

**Mastering process hurdles to strategy execution**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Strategy and strategy implementation are hot topics in corporates all over the world. Companies put in place strategies to define how they will do business and with the hope of gaining an advantage in the marketplace. However, research has revealed that over 60% strategies fail due to poor strategy implementation. It has been said that even the best strategy is bound to fail if it is not implemented. There are varied reasons why companies fail to effectively implement their strategies. In particular, effective strategy implementation can have a great impact on company performance. The aim of this paper is to explore reasons for strategy implementation and explore the possibility of using business process management as a potential vehicle to address strategy implementation challenges. Earlier studies on strategy implementation have not dwelt much on the subject of business process management in strategy implementation. The researcher conducted a qualitative study with 12 interview participants from different organisations, different countries and different industries. The results revealed that business process management can be useful to assist organisations to solve their strategy implementation challenges. Business process management provides a useful framework for organisations to adopt in order to simplify strategy implementation by defining the strategy into the business process management life cycle.

## **KEYWORDS**

Strategy

Strategy management process

Strategy implementation

Business process management

BPM lifecycle

## **DECLARATION**

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

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**Gcinekile Nkambule**

**15 November 2022**

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Strategy implementation is about the creation of unique and sustainable value for an organisation. It is a major step in strategy management (Kerpedzhiev, König, Röglinger, & Rosemann, 2021). Research on the subject has clearly established that effective strategy implementation is beneficial for business success in the long run (Zaidi, Zawawi, Nordin and Ahnuar 2018). However, there are conflicting views and an overall lack of research regarding the subject of strategy implementation in a highly dynamic environment where subject knowledge is rapidly and continuously evolving. The aim of this chapter is to explore the most prominent reasons for failure in strategy implementation and explore business process management as a potential vehicle to address strategy implementation challenges (König, Linhart, & Röglinger, 2019). This chapter will provide an introduction to the study by first discussing the background and context, followed by the research problem, the research aims and objectives, the significance and finally the limitations.

### **1.2 Background**

Business strategy is a set of management choices and actions that is believed would translate into improved company performance. Strategy can also be used for repositioning and transforming an organisation for better performance. Naturally, strategic planning has been defined as the creation of a unique competitive advantage by forming a strong market position based on distinctively defined capabilities (Zapletalová, 2022). Once a strategy is formulated it must then be implemented. Strategy implementation has been defined as an iterative, intricate and dynamic process encompassing a variety of activities aimed at turning strategic plans into reality in order to achieve strategic objectives (Tawse & Tabesh, 2021). Accordingly, effective strategy implementation is defined according to the extent to which an organisation's implemented strategy corresponds to its strategic intentions (Tawse & Tabesh, 2021).

Processes in addition to structure are a cornerstone to strategy implementation (Rentes, de Padua, Coelho, Cintra, Ilana and Rozenfeld, 2019). Therefore, how processes are performed (Teece, 2020) determines the performance of the company and the overall achievement of its strategic objectives (Gębczyńska, 2016). Companies are often in search of means of exploiting their internal capabilities to achieve strategic goals (Ferreira, Neto & Batista, 2019). The concept of business process management can assist in strategy



implementation by improving the integration of strategy and business processes (Gębczyńska, 2016). Adopting a process-oriented approach to strategy implementation ensures that strategic objectives are coordinated and integrated into existing functions into a capable coherent system (Gębczyńska, 2016).

Business Process Management, (BPM), on the other hand, may be referred to as the art and science of monitoring how cross-functional work is carried out in companies in order to provide consistent results and take advantage of improvement possibilities (Dumas, La Rosa, Mendling, & Reijers, 2018). Two goals are pursued by BPM: enhancing business processes and growing the BPM capabilities (Rosemann, 2014). BPM includes tasks like identifying, defining, modeling, implementing, carrying out, overseeing, managing, improving, and innovating business processes from a lifecycle viewpoint (Dumas et al. 2018). BPM offers a framework for productive and efficient work because it encompasses all business processes inside an organization. Business processes, which make up the core unit of analysis in BPM, are made up of actions that participants and resources take in order to produce beneficial results for consumers (Dumas et al. 2018). Despite opposing empirical evidence, BPM research has long operated under the implicit premise that business processes can be thoroughly characterised in terms of process models prior to execution and that they are carried out exactly as specified. A paradigm breakthrough that further sparked study on process deviance was the recognition of business processes as drifting information structures with partially emerging behavior that cannot be fully controlled by process managers (König, Linhart, & Röglinger, 2019).

The integration of BPM to the strategy implementation process could provide the much-needed solution. As this study is not limited to a specific industry, companies in different industries can adopt the learnings from this research for use in their own industries for better understanding of strategy implementation obstacles and improve on their own implementation. Process can be defined as a method of converting inputs into outputs (Vugec, Ivančić and Glavan, 2019). In the case of a business, it is organised actions that utilise resources in a reliable, repeatable and constant manner with the aim of achieving business objectives (Vugec et al., 2019). In that way, business processes are a key element in strategy implementation (Tatic, Mahir, and Merima, 2018).

A successful company is one that is able to clearly define and effectively implement its strategic plans. Therefore, a fundamental premise of business performance is ability to implement on strategic plans which ensures that all strategic goals are achieved and

strategic capabilities fully exploited to gain competitive advantage (Teece, 2020). Between 70 to 90 percent of companies fail to realise the benefit of implementing their strategies (Merkus, Willems & Veenwijk, 2019). It is no doubt that Organisations formulate strategies to define how they intend to compete (Tawse, Patrick, and Vera, 2019). However, success of strategy as alluded above rests on its successful implementation (Zaidi et al., 2018). Very often organisations place more emphasis on formulation as opposed to strategy implementation (Tawse et al., 2019). It is quite clear that many organisations find it difficult to transition from strategy formulation to strategy implementation (Wołczek, 2018). Several researchers have confirmed that strategy implementation is a complex task and requires proper planning and a well outlined process (Wołczek, 2018).

Research reveals that strategy implementation comprises two variables, management skills and organisational structures (Crittenden & Crittenden, 2008a; Wołczek, 2018). Managerial skills include providing leadership, allocating resources, monitoring performance, and defining the corporate culture. Structural variables include actions to be taken, programs to be put in place, systems, policies, communication and monitoring (Wołczek, 2018). Research also reveals that there are four operational factors that affect strategy implementation which include, availability of resources, communication, operational planning and feedback (Obeidat, Al-Hadidi, Tarhini, and Masa'deh, 2017). Several researchers have confirmed that strategy implementation is a complex task and requires proper planning and a well outlined process (Wołczek, 2018). Research shows a gap in providing a comprehensive approach for strategy implementation (Tawse et.al., 2019). Past research has not paid much attention to the strategy implementation process (Tawse, & Tabesh, 2021). Many researchers on the subject have requested for more studies on strategy implementation to expand understanding of the concept and perhaps come up with working solutions for companies (Vigfússon, Johannsdottir and Olafsson, 2021).

### **1.3 Research problem**

Between 60% to 90% of strategy execution efforts are unsuccessful (Amoo, Hiddlestone-Mumford, Ruzibuka and Akwei, 2019). Similarly, research reveals a high failure rate of BPM initiatives (Rentas et al., 2018). Alignment of BPM with strategy is a critical success factor for company success (Rentas et al., 2018). It has been found that by finding ways or exploiting their internal capabilities in line with the organisation's strategy companies would be able to achieve better performance (Ferreira et al., 2019). In that case BPM provides a systematic approach to these issues and improves the ability to meet strategic objectives (Ferreira et al., 2019). Organisational performance increases when companies adopted a process oriented approach to strategy implementation (Ferreira et al., 2019).

There are various reasons why companies fail to implement their strategies (Obeidat et al., 2017a). The most prominent reason is management's failure to invest adequate resources and energy to ensure strategy implementation. This is a natural result because of the complex nature of strategy implementation (Obeidat et al., 2017a). In addition, leaders often fail to realise that strategy implementation involves well-orchestrated management processes (Baroto, Arvand, and Ahmad, 2014). Factors affecting effective strategy implementation can be divided into three (Ivancic, 2013). Firstly, there are soft factors which involve people, communication, consensus and commitment. Secondly, there are hard factors which are made of the institutional situations including organisational structure and administration systems. The Third factor is the mixed factor which involves the strategy itself and interdepartmental or business unit relations (Ivancic, 2013). A recent study argued that barriers to effective strategy implementation may be associated with poor resourcing, structure, culture, politics, stakeholders, infrastructural set-up and the extent of government involvement and regulation (Eresia-Eke & Soriakumar, 2021) The six silent killers can broadly be classified as soft killers.

Further, as mentioned above concerning strategy implementation variables and operational factors, it is clear that people and the way they behave is a key barrier to strategy implementation (Brinkschröder, 2014). Poor leadership, and lack of communication are among the top barriers related to people (Chaimankong & Prasertsakul, 2018). Poor leadership and lack of communication also speak to the problem of strategy transfer to lower levels (Gębczyńska, 2016). Leaders often fail to translate strategy into operating activities which speaks to process barriers to strategy implementation (Gębczyńska, 2016). Another key issue is ensuring that the company has at its disposal the relevant methods and tools that will guide the strategy implementation process (Wołczek, 2018). It is quite clear that many organisations find it difficult to transition from strategy formulation to strategy implementation (Wołczek, 2018). Several researchers have confirmed that strategy implementation is a complex task and requires proper planning and a well outlined process (Wołczek, 2018). On that note, poor management of business processes and the absence of a methodical approach has been found to increase efficiency and therefore inhibit effective strategy implementation (Kasim et al., 2018).

Many organisations are battling with the question of how to increase their strategy implementation capability in the VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous) world

(Amoo, Mumford, Ruzibuka and Akwei, 2019). Research shows a gap in providing a comprehensive approach for strategy implementation (Tawse, Patrick, & Vera, 2019). Past research has not paid much attention to the strategy implementation process (Tawse, & Tabesh, 2021). Many researchers on the subject have requested for more studies on strategy implementation to expand understanding of the concept and perhaps come up with working solutions for companies (Vigfússon et al., 2021). In addition, research reveals that BPM often fails because of poor alignment with strategy. It is said that research associated with strategy in BPM is insubstantial therefore signifying a demand for research on strategy and BPM (Rentes et al., 2018). However, there is a dearth of research on the concept of BPM aligned to strategy implementation.

The primary reason for corporate failure apart from executive corruption is poor strategy implementation (Ivancic, 2013). Despite investment of resources in strategic planning, it is unfortunate that many strategies fail due to poor or no implementation (Merkus et al., 2019). According to Crittenden and Crittenden, (2008) companies realise only 63% of their financial performance related to strategy and about 34% of the strategy actually gets implemented (Baroto et al., 2014). It is reported that about 90% of companies fail to implement their strategic plans (Obeidat et al., 2017). Further, between 70 to 90 percent of companies fail to realise the benefit of implementing their strategies (Merkus et al., 2019). It is no doubt that Organisations formulate strategies to define how they intend to compete (Tawse, Patrick, and Vera, 2019). However, success of strategy as alluded above rests on its successful implementation (Zaidi et al., 2018). Very often organisation place more emphasis on formulation as opposed to strategy implementation (Tawse et al., 2019). Researchers opine that it would be much better to effectively execute a second-grade strategy than to have a poorly executed first grade strategy (Alharthy, Abdullah & Rashid, 2017). A world class strategy that is not or poorly implemented is of no value to an organisation.

#### **1.4 Research aims and objectives**

The aim of the study is to explore strategy execution process hurdles and investigate the possibility of introducing business process management as a vehicle for achieving optimum strategy execution. The benefits of finding a solution would help organisations to leverage business process management as a vehicle to overcoming the complexity of strategy execution. The purpose of this research is to highlight obstacles to strategy implementation and further find out the impact of BPM in improving strategy implementation.

The aim of the study is to explore strategy execution hurdles and investigate the possibility of introducing business process management as a vehicle for achieving optimum strategy execution. The benefits of finding a solution would help organisations to leverage business process management as a vehicle to overcoming the complexity of strategy execution. BPM can be viewed as an enabler of business performance and thus its adoption has increased in a number of organisations (Syed, Bandara, French, & Stewart, 2018). However, similar to strategy implementation businesses have often failed to achieve the required results (Syed et al., 2018a). The number one obstacle for BPM implementation is management's failure to integrate it with strategy. Therefore, the researcher believes organisations would achieve enormous success by adopting BPM into the strategy management process. While ensuring that the strategy gets implemented it would also release the pressure on management of not having a way to transfer the strategy to the lower levels as that would be addressed by BPM.

### **1.5 Research significance**

Strategy execution is aimed at improving organizational performance (Zaidi et.al., 2018). Getting strategy execution right has enormous benefits to the organisation and its stakeholders. Further, efficient management of processes is fundamental to strategy implementation (Gębczyńska, 2016). It cannot be denied that there is a need to guide the actions of organisations in order to assist them to achieve their strategic objectives and thus outperform in the marketplace (Ferreira et al., 2019). This study will contribute to theory development by means of exploring two management methods with the aim of achieving successful implementation of strategy (Ferreira, et al., 2019). Therefore this study will serve as a source of research in the subject of strategy implementation and business process management.

Processes in addition to structure are a cornerstone to strategy implementation (Rentes et al., 2018). Therefore, how processes are performed determines the performance of the company and the overall achievement of its strategic objectives (Gębczyńska, 2016). Companies are often in search of means of exploiting their internal capabilities to achieve strategic goals (Ferreira, Neto, and Batista. 2019). The integration of BPM to the strategy implementation process could provide the much-needed solution. