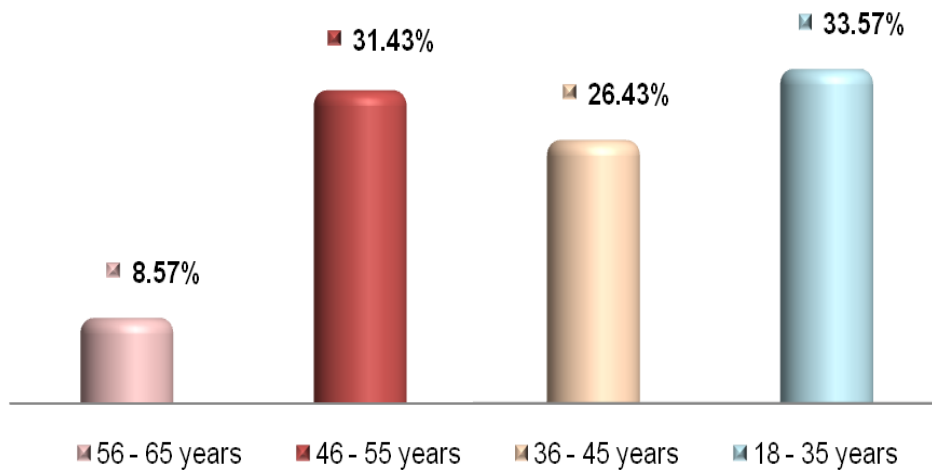


Figure 4.2: Age distribution of respondents (Source: Compiled by researcher)

The figure indicates that the majority of respondents are between the ages of 18–35 years (33.57%). The second largest age group of respondents is 46–55 years (31.43%), then respondents within the age group of 36–45 years (26.43%). The group of respondents in the majority are commonly classified as Generation Y employees, a classification for people born between 1981—1999. Generation Y employees tend to have high expectations of their workplace, and prefer instant feedback and recognition. Admittedly, with these employees, substantial engagement efforts will be required to keep them engaged as they get bored easily and frequently change jobs. Nonetheless, with strategy execution, these employees are more likely to be the champions of strategy execution processes owing to their goal oriented mindsets and preference of flexible work environments.

The second largest group of respondents are classified as Baby Boomers, that is those born between 1946 and 1964. These older generation of employees prefer one-on-one communication and prosper in competitive environments. They are easy to engage but can easily become disengaged as they thrive on personal fulfillment and involvement. Strategy execution might be a challenge with these employees as they have a negative feeling towards flexibility and change.

In summary, it is important to mention that age is not a good measure of rank or responsibility in the military. The majority of employees in the SAAIF are young and they represent employees at the middle and lower levels of the organisation.

4.3.1.3. Gender

Table 4.1 below indicates the gender distribution of the respondents.

Table 4.1: Gender distribution of sample (Source: Compiled by researcher)

Gender	Frequency	Percent %
Male	91	65.00
Female	49	35.00
Total	140	100.00

The majority of respondents (65%) were male which validates the traditional demographics in the military as a male dominated organisation. However, the fact that 35% of the respondents are female, is enough evidence that the role and responsibility of this gender group cannot be ignored in a crucial activity such as strategy execution.

4.3.1.4. Years serving in the military

Figure 4.3. below shows that 35% of the respondents have 10 years or fewer military experience, while 40% have more than 21 years experience with only 10.71% having served more than 31 years in the military.

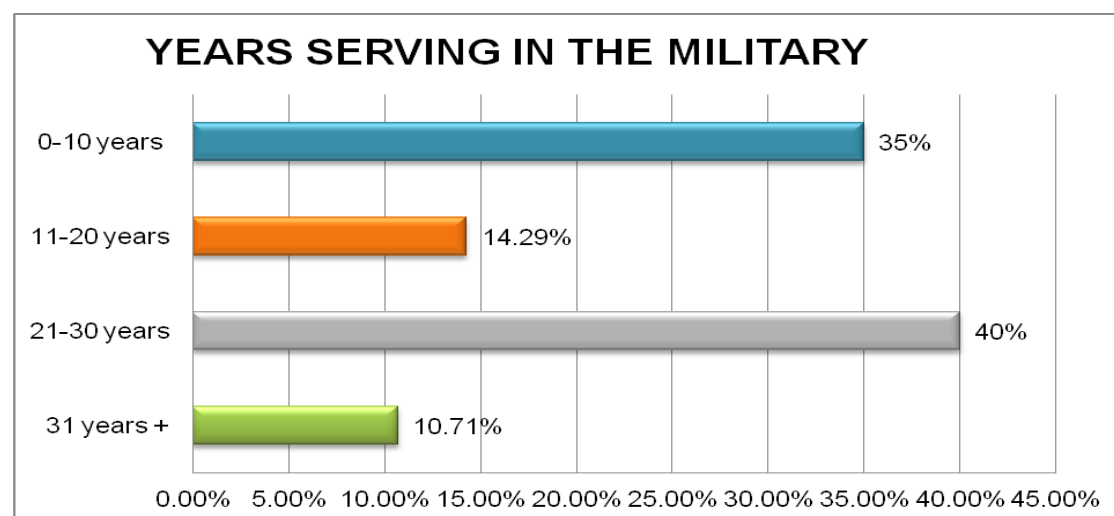


Figure 4.3: Years serving in the military (Source: Compiled by researcher)

As with most organisations, the military is facing rapid changes, mainly due to external factors. These changes require a new understanding of the complexities, and the importance of change agents in growing exponentially.

Strategies are therefore not only dependent on a firm grasp on old and well established processes, but also on how employees must perceive change. The fact that the majority of the respondents have more than 21 years of military experience, emphasises the importance of striking a favourable balance between experience on one hand, and a propensity towards change on the other.

Military ranks and responsibilities are largely denoted by the years an employee has in service. This generally indicates that 35% of respondents are within the middle and lower levels of the organisation and are mostly responsible for executing organisational strategies. From the figure, 35% of respondents have 10 years or less experience in the military, which to a degree indicates the rejuvenation stance that the SAAIF has taken.

In summary, organisations today insist on having employees who feel energetic and dedicated to and absorbed by their work in a productive manner. In brief, the younger employees of the SAAIF are more likely to make the organisation more industrious as they are young, energetic and full of new ideas.

4.3.1.5. Educational background

Figure 4.4 below shows the educational levels of the respondents.

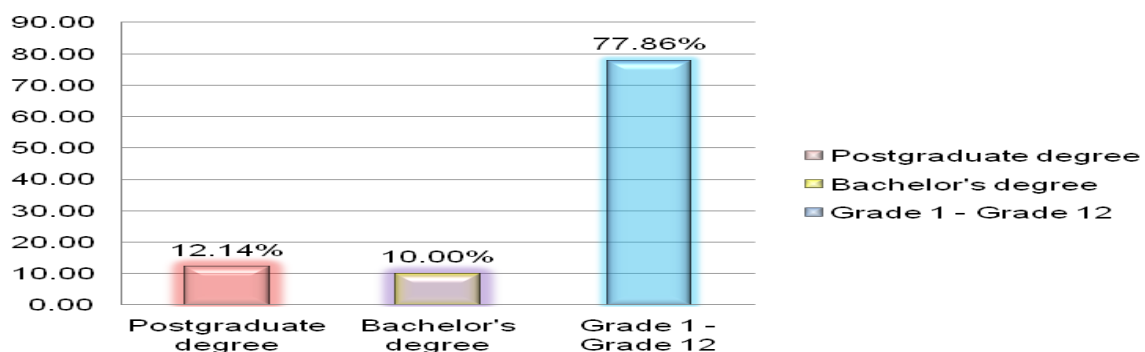


Figure 4.4. Educational background (Source: Compiled by researcher)

The figure shows that 77.86% of the respondents have Grade 1–12. Of the respondents 10% have a bachelor's degree and 12.14% have postgraduate degrees. The figure indicates that the majority of the employees in the SAAIF have some form of education. However, with 77.86% of respondents with Grade 1–12 is an indication that some middle to senior level employees might not have the necessary education to manage and execute complex strategic objectives.

4.3.1.6 Discussion of the above results

The demographic results show that the majority of the respondents' ranks are those in the middle to lower level management of the organisation. Lance Corporals and Sergeants are in the majority. Consequently, these are employees responsible for the execution of strategies, therefore the age distribution of respondents in the study is pertinent to its purpose.

A large number of respondents are 36 years and younger. As mentioned earlier, these respondents are more likely to contribute to the successful execution of strategic goals. However, they require high levels of engagement in order to commit and be loyal to an organisation. Additionally, they see work as a means to an end and not an end in itself. Furthermore, the second largest group of respondents are classified as the Baby Boomers that thrive on maintaining the status quo, which ultimately stymies strategy execution efforts.

The gender distribution indicated that males dominated in the survey, therefore it is highly likely that the respondent's opinions will be biased towards male opinions.

Military experience is balanced out with almost half of the respondents having fewer than 20 years in the military and just over half of other respondents with more than 20 years military experience. In the majority are respondents who have been in service for 21–30 years.

The study further indicates that most respondents have some form of education and are literate, with very few respondents that possess a post-matric or tertiary qualification.

The educational levels of respondents is a good indication of the intellectual levels of engagement that the SAAIF employees require and the level of complexity of strategy execution process that the employees can comprehend. Together, these two indicators can enable the SAAIF leaders and management to comprehensively understand engagement and strategy execution problems.

4.3.2. EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

In this section, data concerning the response frequencies of the SAAIF headquarters employees in Pretoria to the questionnaire on employee engagement is reported. The objective of the section is to analyse all 15 questions from the questionnaire which had strongly agree/ agree/ neutral/ disagree/ strongly disagree responses as developed by the researcher, with the aim of obtaining the perceptions of respondents regarding their levels of engagement in the workplace.

4.3.2.1. Employee engagement questionnaire

A self-designed questionnaire was used to explore various factors that influence employee engagement in the SA Army Infantry Formation (**see appendix A**).

4.3.2.1.1 The objective of the questionnaire is to measure employee engagement through the use of the following 15 items:

- Pride
- Job commitment
- Job importance
- Absorption
- Organisational commitment
- Autonomy
- Problem solving
- Feeling valued and recognised
- Work-life balance
- Retention
- Working relations

- Communication
- Goals
- Trust (information)

This data on employee engagement will be interpreted together with the results from the strategy execution questionnaire in order to better understand the levels of employee engagement in executing strategies at the SAAIF.

4.3.2.1.2 The purpose of the employee engagement questionnaire.

The employee engagement measuring instrument is to gather the data required to address the following research objectives:

- To determine the levels of employee engagement in the SAAIF; and
- to identify drawbacks on employee engagement in the SAAIF.

4.3.2.2. Descriptive statistics of the employee engagement questionnaire

The tables below depict descriptive statistics on the 15 different questions relating to employee engagement as developed by the researcher. A brief interpretation will be given on the responses to each question's response in an effort to make sense of the data.

Table 4.2 below represents the results on the question of pride.

Table 4.2: I am proud of the work that I do (Source: Compiled by researcher)

I am proud of the work that I do.	Count	%
Strongly agree	74	52.86
Agree	45	32.14
Neutral	11	7.86
Disagree	8	5.71
Strongly disagree	2	1.43
Total	140	100.00

More than 85% of the respondents, agree with the statement that they are proud of the work that they do. Pride in the military is about serving and defending the country without reservation and is strongly linked to patriotism. It is very alarming to note that about 15% of the respondents disagreed with the statement. However, the majority of the respondents (85%) indicated a strong sense of pride. The latter employees are likely to advocate the cause and purpose of the organisation by speaking well about it, being loyal to it and striving to constantly work hard, beyond the call of duty.

Table 4.3. below depicts responses to the question of job commitment. In chapter 2 it was mentioned that engaged employees report less absenteeism, stay with the organisation longer and are happier being proactive and more productive.

Table 4.3: I look forward to coming to work each day

I look forward to coming to work each day	Count	%
Strongly agree	59	42.14
Agree	53	37.86
Neutral	14	10.00
Disagree	12	8.57
Strongly disagree	2	1.43
Total	140	100.00

Source: Compiled by researcher

The responses in the table above indicate that about 80% of respondents are engaged with regards to job commitment. Conversely 10% of the respondents are neutral about the statement which the researcher can assume, together with 8.57% who disagree and 1.43% who strongly disagree that they are not fully engaged in their work environments.

Job importance is indicated in Table 4.4. below. Employee engagement extends beyond financial and external incentives. However, drivers such as incentives, salaries and rewards are still significant in the current work-a-day world.

Table 4.4: My job means a lot more to me than just money

My job means a lot more to me than just money.	Count	%
Strongly agree	58	41.43
Agree	52	37.14
Neutral	15	10.71
Disagree	13	9.29
Strongly disagree	2	1.43
Total	140	100.00

Source: Compiled by researcher

In table 4.4, 9.29% of the respondents disagree and 1.43% strongly disagree with the statement that “My job means a lot more to me than just money”. These are disengaged employees who view their jobs as trading time for compensation. They do little beyond the minimum effort required to complete their tasks. Although 41.3% feel that their jobs means more than just money, 10.71% are neutral. This could result in a negative impact on strategy execution.

Disengaged employees tend to spread negative energy in the workplace which is a worrying factor, especially if more than 10% of respondents disagree with the statement. Work is seen today as a means to an end, military employment is no exception. The young South Africans that enlist in the military today, are products of modern societies that place more value on extrinsic benefits of employment such as rewards and incentives. It is not surprising that more than 10% of respondents are of the opinion that military work should also be competitive in as far as compensation and rewards are concerned.

As discussed in the literature review, employees that are engaged become so engrossed in their work that the passage of time becomes irrelevant. This passage of time indicates to a large extent the enjoyment of work, the understanding of tasks and the ability to perform the work. This however can also be as a result of the complexity of one’s work, which in such as case can boost engagement levels. Table 4.5 below depicts results of absorption of respondents in their workplace.

Table 4.5: Time flies when I am working (Source: Compiled by researcher)

Time flies when I am working	Count	%
Strongly agree	56	40.00
Agree	57	40.71
Neutral	16	11.43
Disagree	8	5.71
Strongly disagree	3	2.14
Total	140	100.00

It is clear from Table 4.5 that about 80%, (40% each in terms of strongly agree and agree) of the respondents are absorbed by their work, which is a strong indication of work engagement.

Table 4.6 below indicates the scores of respondents on the question of commitment.

Table 4.6: I will stay overtime and finish a job even if i am not paid for it

I will stay overtime and finish my job even if I am not paid for it.	Count	%
Strongly agree	44	31.43
Agree	41	29.29
Neutral	28	20.00
Disagree	17	12.14
Strongly disagree	10	7.14
Total	140	100.00

Source: Compiled by researcher

Engaged employees bring discretionary efforts to work in the form of extra time. Because such employees are emotionally attached to an organisation, they are normally involved in their respective jobs and therefore display high levels of enthusiasm. About 61% of the respondents agreed with the statement. This relatively low response indicate that more than 30% (**20% neutral/ 12.14% disagree/ 7.14% strongly disagree**) of the respondents will sacrifice neither time nor effort for the organisation without compensation. This is a worrying factor as the fundamental job of military personnel is to serve the country and its people.

Table 4.7 below discusses responses to decision making or autonomy. Autonomy is synonymous with self-directed behaviour. It is also another lever that drives employee engagement into full strategy execution.

Table 4.7: I make important decisions about my work

I make important decisions about my work	Count	%
Strongly agree	56	40.00
Agree	60	42.86
Neutral	13	9.29
Disagree	7	5.00
Strongly disagree	4	2.86
Total	140	100.00

Source: Compiled by researcher

From the table it is clear that just more than 82% of the respondents agree with the statement. These respondents are of the opinion that they are responsible for the choices they make in the workplace and are, as such, able to do their best work while gaining wisdom on making decisions and solving problems. Forty percent strongly agree with the statement about making important decisions at work which is a good indication of the level of autonomous relations at SAAIF. Empowering employees to do their job with little interference is a strong predictor of employee engagement. Therefore, employees need to acquire a strong sense of purpose and autonomy in their work even when they may not control the final decision, product, or outcome.

Table 4.8 below displays the responses to problem solving.

Table 4.8: I contribute to solving problems that arise in my work

I contribute to solving problems that arise in my work.	Count	%
Strongly agree	57	40.71
Agree	49	35.00
Neutral	23	16.43
Disagree	6	4.29
Strongly disagree	5	3.57
Total	140	100.00

Source: Compiled by researcher

Table 4.8. above displays the results of responses to the question on problem solving. About 76% of the respondents feel that they contribute to problem solving at work, while approximately 16.43% are neutral. A strong sense of problem solving as depicted by the above given results, means that employees in the SAAIF are highly involved in the day to day activities of their work. This level of involvement is critical for engaging employees in the execution of organisational strategies.

The table 4.9 below depicts the results to the question of whether or not ideas of employees are listened to.

Table 4.9: My ideas are always listened to (Source: Compiled by researcher)

My ideas are always listened to	Count	%
Strongly agree	31	22.14
Agree	61	43.57
Neutral	34	24.29
Disagree	8	5.71
Strongly disagree	6	4.29
Total	140	100.00

Employees that are engaged, experience an undeniable purpose and meaning in their work, by willingly contributing intellectual effort and positive energy. In the table above, 24.29% of the respondents were neutral to the question posed; 10% disagreed with the statement. This type of response might be attributable to the nature of military organisations in that they are robust, and use a chain of command that rarely allows for creativity or challenge the status quo.

In Table 4.10 below, work-life balance is interrogated in light of employee engagement. People feel better when engaged, work better, and live better. Evidently, employee engagement is not what managers do to their employees, rather an emotional, mental and physical state that employees give to their organisation.

It is a fact that finding the right balance between work and personal life is critical to the performance and well-being of employees.

Table 4.10: My job is an important part of my life

My job is an important part of my life	Count	%
Strongly agree	71	50.71
Agree	50	35.71
Neutral	9	6.43
Disagree	6	4.29
Strongly disagree	4	2.86
Total	140	100.00

Source: Compiled by researcher

The table above shows that 86% of the respondents agree with the statement that their jobs are important parts of their lives. It is a given that an average working person spends most of his/her time at work; thus, it makes perfect sense that one's work should be important, unless they are not engaged in their jobs, such as the 7% of respondents who disagree with the above-mentioned statement.

The results of how frequently respondents think about quitting their jobs are exhibited in table 4.11 below.

Table 4.11: I frequently think about quitting my job and leaving this organisation.

I frequently think about quitting my job and leaving this organisation.	Count	%
Strongly agree	11	7.86
Agree	15	10.71
Neutral	11	7.86
Disagree	49	35.00
Strongly disagree	54	38.57
Total	140	100.00

Source: Compiled by researcher

Twenty six (19%) of the respondents respectively, agree with the statement about quitting their jobs.

This shows that about 19% of respondents are not engaged or are so disengaged that they frequently think about quitting their jobs. In conclusion, as mentioned previously, employees do not leave companies, they leave managers. Therefore, the responses to the above statement indicated that there are challenges with manager-employee relationships at the SAAIF. Alternatively, this high number of respondents thinking about quitting their jobs could also be attributable to the absence of or ineffectiveness of a retention strategy, career growth opportunities or communication.

Table 4.12. portrays the results on an employee/supervisor relations question. The manager-employee relationship is the most important driver of employee engagement. This relationship has been tied to employees' satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their work or workplace and their subsequent decision of whether to stay in the work place or go else where.

Table 4.12: I have a good working relationship with my senior/supervisor

I have a good working relationship with my senior/supervisor.	Count	%
Strongly agree	56	40.00
Agree	52	37.14
Neutral	19	13.57
Disagree	7	5.00
Strongly disagree	6	4.29
Total	140	100.00

Source: Compiled by researcher

Of the responses in Table 4.12, 77% agreed to the statement, which possibly indicates a sound sense of good manager-employee relations in the SAAIF. Managers and employees must connect at a certain level in order to establish a working relationship. Moreover, from a managerial point of view, connection to employees involves individual relations with employees.

Good manager-employee relations are antecedents for high levels of disclosure, transparency, two-way communication, and relationship orientation, which characterises authentic leadership and develops a positive environment where employees feel trusted, supported and involved.

Table 4.13 below displays results concerning communication. Internal communication promotes the degree to which individuals are attentive and absorbed in the performance of their roles. What is certainly true is that communication and the alignment of people to a common cause, uphold values that shape the behavioural norms of the culture the organisation espouses.

Table 4.13: I communicate well with everyone in my section

I communicate well with everyone in my section.	Count	%
Strongly agree	61	43.57
Agree	68	48.57
Neutral	7	5.00
Disagree	3	2.14
Strongly disagree	1	0.71
Total	140	100.00

Source: Compiled by researcher

Communication is a potent tool for engaging employees in an organisation. Responses shown in Table 4.13. above indicate that about 92% of the respondents are of the opinion that good communication exists in their respective work environments. The assumption can thus be made that the degree to which the employees are attentive and absorbed in the performance of their roles is increased. Organisational roles of these employees can be easily streamlined with their duties which can boost productivity in the SAAIF. Table 4.14. shows the degree to which employees feel that their superiors value their work.

Table 4.14: My seniors/supervisors value the work that I do

My seniors/supervisors value the work that I do.	Count	%
Strongly agree	48	34.29
Agree	54	38.57
Neutral	23	16.43
Disagree	10	7.14
Strongly disagree	5	3.57
Total	140	100.00

Source: Compiled by researcher

Thirty eight (27%) of the respondents feel that their seniors and supervisors do not value the work that they do. Respondents will not be actively engaged when it is highly unlikely that they will feel valued and recognised.

Table 4.15 below depicts the results pertaining the question about goals. Goals drive everything in an organisation, without goals there is no work.

Table 4.15: My daily tasks are in line with the strategy of the organisation

My daily tasks are in line with the strategy of the organisation.	Count	%
Strongly agree	54	38.57
Agree	55	39.29
Neutral	23	16.43
Disagree	6	4.29
Strongly disagree	2	1.43
Total	140	100.00

Organisational goals are achieved through the uniform efforts of both the employee and manager. Table 4.15 above, shows the results of respondents regarding goals. Hundred and nine respondents agreed that their goals are aligned with the organisation's strategy. As mentioned earlier, goals are achieved through a uniformed effort and to have 22% of respondents who disagrees with the statement is a significant cause for concern in as far as reaching goals for the SAAIF.

Table 4.16 pictures results concerning trust relative to information.

Table 4.16: I trust the information that I receive from my seniors/supervisors

I trust the information that I receive from my seniors/supervisors	Count	%
Strongly agree	44	31.43
Agree	66	47.14
Neutral	17	12.14
Disagree	9	6.43
Strongly disagree	4	2.86
Total	140	100.00

Source: Compiled by researcher

Of the respondents indicated above, about 79% agree with the statement. From the responses above, 21% of employees are of the opinion that the information they receive from seniors is not trustworthy.

4.3.2.3. Discussion of employee engagement results

The table below depicts the engagement levels in percentages of each item included in the questionnaire.

Table 4.17. Engagement levels of each questionnaire item

Questions	Engaged %	Not Engaged %
I am proud of the work that I do.	77.86	22.14
I look forward to coming to work each day.	70.00	30.00
My job means a lot to me than just money.	67.85	32.15
Time flies when I am working.	72.86	27.14
I will stay overtime and finish my job even if I am not paid for it.	41.44	58.56
I make important decisions about my work.	75.00	25.00
I contribute to solving problems that arise in my work.	67.85	32.15
My ideas are always listened to.	55.71	44.29
My job is an important part of my life.	79.27	20.73
I frequently think about quitting my job and leaving this organisation.	55.00	45.00
I have a good working relationship with my senior/supervisor.	67.85	32.15
I communicate well with everyone in my section.	89.29	10.71
My senior/supervisors value the work that I do.	62.15	37.85
My daily tasks are in line with the strategy of the organisation.	72.14	27.86
I trust the information that I receive from my seniors/supervisors.	68.24	31.76
Overall engagement/disengagement levels	68.17%	31.83%

Source: Compiled by researcher

Table 4.17. above depicts the levels of engagement/disengagement of each question asked in the measuring instrument on employee engagement. The table contains the summation of employee engagement results in percentage form. The engagement 'scores' were calculated using the 'Net' scores method. The percentages expressing disagree and strongly disagree is subtracted from the percentage expressing the agree and strongly agree to arrive at the engagement percentage of respondents. It must be noted that this method discounts the size of the neutral percentage pool. In summation, once the engaged percentage is calculated, the disengaged figure is derived by subtracting the engaged percentage from a figure of 100 percent.

4.3.2.3.1 Purpose of the employee engagement questionnaire

The purpose of the employee engagement measurement instrument was to gather the data required to address the following research objectives:

- To determine the levels of employee engagement in the SAAIF;
- to identify drawbacks on employee engagement in the SAAIF; and
- to make recommendations on how the SAAIF employees can be engaged when executing organisational strategies.

4.3.2.3.2 The level of employee engagement in the SAAIF

The measurement of employee engagement in the SAAIF provided insight into the levels of engagement, the areas of concern and critical challenges pertinent to engagement in the organisation.

This study reveals that 68% of employees in the SAAIF are engaged in their work.

As this is the first study of its nature in the SAAIF, there are no benchmarks that can be utilised to measure the results against.

However, given the global and South African workforce engagement levels mentioned earlier, to have 68% of the workforce engaged, is remarkable when compared to the 13% and 9% of the engaged workforces respectively.

Nevertheless, given the scope and nature of work in military organisations, having 32% of the workforce not engaged signals huge concerns. Although an engagement level of 68% is admirable, in a military organisation anything less than 100% is questionable, as military operations are literally, about a matter of life and death.

Thus, it is important that drawbacks that lead to disengagement of employees in the SAAIF be queried in an effort to obtain understanding and attempt to improve the levels of engagement.

4.3.2.3.3 Drawbacks in employee engagement in the SAAIF

From the results, 78% of the respondents feel proud about their organisation. Admittedly, a score of 78% for most organisations might not be problematic, but given the vision and mission of the SAAIF, having employees that are not proud is detrimental to the current and future standing of the organisation, as pride is a core value of the SAAIF.

An employee that is proud, looks forward to going to work. Not surprisingly, only 70% of employees in the SAAIF look forward to going to work each day. This is a good indication of how pride relates with affinity. Thirty percent of employees in the SAAIF do not have affinity with the organisation. It is true that when employees do not find affinity in the workplace, they will look for it elsewhere.

Employees that are not proud and not connected with their organisation will, most likely not even agree to work overtime, let alone working overtime without remuneration. A good indication of engagement is the willingness to go the extra mile for the organisation.

Only, 41% of employees in the SAAIF are willing to go the extra mile for their organisation. This is another huge cause for concern as soldiers are volunteers that serve and defend their country.

Historically, military enlistments were never influenced by money or rewards, but a common purpose for a greater good or belief. However, the study reveals that 32% of employees in the SAAIF feel that money is more important than their jobs. This factor has a negative impact on engagement and is extrinsic in nature, indicating that 32% of the employees in the SAAIF simply go to work for incentives and financial rewards.

Another possible drawback to engagement levels in the SAAIF is ability of the organisation to retain its talent. Only 55% of the employees at SAAIF, do not think about quitting their jobs. This means that 45% of the workforce in the SAAIF constantly think about quitting their jobs. As mentioned in the paper earlier, employees do not leave organisations, they leave managers. Admittedly, the employees that frequently think about quitting, have experienced or continue to experience problems with their managers.

A sound manager relationship is based on trust. Without trust, most organisations are set to fail. In the SAAIF, 32% of the employees do not trust the information they receive from their supervisors. This is alarming, simply because the study revealed high levels of communication in the SAAIF. The above-mentioned results on trust, indicate that although the communication function is of high-quality, it is not effective because the information shared is not trustworthy.

Additionally, this element of mistrust filters down to the actual work that employees do as only 62% of employees in the SAAIF feel that their work is valued by the seniors or supervisors. Engagement entails a sense of ownership and entitlement. People become engaged to what they helped create.

Another drawback to engagement in the SAAIF is caused by decision-making. Making decisions about one's work, empowers one, with accountability. Of the respondents, 25% say that they do not make decisions about their work.

This lack of autonomy negatively impacts engagement. An autonomous relationship involves having a voice and more importantly having ideas that are listened to.

However, only 56% of the SAAIF employees feel that their ideas are listened to. This low level of ideas sharing has obvious effects on the manager-employee relationship. Evidently, Thirty two percent of SAAIF employees say that they do not have good relations with their managers.

In summary, the manager-employee relation is the most important driver of employee engagement, without which, the retention, motivation, happiness, and overall performance of employees will be adversely affected.

4.3.3. STRATEGY EXECUTION

4.3.3.1. Strategy execution questionnaire

A self-designed questionnaire was used to explore factors that influence the successful execution of strategies (**see appendix C**).

4.3.3.1.1 The objective of the questionnaire was to measure strategy execution through the use of the following 15 items:

- Understanding the vision and mission;
- Involvement in strategy formulation.
- Link between daily tasks and strategies.
- Employees as assets.
- Performance appraisal.
- Skills development.
- Reward and recognition
- Feeling valued.
- Training and development.
- Leadership trust.
- Job resources.

- Professional and personal goals.
- Teamwork.
- Communication of strategies.
- Embracing change.

4.3.3.2 The purpose of the strategy execution questionnaire

The strategy execution measurement instrument was to gather the data required to address the following research objectives:

- To determine impediments to successful strategy execution in the SAAIF.

4.3.3.3 Descriptive statistics of the strategy execution questionnaire

Table 4.18 below depicts results from responses to the vision and mission question.

Table 4.18: I understand the vision and mission of my organisation

I understand the vision and mission of my organisation.	Count	%
Strongly agree	67	47.86
Agree	64	45.71
Neutral	5	3.57
Disagree	0	0.00
Strongly disagree	4	2.86
Total	140	100.00

Source: Compiled by researcher

The results depicted in Table 4.18 above indicate that 94% of the respondents agree with the statement: “ I understand the vision and mission of the organisation”. The core issue around organisation’s visions, is getting employees to understand how the missions and visions relate to their daily tasks and they should be able to perceive the real consequences of implementing the mission and vision of the organisation. Only 3% of respondents disagreed with the statement.

Respondents were asked about their participation in strategy formulation and their responses are depicted in Table 4.19 below.

Table 4.19: I am involved in the creation of strategic goals of the organisation.

I am involved in the creation of strategic goals of the organisation	Count	%
Strongly agree	21	15.00
Agree	62	44.29
Neutral	24	17.14
Disagree	26	18.57
Strongly disagree	7	5.00
Total	140	100.00

Source: Compiled by the researcher

Of the responses depicted in Table 4.19 above, 59% of the respondents agreed to being involved in the creation of strategic goals. Interestingly, note should be taken that 41% of respondents respectively, disagreed with the statement. This is cause for alarm as the inclusion of employees who must execute strategies in the planning stages can help align the actions of employees during execution, improve communication and foster buy-in from the executors.

Table 4.20 below portrays results from responses to the statement: “my day-to-day activities are directly linked to strategic goals”. The difficulty with strategy execution is setting clear concise goals, assigning responsibilities, and monitoring the actual performance of employees.

Table 4.20: My day-to-day work activities are directly linked to strategic goals.

My day-to-day work activities are directly linked to strategic goals	Count	%
Strongly agree	32	22.86
Agree	72	51.43
Neutral	24	17.14
Disagree	10	7.14
Strongly disagree	2	1.43
Total	140	100.00

Source: Compiled by the researcher

In the table above, 74% of respondents agreed with the statement that their daily tasks are linked to strategic goals. The number of uncertain respondents is quite significant as daily tasks more or less make up the gist of work commitments. Furthermore, 26% of the respondents disagreed with the statement.

In Table 4.21 below, members were asked whether or not they saw themselves as assets to the organisation. The results are shown in the table.

Table 4.21: I am an asset to the organisation

I am an asset to the organisation.	Count	%
Strongly agree	57	40.71
Agree	63	45.00
Neutral	16	11.43
Disagree	3	2.14
Strongly disagree	1	0.71
Total	140	100.00

Source: Compiled by the researcher

It is argued that organisations that effectively execute their strategies view their people as assets. Table 4.21 above, illustrates the responses of the SAAIF employees. Of the respondents, about 86% agree with the statement, indicating a strong sense of value from the employees.

When employees see themselves and are treated as assets and knowledge workers, rather than just labour that incurs expenses, they add considerable value to an organisation. They become a workforce, an asset empowered and motivated to achieve. 20 (14%) of the respondents were uncertain about the statement.

Performance management serves as a platform for aligning the employee's actions and behaviours in meeting organisational goals. The table below indicates responses regarding rewards and recognition of performance.

Table 4.22: My performance at work is always recognised

My performance at work is always recognised.	Count	%
Strongly agree	41	29.29
Agree	51	36.43
Neutral	24	17.14
Disagree	15	10.71
Strongly disagree	9	6.43
Total	140	100.00

Source: Compiled by the researcher

Of the results depicted in Table 4.22 above, 66% of the respondents agreed that they received recognition for their work and performance. Conversely, 34% of the respondents disagreed with the statement.

Table 4.23. below illustrates the skills level of the respondents.

Table 4.23: I have the necessary skills to do my job well

I have the necessary skills to do my job well	Count	%
Strongly agree	65	46.43
Agree	55	39.29
Neutral	12	8.57
Disagree	5	3.57
Strongly disagree	3	2.14
Total	140	100.00

Source: Compiled by the researcher

In the table above, about 86% of the respondents agree with the statement on skills, thus indicating that respondents are well equipped and skilled to perform their jobs. Of all the respondents 14% were uncertain, which could be attributable to a number of factors. It is worth noting that the majority of the members in the SAAIF have a job fit that enables them to perform their tasks. Contrarily, it is important to realise that most respondents will agree with the statement, as they will not agree to being unskilled. It is for this reason that the researcher will apply caution when analysing the responses from this question item.

Employee engagement stretches beyond the external and financial incentives. However, drivers such as incentives, salaries and rewards are still important in the current working world. As indicated by results of the employee engagement questionnaire, more employees in the SAAIF feel that their jobs mean less than money. Henceforth, the results depicted in Table 4.24 below, will interestingly, shed led into the opinions of respondents regarding performance and rewards.

Table 4.24: I get rewarded for good performance

I get rewarded for good performance	Count	%
Strongly agree	17	12.14
Agree	42	30.00
Neutral	31	22.14
Disagree	34	24.29
Strongly disagree	16	11.43
Total	140	100.00

Source: Compiled by the researcher

Of all the respondents shown in Table 4.22, 42% agree that they are rewarded for good performance. Interestingly, 58% are unsure and express their disagreement with the statement about receiving rewards for good performance.

Table 4.25 below, illustrates the opinions that respondents have about their fellow workers.

Table 4.25: Most people in my organisation are hard workers

Most people in my organisation are hard workers	Count	%
Strongly agree	34	24.29
Agree	43	30.71
Neutral	24	17.14
Disagree	25	17.86
Strongly disagree	14	10.00
Total	140	100.00

Source: Compiled by the researcher

Depicted in Table 4.25 above, 55% of respondents are of the opinion that most of their colleagues are hard workers. However, 17.14% of the respondents chose to be neutral or were uncertain about the work ethics of their colleagues, while 28% disagreed with the statement.

Table 4.26, shows the responses given when the respondents were asked about their training and development.

Table 4.26: I am well trained and developed to do my job well

I am well trained and developed to do my job well.	Count	%
Strongly agree	56	40.00
Agree	64	45.71
Neutral	12	8.57
Disagree	6	4.29
Strongly disagree	2	1.43
Total	140	100.00

Source: Compiled by the researcher

Shown in the table above is that 86% of the respondents agree that they are well trained to do their jobs adequately. Of the responses, 14% remained neutral and disagreed with having been adequately trained .

Career management and development influences the engagement of employees and helps retain the most gifted of employees by providing opportunities for personal development and is therefore a pivotal driver of engagement.

The issues around long-term career prospects and promotion opportunities are relevant in strategy execution as well, as employees will possess the necessary skills and abilities to perform their tasks.

The question about leadership and trust is discussed using the table below.

Table 4.27: I trust and believe in my leaders (Source: Compiled by the researcher)

I trust and believe in my leaders.	Count	%
Strongly agree	46	32.86
Agree	51	36.43
Neutral	24	17.14
Disagree	17	12.14
Strongly disagree	2	1.43
Total	140	100.00

Leadership is vital to strategy execution. Certainly, leadership affects how organisations respond to execution challenges. The leadership question as portrayed in the table above, indicates that 69% of respondents trust their leaders. From the responses 31% disagreed with the statement. Strategy execution is a key responsibility of leaders and as a leadership essential, leadership must be execution biased. Therefore, the role of leadership is to provide vision, direction, allocate resources, motivate, mentor and coach on strategy execution processes.

In addition, trust is an enveloping factor of engagement. Without trust, it is difficult for managers to get employees to work hard. Leaders and managers are the important actors in plying trust-worthy leadership, advocating employee voice and permitting purposeful involvement in work and team decisions in the execution of organisational strategies. When asked about their opinion on the tools they had to do their jobs, the respondents indicated as shown in Table 4.28 below.

Table 4.28: I do not have the necessary tools I need to do my job well

I do not have the necessary tools I need to do my job well.	Count	%
Strongly agree	17	12.14
Agree	33	23.57
Neutral	25	17.86
Disagree	45	32.14
Strongly disagree	20	14.29
Total	140	100.00

Source: Compiled by the researcher

As seen in Table 4.28 above, 64% disagreed with the statement, saying that they had the necessary tools to do their jobs. In contrast, 36% of the respondents agreed that they had sufficient resources and tools with which to do their trade.

Table 4.29, clearly shows the results of the question regarding the personal and professional aspirations of the respondents.

Table 4.29: I want to achieve great things for myself and the organisation

I want to achieve great things for myself and the organisation	Count	%
Strongly agree	59	42.14
Agree	63	45.00
Neutral	8	5.71
Disagree	3	2.14
Strongly disagree	7	5.00
Total	140	100.00

Source: Compiled by the researcher

In the table above, 87% of the respondents indicated that they strongly agreed with the statement. Of the responses, 13% disagreed with the statement.

Regarding the question of teamwork, 79% disagreed with the statement that teamwork is not important as shown in the table 4.30 below.

Table 4.30: Teamwork is not important in day to day tasks

Teamwork is not important in day to day tasks	Count	%
Strongly agree	12	8.57
Agree	18	12.86
Neutral	10	7.14
Disagree	34	24.29
Strongly disagree	66	47.14
Total	140	100.00

Source: Compiled by the researcher

Thirty (21%) of the respondents agreed with the statement. Teamwork is a functional and cohesive necessity; one in which members trust one another; in which they engage in unfiltered disagreement around ideas and in which they are dedicated to plans and decisions of action

Communication of organisational strategies is a challenge in the SAAIF as indicated in the problem statement. Shown in Table 4.31 are the responses to the question regarding the communication of strategies.

Table 4.31: Organisational strategies are clearly communicated by seniors

Organisational strategies are clearly communicated by seniors.	Count	%
Strongly agree	18	12.86
Agree	53	37.86
Neutral	34	24.29
Disagree	22	15.71
Strongly disagree	13	9.29
Total	140	100.00

Source: Compiled by the researcher

Table 4.31 above, indicates that 51% of the respondents are of the opinion that strategies are clearly communicated.

As mentioned in the problem statement of the study, the assumption made was that employees in the SAAIF are not adequately engaged in strategy execution processes and as a result, employees have trouble in understanding strategic plans and objectives, accepting strategic roles and focusing their actions on being committed to the execution of organisational strategies.

The above results indicate that more than 49% (24.9% neutral/ 15.71% disagree and 9.29% strongly disagree) of respondents are either neutral or disagree with the statement that “organisational strategies are clearly communicated by seniors”.

The last table depicting the strategy execution questionnaires relates to the ability to adapt to change by employees. Table 4.32 shows all the responses to the issue of change in the organisation.

Table 4.32: Change is good as it promotes growth in the organisation

Change is good as it promotes growth in the organisation	Count	%
Strongly agree	64	45.71
Agree	54	38.57
Neutral	14	10.00
Disagree	4	2.86
Strongly disagree	4	2.86
Total	140	100.00

Source: Compiled by the researcher

The table above depicts all the results relating to change. Hundred and eighteen (84%) of the respondents agreed with the statement that change promotes growth. Conversely, 16% of the respondents disagreed with the statement.

Strategy execution normally involves managing matters differently. Nevertheless, it is human nature to lean to the familiar and refuse change. No matter how good the organisation's current strategy is, there will always be booms and changes that will emerge in unexpected places. Admittedly, adapting strategy to change is a difficult imperative.

Strategy execution involves change. Managing change requires a lot more than maintaining employees' happiness and subduing resistance to new ideas. Change is not possible without dedication to the decisions and activities that define strategy execution.

Making strategy execution a success demands timely feedback about organisational performance and then utilising that information to refine the strategy, the objectives, and the execution procedure itself.

4.3.3.4 Discussion of strategy execution results

The table below depicts the summation of strategy execution results in percentage form. The engagement 'scores' were calculated using the 'Net' scores method. The percentages expressing disagree and strongly disagree is subtracted from the percentage expressing the agree and strongly agree to arrive at the engagement percentage of respondents. It must be noted that this method discounts the size of the neutral percentage pool. In summary, once the engaged percentage is calculated, the disengaged figure is derived by subtracting the engaged percentage from a figure of 100 percent.

Table 4.33. Strategy execution results of each questionnaire item

Questions	Agree %	Disagree %
I understand the vision and mission of my organisation	90.71	9.29
I am involved in the creation of strategic goals of the organisation.	35.72	64.28
My day-to-day activities are directly linked to strategic goals.	65.72	34.28
I am an asset to the organisation.	82.86	17.14
My performance is always recognised.	48.58	51.42
I have the necessary skills to do my job well.	80.01	19.99
I get rewarded for good performance.	6.42	93.58
Most people in my organisation are hard workers.	27.14	72.86
I am well trained and developed to do my job well.	79.99	20.01
I trust and believe in my leaders.	55.72	44.28
I do not have the necessary tools I need to do my job well.	10.72	89.28
I want to achieve great things for myself and the organisation.	80	20
Teamwork is not important in day to day tasks	50	50
Organisational strategies are clearly communicated by seniors.	25.72	74.28
Change is good as it promotes growth in the organisation.	78.56	21.44

Source: Compiled by the researcher

Of all the respondents, 91% indicated that they understand the mission and vision of the organisation. Conversely, only 36% of employees are involved in the creation of organisational strategies during the planning stages of strategies. This high exclusion of employees during the planning stages limits buy-in into the strategies and ultimately creates a challenge in relation to the successful execution of strategies. In addition, with 66% of employees asserting that their jobs are linked to strategic objectives, a possible outcome could be that respondents lack the in-depth insight into how their day-to-day tasks are intertwined with the strategies of the organisation.

With 83% of employees being of the opinion that they are assets to the organisation, a platform is created for managers to effectively engage these employees in effectively executing strategic objectives. A lack of performance appraisals creates a negative climate, destructive to the successful execution of strategies. More than 51% of respondents are of the opinion that their performances are not recognised which is more than half the number of employees.

A critical assessment has to be conducted in relation to the performance appraisal system currently employed by the SAAIF, as evidence suggests a significant level of incompetence in recognising performance-this cannot be ignored.

More than 80% of employees have the necessary skills to perform their jobs, but one cannot help but get a feel that these skills are underutilised. This could be caused by the inability to assign roles and to create job-fit matches between skills and tasks.

Reward and recognition although mostly extrinsic in nature, is an important managerial task that has profound effects if correctly applied to the engagement of employees in achieving goals and objectives that are strategic in nature. Only 6% of the respondents are rewarded for good performance.

The SAAIF's performance management function has to be revived or implemented if none exists. Managers should constantly communicate organisational strategies to subordinates so as to solicit a buy-in from the people responsible for the execution of these strategies.

Only 26% of respondents say that strategies are communicated clearly to them. Tools of trade, or prime job equipment has to be provided for committed and engaged employees who are willing to commit their time and effort unreservedly towards the attainment of organisational strategies.

When respondents were asked about management and leadership, 53% indicated that they trust their leaders, while the other 47% disagreed with the statement. Trust is a cornerstone upon which great working relations are created. It will prove difficult to succeed in executing strategies if only 53% of the workforce trust and believe in their leaders.

It is argued in chapter 2 that issues related to communication pose the greatest threat to successful strategy execution. Of the responses, 91% indicated that they understand the mission and vision of the organisation. This high level of vision and mission understanding is contrasted with the fact that 74% of the employees do not have a clear understanding of the strategic goals. Although employees understand the mission and vision of the organisation, they will not be able to execute strategies as strategic goals are not clearly communicated.

When asked about the work ethics of fellow employees, as well as teamwork, 73% of respondents are of the opinion that their fellow workers do not work hard enough and half of the respondents do not view teamwork as important in executing their tasks. Only 6% of the respondents are rewarded for good performance with 49% appraised for good performance.

In as far as being engaged, 83% of the respondents see themselves as assets to the organisation, with 66% of employees specifying that their daily tasks are aligned with the big picture of the organisation. It is perhaps disquieting that only 36% of employees are engaged in strategy formulation processes.

In brief, most responses to key drivers of strategy execution such as management and leadership, communication, organisational culture, performance appraisal, reward and recognition employee engagement and resource allocations indicate serious challenges that impede on the successful execution of strategies in the

SAAIF as shown by the evidence above. In summary, these low levels of scores and poor ratings relative to key strategy drivers indicate that strategy execution in the SAAIF is a source of concern.

4.3.4. INFERENCE ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

4.3.4.1. T-Tests

Table 4.34 and Table 4.35 depict the differences between the demographic groups. In this instance, the aim is to test whether or not employee engagement and strategy execution differ between males and females.

Table 4.34: T-tests on male and female respondents

Variables	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Employee engagement	Male	91	31.66	9.036
	Female	49	30.00	8.799
Strategy execution	Male	91	35.14	7.195
	Female	49	34.43	8.984

Source: Compiled by the researcher

Table 4.35: t statistics on employee engagement and strategy execution

Variables	t statistics	p-value	Mean Difference
Employee engagement	1.046	0.297	1.659
Strategy execution	0.480	0.633	0.714

Source: Compiled by the researcher

In Table 4.35. the p-value of 0.297 which is greater than 0.1 means that employee engagement is the same between males and females. Therefore the fact that the majority of employees in the SAAIF are male does not have any impact on the level of engagement of the employees.

Additionally, the p-value of strategy execution is 0.633 which is greater than 0.1, this also infers that the ability to execute strategies is the same between males and females in the SAAIF.

In summary, employee gender is irrelevant to the successful execution of strategies and the engagement of employees respectively.

Table 4.36 and Table 4.37 below portrays the T-tests results on the level of education in the SAAIF. In this instance, the aim is to test whether or not employee engagement and strategy execution differ between employees with a degree and those with Grade 1-12.

Table 4.36: T-tests on the level of education

Variables	Education	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Employee engagement	Degree	31	31.677	9.799
	Grade 1 -12	109	30.908	8.744
Strategy execution	Degree	31	35.903	7.639
	Grade 1 – 12	109	34.606	7.910

Source: Compiled by the reseacher

Table 4.37: t statistics on the level of education

Variables	t statistics	p-value	Mean Difference
Employee engagement	0.421	0.675	0.769
Strategy execution	0.812	0.418	1.298

Source: Compiled by the researcher

Displayed in Table 4.37 above, the p-value for employee engagement is 0.675 which is greater than 0.1, which means that the level of employee engagement is the same between those with a degree and those with Grade 1 – 12. Furthermore, the p-value for strategy execution as depicted in Table 4.37 is 0.418 which is also greater than 0.1, inferring that the ability to execute organisational strategies is the same between employees with Grade 1 – 12 and those with a degree.

In short, an employee's level of education has no impact on their abilities to execute strategies or become engaged in their work.

4.3.4.2 ANOVA

As shown above, the level of engagement and strategy execution abilities of employees are not affected by either education or gender. Table 4.38 below, depicts the analysis of variance tests conducted with the intent to determine whether employee engagement levels and strategy execution abilities differ among rank groups, age and years of service in the military.

Table 4.38: ANOVA analysis

Variables		F statistic	p-value
Rank	Employee engagement	0.926	0.451
	Strategy execution	0.525	0.718
Age	Employee engagement	0.903	0.442
	Strategy execution	1.024	0.384
Years serving in the military	Employee engagement	1.726	0.165
	Strategy execution	0.504	0.680

Source: Compiled by the researcher

From the above table the following are evident:

4.3.4.2.1 Rank

The p-value of rank in employee engagement is 0.451, which is greater than 0.1, which means that levels of employee engagement differ among rank groups in the SAAIF. Moreover, rank denotes the level of responsibility which in turn differentiates between lower, middle and senior level employees. Henceforth, engagement in the SAAIF is affected by the organisational level or area of responsibility within which an employee is staffed.

In the same fashion, the p-value of rank in strategy execution is 0.718 which is also greater than 0.1. By the same token, the ability to execute organisational strategies varies across the different rank groupings in the SAAIF. Notably, this might be attributable to the fact that successful strategy execution is heavily reliant on the performance of lower level employees.

4.3.4.2.2 Age

As depicted in Table 4.38, the p-values of age in employee engagement and the ability to execute strategies differ among the different age groups.

The age difference affirms the earlier discussion on generational classifications of majority employees in the SAAIF, into the Generation Y and Baby Boomers classifications respectively. It is argued that Generation Y employees are more likely to execute organisational strategies more effectively but then again become bored easily which could signal low levels of engagement amongst these members.

Baby Boomers on the other hand tend to resist changes, making strategy execution difficult, but these employees are easier to engage as they prefer one-on-one communication and interaction.

4.3.4.2.3. Years serving in the military

The p-value of years serving in the military in employee engagement, as portrayed in Table 4.38 is 0.165. This implies that the level of employee engagement differ among the tenure (different years) groups. Similarly, regarding strategy execution, the ability of employees to execute strategies differ base on the years of service. This is attested by the p-value of 0.680. In summary, both the experience and years of service have an effect on the level of engagement and the strategy execution abilities of employees in the SAAIF.

4.3.4.3 Reliability

The table below depicts reliability test results conducted on two variables, namely strategic execution and employee engagement.

Table 4.39: Reliability test

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	N
Employee engagement	0.864	15
Strategy execution	0.774	15

Source: Compiled by the researcher

The Cronbach's Alpha for employee engagement is 0.864 and for strategy execution is 0.774. For both the variables the Cronbach's Alpha is above 0.5 which then means the scales used for this study is a reliable scale.

4.3.4.4. Normality

The table below displays the normality test which was done to ensure that the correct test for the T-test, ANOVA and correlation were used during analysis and interpretation.

Table 4.40: Normality test

Variables	KS Statistic	p-value
Employee engagement	0.077	0.041
Strategy execution	0.055	0.200

Source: Compiled by the researcher

** KS = Kolmogorov – Smirnov*

From the results shown in the table above, the p-value for employee engagement is 0.041 a number less than 0.1. This means that the variable employee engagement is not normally distributed. In addition, the p-value for strategy execution is 0.2 which is greater than 0.1, meaning that the variable strategy execution is normally distributed.

The Spearman's rho coefficient was then used to test for the relationship between employee engagement and strategy execution.

4.3.5.5. Correlation

Table 4.41 below depicts the test for the correlation coefficient between employee engagement and strategy execution, with the intention of determining whether changes in employee engagement have an influence on the execution of strategies in organisations.

Table 4.41: Correlation coefficient test

Variables		Correlation Coefficient	p-value
Employee engagement	Strategy execution	0.736	0.000

Source: Compiled by the researcher

The correlation coefficient between employee engagement and strategy execution is 0.736 with a p-value of 0.000, indicating a significant positive relationship between employee engagement and strategy execution.

A positive relationship means that increases in employee engagement levels in the SAAIF will positively influence the strategy execution of the same organisation.

4.4 CONCLUSION

Modern day organisations call for innovative, committed, proactive and engaged employees who can perform at high standards necessary to achieve organisational goals.

The study indicated that the majority of the respondents fall within the middle to lower level management of the organisation. Accordingly, these are employees responsible for the execution of strategies; therefore, the age distribution of respondents in the study is pertinent to the purpose of the study.

A large number of respondents are 36 years and younger. As mentioned earlier, these respondents are more likely to contribute to the successful execution of strategic goals, as they are energetic, innovative and adapt easily to change.

Additionally, gender distribution responses indicated that males dominated in the survey, therefore it is highly likely that the respondent's opinions will be biased towards male opinions.

Military experience is balanced. In the majority are respondents who have been in service for 21–30 years. The study further indicated that most respondents are literate, with very few possessing a post-matric or tertiary qualification.

In summary, the correlation coefficient between employee engagement and strategy execution is 0.736 with a p-value of 0.000, as shown previously, indicating a significant positive relationship between employee engagement and strategy execution. A positive relationship means that increases in employee engagement levels in the SAAIF will positively influence the strategy execution of the same organisation.

CHAPTER 5

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1. INTRODUCTION

The primary objective of this study was to determine how the employees of the SAAIF headquarters can be engaged in the execution of organisational strategies.

In order to achieve this objective, a quantitative study was conducted to measure engagement levels and also to determine impediments on strategy execution in the SAAIF.

This chapter summarises the findings of the study, as well as providing recommendations that can be used to enhance and further develop employee engagement in strategy execution in the SAAIF. Furthermore, the study can also be used as a benchmark for future employee engagement and strategy execution studies in South African military organisations.

5.2. FINDINGS

The findings of the study to be discussed will be broadly categorised into two groupings; employee engagement and strategy execution.

5.2.1 Employee engagement

The measurement of employee engagement in the SAAIF provided insight into the levels of engagement, problem areas and critical challenges that relate to the engagement of employees.

From the discussion in paragraph 4.3.2.3.2, it is clear that the majority of the respondents are indeed engaged in their work.

In contrast, about 32 percent of SAAIF employees are not engaged in their workplace. This level of disengagement can be attributable to a number of challenges that were identified in the study, which include:

5.2.1.1 Pride

Almost 80 percent of respondents feel proud and honoured to be part of the SAAIF, however, for a military organisation this not sufficient and is a cause for concern as military personnel are required to serve their country with pride, dignity and courage.

5.2.1.2 Commitment

A good indication of engagement is the willingness to go the extra mile for the organisation. Only, 41 percent of employees in the SAAIF are willing to go the extra mile for their organisation. This is alarming as military personnel are volunteers who have pledged to serve and defend their country regardless of the circumstances.

5.2.1.3 Rewards

Military enlistments are generally not money or rewards driven, but propelled by purpose for a greater good. However, the study found that 32 percent of employees in the SAAIF feel that money is more important than their jobs. This implies that 32 percent of the employees in the SAAIF are motivated by extrinsic factors. For an entity responsible for the national security of the country, having employees that are driven by financial rewards is a threat to security as these employees are prone to monetary persuasions.

5.2.1.4 Employee retention

As discussed in paragraph 4.3.2.3.3, most of the respondents constantly think about quitting their jobs. Additionally, as discussed in Chapter 2, employees do not leave organisations they leave managers. These findings signal low levels of job satisfaction, commitment and employee engagement in the SAAIF amongst the 42 percent of the respondents.

5.2.1.5 Manager-employee relationships

A sound manager relationship is based on trust. Without trust, most organisations are set to fail. In the SAAIF, about 32 percent of the respondents do not trust the information they receive from their supervisors. This level of mistrust has a negative impact on the manager-employee relationship required to build an environment conducive to employee engagement.

5.2.1.6 Effective communication

The study found that there exist high levels of communication in the SAAIF. That is, information easily shared and employees feel they can effortlessly transmit and receive information within the organisation. However, although effective in transmission, the majority of employees feel that they cannot trust the information received through these channels. In brief, this implies that there could be more than one line of communication in a single organisation, channels that are seen as trustworthy by employees.

5.2.1.7 Decision-making

Another challenge identified to employee engagement in the SAAIF is attributable to decision-making. Making decisions about one's work, empowers one with accountability. Of the respondents, about 25 percent of the respondents say that they do not make decisions about their work. This indicates a low level of autonomy and could indicate that there are high levels of micro managing which stymies employee engagement as discussed in paragraph 2.2.2.3.

5.2.2 Strategy execution

The significance of strategy execution to accomplish organisational objectives is highly acknowledged today. Successful strategy execution is a challenge in the SAAIF. Additionally, factors that hinder the successful execution of strategy in the SAAIF are:

5.2.2.1 Involvement in strategic planning

The study findings indicate that only 36 percent of employees in the SAAIF are involved in the creation of organisational strategies during the planning stages of strategies. This high exclusion of employees during the planning stages limits buy-in into the strategies and ultimately creates a challenge in relation to the successful execution of strategies.

5.2.2.2 Rewards and recognition

Reward and recognition although mostly extrinsic in nature, is an important managerial task that has profound effects if correctly applied to the engagement of employees in achieving goals and objectives that are strategic in nature. Only 6 percent of the respondents say they get rewards for good performance.

5.2.2.3 Clarity on organisational strategies

Of the respondents, most assert that their jobs are not linked to strategic objectives as discussed in chapter 4. This “missing link” between strategies and employee understanding of strategies, generally creates a situation where employees lack in-depth insight into how their day-to-day tasks are intertwined with the strategies of the organisation

5.2.2.4 Effective performance appraisals

A lack of effective and fair performance appraisals creates a negative climate, destructive to the successful execution of strategies. More than half of respondents are of the opinion that their good performances are not recognised in the SAAIF.

5.2.2.5. Communication of strategies

Managers should constantly communicate organisational strategies to subordinates to solicit a buy-in from them, as they are responsible for the execution of organisational strategies.

Only 26 percent of respondents say that their seniors communicate organisational strategies clearly to them.

5.2.2.6 Leadership

When respondents were asked about management and leadership, more than half of them, indicated that they trust their leaders, while the about 47 percent of them disagreed with the statement. Trust is a cornerstone upon which great working relations are created. It will prove difficult to succeed in executing strategies if only half of the workforce trusts and believes in their leaders.

5.2.2.7 Organisational mission and vision

Of the responses, the majority understand the mission and vision of the organisation. This exceptional level of understanding is contrasted with the fact that more than seventy percent of these respondents, feel that they do not have a clear understanding of the strategic goals. Although employees understand the mission and vision of the organisation, they will not be able to execute strategies, as they do not understand the strategic goals of the SAAIF.

5.2.2.8 Teamwork

When asked about the work ethics of fellow employees, as well as teamwork, more than half of the respondents are of the opinion that their fellow workers do not work hard enough. Additionally, half of the respondents do not view teamwork as important in executing their tasks, a rather disturbing finding as military organisations thrive on teamwork to achieve goals.

5.3. Recommendations

In order to successfully achieve organisational goals, execution processes in the SAAIF have to be fully aligned to employee actions and behaviours. Consequently, constantly engaging employees in the victories and losses of the organisation no matter how big or small enhances the reality of mission, vision statements and key

strategic objectives throughout the organisation. However, for SAAIF employees to be fully engaged in strategy execution activities, they must associate with the brand of the organisation. Brand awareness in the SAAIF can be done either through the use of extensive corporate branding strategies or through regular revivals of organisational traditions and culture. Admittedly, instilling a sense of patriotism in the SAAIF through the endorsement of military and national heroes/heroines and a positive portrayal of South Africa builds pride, which as a core value of the South African military enhances the patriotic stance of the military.

Furthermore, employees perform better when they know more, hence the alignment of organisational purposes to daily work activities will boost employee performance. Linking day to day work activities with strategic objectives and reviewing performances on a weekly and monthly basis will most likely boost organisational performance. Moreover, employees that are connected with their work roles are less likely to quit their jobs or leave their organisations. It is also equally important that the SAAIF develop and implement retention strategies to retain their best talent and to recruit the best in the country.

It is imperative that frequent compulsory teambuilding exercises be engaged in by all the employees in the SAAIF. Building teams and aligning projects with such teams to either solve problems, address issues or execute work improves strategy execution efforts. The SAAIF have to engage leaders and managers in educational and training programmes necessary to improve the relevance of leadership and managing skills in these modern times that are characterised by, rapidly changing environments and employee populations.

Additionally, managers and leaders in the SAAIF have to be trained and educated about the individual factors that determine engagement levels of a diversified workforce such as the one found in the SAAIF.

Communication has been identified as an important driver of strategy execution. Hence, the identification and elimination of informal communication lines in the SAAIF will help strengthen and improve communication.

Managers and leaders in the SAAIF have to communicate and translate complex strategic objectives to every employee in the organisation to create a buy-in and ensure that employees are engaged in strategy execution processes.

As discussed earlier in the study, autonomy is crucial in both strategy execution and employee engagement as it enables employees to execute their tasks related to organisational strategies. Autonomous behaviour is in most cases characterised by decentralised decision-making with little interference from leaders and managers.

Performance appraisals currently used in the SAAIF are not effective, hence a revision of the of the current systems is required with full consultation with all the stakeholders in building effective appraisal programmes. In summary, the SAAIF must conduct annual employee engagement surveys to measure progress and detect engagement problems as they arise as well as review strategies on a quarterly basis with focus on the of execution part.

5.4 CONCLUSION

The study revealed through literature review (Chapter 2), the importance of engaging employees in their workplace in an effort to sucessfully execute organisational strategies. Additionally, as discussed in paragraph 4.3.5.5, there is a significant positive correlation between employee engagement and strategy execution.

However, challenges and barriers to employee engagement and strategy execution respectively, were identified in chapter 4.

These challenges and impediments, it was found have a direct effect on the level of employees and the execution of strategies in the SAAIF. This said, by increasing the levels of employee engagement in the workplace, employees responsible for executing strategies can be more committed, motivated, proactive and engaged in the execution of their work.

This is the first employee engagement and strategy execution study ever to be conducted in the SAAIF.

Therefore, the study can be effectively used as a benchmark for further studies in the field of employee engagement and strategy execution at SAAIF. The researcher managed to collect and analyse data from all the 140 respondents as planned, with this in mind, it can be said that the study presented the true reflections of the views and opinions of employees in the SAAIF.

Employee engagement is a relatively new concept in the field of human resource and is foreign in the management field. With a unyielding approach to the positive effects of employee engagement and strategy execution discussed in this study, it is possible for leaders and managers to improve the performances of their employees and ultimately that of the organisations. Additionally, engaging employees in strategic issues will not only improve performance, but also create a buy-in that will grow the organisation and help retain talented employees.

Constantly testing the engagement levels of employees, will enable leaders to identify the levels of employee engagement with focus placed on disengaged employees that commonly impact negatively on organisational successes. Managers will be able to act accordingly, either by transforming disengaged employees into engaged ones or rooting them out of their organisations. In summary, this research successfully addressed the problem statement discussed in chapter 1 and fully addressed all the objectives.

References

- Amason, A. C., 2011. *Strategic management: from theory to practice*. New York: Routledge.
- Angel, R., 2008. Linking Execution with Strategy in support functions. *Ivey Business Journal*, pp. 1-8.
- Bakker, A. B., Schaufeli, W. B., Leiter, M. P. & Taris, T. W., 2008. Work engagement: An emerging concept in occupational health psychology. *Work and Stress*, 22(3), pp. 187-200.
- Bhuvanaiah, T. & Raya, R., 2014. Employee Engagement: Key to Organisational Success. *SCMS journal of Indian Management*, pp. 61-71.
- Bigler, J. W. R. & Williams, F. A., 2013. World-Class strategy execution through on the job leadership. *Business Studies Journal*, 5(1), pp. 95-112.
- Burns, N. & Grove, S. K., 2003. *Understanding nursing research*. 3rd ed. Philadelphia: Saunders Company.
- Cardus, M., 2013. The five levers of employee engagement. *The journal for quality and participation*, pp. 28-31.
- Cheese, P., 2014. Employee engagement: how is it changing and what drives it?. *The future of engagement: Thought piece collection*, pp. 6-14.
- Childress, J. R., 2013. *FASTBREAK: The CEO's Guide to Strategy Execution*. a pre print electronic version ed. UK: The Principia Group.
- Cook, S., 2015. Leading engagement. *The Training Journal*, pp. 33-36.
- Covey, S. R., 2006. *The 8th Habit from effectiveness to greatness*. London: Simon and Schuster UK Ltd.
- Dawson, J., 2014. Management Issues: Strategy is Easy, Execution is Tough. *The institute*, pp. 1-5.
- De Waal, J. & Pienaar, J., 2013. Towards understanding causality between work engagement and psychological capital. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, pp. 1-10.
- Flood, P., Dromgoole, T., Carrol, S. & Gorman, L., 2000. *Managing strategy implementation*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Gallup, 2012. *State of the Global Workplace report*, New York: Gallup.
- Hamm, J., 2011. *Unusually Excellent – The necessary nine skills required for the practice of great*. New York: Jossey-Bass, Wiley.

- Hartigan, M., 2015. strategy execution: the military provenance. *"Presentation to senior business executives"*, pp. 145-153.
- Haudan, J., 2007. Sucessful strategy execution takes people-not paper. *Employement relations today*, pp. 38-39.
- Hoole, C. & Bonnema, J., 2015. Work engagement and meaningful work across generational cohorts. *Journal of human resource management*, pp. 1-11.
- Hrebiniak, L. G., 2005. Business Strategy: Execution Is the Key. pp. 1-23.
- Kahn, W.A., 1990. Psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work. *Academy of Management Journal*, 33(4), pp. 692–724.
- Kataria, A., Garg, P. & Rastogi, R., 2013. "Organisational effectiveness as a function of employee engagement". *South Asian Journal of Management*, 20(4), pp. 56-73.
- Kathuira, R., 2012. Strategic execution. How thinking strategically will benefit your business. *Smart business Houston*, p. 6.
- Katoma, F. N., 2011. The role of middle managers in strategy execution: a case study of a Local Authority Council in Namibia. *Unisa Press*, pp. 31-35.
- Kotter, J. P., 1997. Conversations with John P. Kotter. *Strategy and leadership*, 25(1), pp. 18-23.
- Krejcie, R. & Morgan, D. W., 1970. Determining sample size for research activities. *Educational and psychological measurement*, Volume 30, pp. 607-610.
- Liberman, K., 2015. Loving their work: How managers impact employee engagement. *credit Union Management*, pp. 22-26.
- Macey, W. H. & Schneider, B., 2008. "The Meaning of Employee Engagement". *Industrial and Organisational Psychology*, 1(1), pp. 3-30.
- MacLennan, A., 2011. *Strategy execution translating strategy into action in complex organisations*. Newy York: Routledge.
- Mathis, L., 2013. 3 strategies of employee engagement. *EHS Today*, pp. 35-36.
- Mehta, D. & Mehta, N. K., 2013. Employee engagement: A literature review. *Economia. Seria Management*, pp. 209-215.
- Men, L. R., 2015. Employee Engagement in Relation to Employee-Organisation Relationships and Internal Reputation: Effects of Leadership Communication. *Public Relations Journal*, 9(2), pp. 1-22.

- Men, L. R. & Stacks, D. W., 2014. The effects of authentic leadership on strategic internal communication and employee-organisation relationships.. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 26(4), pp. 301-324.
- Mishra, K., Boynton, L. & Mishra, A., 2014. Driving Employee engagement: The expanded role of internal communication. *International journal of business communications*, 5(2), pp. 183-202.
- Mouton, J., 2009. *How to succeed in your Master's & Doctoral studies: A South African Guide and Resource Book*. 13th ed. Hatfield: Van Schaik Publishers.
- Oh, E., 2015. *Employee engagement targets - It's not just about picking a number*. Unknown: Human Resource Magazine.
- Olivier, A. J., 2015. Closing the strategy execution gap in the public sector. *Stellenbosch University*, pp. 1-251.
- Piña-Ramírez, W. & Dávila, N., 2014. What Drives Employee engagement? Its all about the "I". *The Public Manager*, pp. 6-9.
- Purcell, J., 2015. Time to focus on employee voice as a prime antecedent of engagement: Rediscovering the black box. *Employment Studies Journal*, pp. 21-25.
- Radomska, J., 2014. Model of succesful strategy execution: redefining the concept. *Problems of management in the 21st Century*, pp. 213-222.
- Rich, B., Lepine, J. & Crawford, E., 2010. Job engagement: Antecedents and effects on job performance. *Academy of Management Journal*, pp. 617-635.
- Robinson, D. & Gifford, J., 2014. The future of engagement: The thought piece collection. *Employment studies Journal*, pp. 1-93.
- Sahoo, C. K. & Mishra, S., 2012. A framework towards Employee engagement: The PSU Experience. *ASCI Journal of Management*, pp. 94-112.
- Schaufeli, W. B., Salanova, M., Gonzales-Roma, V. & Bakker, A. B., 2002. The measurement of engagement and burnout: A two sample confirmatory factor analytical approach. *Journal of hapiness studies*, Volume 3, pp. 71-92.
- Schuck, B. & Wollard, K. K., 2010. Employee engagement and HRD: A seminal review of the foundations. *Human Resource Development Review*, 9(1), pp. 89-110.
- Sekaran, U. & Bougie, R., 2009. *Research methods for business: A Skill Building Approach*. 5th ed. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
- Sharma, B. R. & Raina, A. D., 2013. Employee Engagement Predictors in the Indian Segment. *The Indian Journal of industrial relations*, 49(1), pp. 1-12.

- Sibson Consulting, 2015. [www.sibson.com](http://www.sibson.com/services/organisation-talent/strategy-execution/#all). [Online] available at: <http://www.sibson.com/services/organisation-talent/strategy-execution/#all> [Accessed 26 September 2015]
- Simmons, R., 2010. *Seven Strategy Questions*. Massachusetts: Harvard Business Review Press.
- Smith, S. & Ward, P., 2014. Strategy execution: Executing your strategy and achieving your results. *Quest Worldwide*, pp. 1-26.
- Soanea, E. et al., 2012. Development and application of a new measure of employee engagement: the ISA engagement. *Human Resource Development International*, pp. 529-547.
- Stockley, D., 2014. [www.derekstockely.com.au](http://www.derekstockely.com.au/newsletters-05/038-employee-engagement.html). [Online] available at: www.derekstockely.com.au/newsletters-05/038-employee-engagement.html [Accessed 26 September 2015].
- Sull, C., Homkes, R. & Sull, D., 2015. Why Strategy Execution Unravels—and What to Do About It. *Harvard business review*, pp. 58-66.
- Sull, D. L. & Ruelas-Gossi, A., 2010. Strategic orchestration. *Business strategy review*, Issue 4, pp. 58-63.
- Suri, N., 2014. A new engagement paradigm. *Human Capital*, pp. 54-56. unknown, n.d. Current human capital measures.
- Truss C, Alfes K, Delbridge R, Shantz A, Soane E (2013), 'Employee Engagement, Organisational Performance and Individual Wellbeing: Developing the Theory, Exploring the Evidence', editorial introduction to special issue, *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, Vol. 24, no. 14, pp. 2657-2669
- Vosloban, R. I., 2015. Employee engagement concept- A theoretical and practical approach. *Contemporary readings in law and social justice*, 5(2), pp. 759-765.
- Watson, G. H., 2005. Design and Execution of a collaborative business strategy. *The Journal for Quality & Participation*, pp. 4-9.
- Walker, S., 2012. *Employee engagement and communication research*. London: Kogan Page, pp. 102-108

• 2

Department:
Defence

SA ARMY INF FMN/R/302/3/9

Department of Defence
SA Army Infantry Formation
Private Bag X172
Pretoria
0001
28 May 2015

Enclosure: Chapter 1 (Research proposal)

1. I, 00035659 MC Capt K.M Pholoba, humbly request permission to conduct quantitative research with employees of the South African Army Infantry Formation.
2. In fulfilment of my Master's degree, i am required to conduct a field study in my work environment aimed at identifying a problem that the study should attempt to solve or improve.
3. The topic I chose as thoroughly explained in the enclosure of Chapter 1 pertains to the successful execution of well thought and drafted strategic plans of the SA Army Infantry Formation. Additionally, the study adopts a human resource approach where it identifies the employees of the SA Army Infantry Formation as the important drivers of all the strategic plans formulated.
4. The instrument to be used is a questionnaire that will be administered to respondents. The instrument will allow for anonymity, confidentiality and an objective outlook. The sample population required to gather the data is 140 as scientifically calculated from a population of more than 240 members currently in the SA Army Infantry Formation. The questionnaire is not rank specific but Senior Staff Officer are excluded in the sample group as they form part of the senior management and are therefore regarded as implementers not drivers of the strategies for the purpose of this research.
5. I hope and trust that my request will be kindly taken into consideration, in light of development, learning and contributing to the improvement of the work environment in the SA Army Infantry Formation.

(K.M. PHOLOBA)

SO3 RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT SA ARMY INFANTRY FORMATION: CAPT



1. *Unggah a Bampantani* - Uungah a wongkaWuwu. Kaga ya Tumbutan. Uhehe a Khamu. Department of Culture, Manado wa Tumbes.
 2. *Uungah a WengkaWuwu* - Uungah a wongkaWuwu. Kaga ya Tumbutan. Uhehe a Khamu. Department of Culture, Manado wa Tumbes.

APPENDIX B: LETTER OF AUTHORITY

RESTRICTED



Defence Intelligence

Department:

Defence

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DI/SDCI/DDS/R/202/3/7

Telephone: (012) 315-0216
Fax: (012) 326-3246
Enquiries: Brig Gen M. Sizani

Defence Intelligence
Private Bag X367
Pretoria
0001
14 July 2015

AUTHORITY TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE (DOD): CAPT K.M. PHOLOBA

1. Request letter SA ARMY INF FMN/R/302/3/9 dd 07 July 2015 has reference.
2. Capt K.M. Pholoba is hereby granted permission from a security perspective to conduct research in the DOD on the topic entitled **"Employee Engagement in Strategy Execution at the South African Army Infantry Formation"** as a prerequisite for an attainment of a Masters Degree in Business Administration under the tutelage of the University of Free State as requested.
3. On completion the final research product must be submitted to Defence Intelligence (DI), Sub-Division Counter Intelligence (SDCI) for scrutiny before it is released to any entity outside the DOD.
4. For your attention.

(G.S. SIZANI)

CHIEF DIRECTOR COUNTER INTELLIGENCE: MAJ GEN

KS/KS (Capt K.M. Pholoba)

DSTR

For Action

OC SA Army Infantry Formation

(Attention: Capt K.M. Pholoba)

Internal

File: DI/SDCI/DDS/202/3/7



Lefapha la Boqhemelo . Umnyango wezokuVivela . Kgoro ya Tshireletso . iSebe lezoKhusele . Department of Defence . Mutsho wa Tshelezo
UmNyango WozokuVivela . Ndzwelo ya nzi Vusireheleni . Lefapha la Tshireletso . Departement van Verdediging . LaTsho leTshelezo

RESTRICTED

APPENDIX C: QUESTIONNAIRE

ENGAGEMENT RESEARCH 2015

SECTION A

Please encircle ☐ the correct answer.

Rank	
Major – Lieutenant Colonel	1
Candidate Officer – Captain	2
Staff Sergeant – Warrant Officer	3
Lance Corporal – Sergeant	4
Public Service Act Personnel/Civilian	5

Age Group	
56 Years – 65 Years	1
46 Years – 55 Years	2
36 Years – 45 Years	3
18 Years – 35 Years	4

Gender	
Male	1
Female	2

Years in the military	
31 Years and above	1
21 Years – 30 Years	2
11 Years – 20 Years	3
0 Years – 10 Years	4

Educational Background	
Post Graduate degree	1
Bachelor's degree	2
Grade 1 – Grade 12	3

ENGAGEMENT RESEARCH 2015

SECTION B

Please encircle ☐ only one answer.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I am proud of the work that I do.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I look forward to coming to work each day.	1	2	3	4	5
3. My job means a lot more to me than just money.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Time flies when I am working.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I will stay overtime and finish a job even if I am not paid for it.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I make important decisions about my work.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I contribute to solving problems that arise in my work.	1	2	3	4	5
8. My ideas are always listened to	1	2	3	4	5
9. My job is an important part of my life.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I frequently think about quitting my job and leaving this organisation.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I have a good working relationship with my senior/supervisor	1	2	3	4	5
12. I communicate well with everyone in my section.	1	2	3	4	5
13. My seniors/supervisors value the work that I do.	1	2	3	4	5
14. My daily tasks are in line with the strategy of the organisation.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I trust the information that I receive from my senior/supervisor	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION C

Please encircle ☐ only one answer.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I understand the vision and mission of my organisation.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I am involved in the creation of strategic goals of the organisation.	1	2	3	4	5
3. My day-to-day work activities are directly linked to strategic goals.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I am an asset to the organisation.	1	2	3	4	5
5. My performance at work is always recognised.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I have the necessary skills to do my job well.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I get rewarded for good performance.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Most people in my organisation are hard workers.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I am well trained and developed to do my job well.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I trust and believe in my leaders.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I do not have the necessary tools I need to do my job well.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I want to achieve great things for myself and the organisation.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Teamwork is not important in day to day tasks.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Organisational strategies are clearly communicated by seniors.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Change is good as it promotes growth in the organisation.	1	2	3	4	5

THIS PAGE WAS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK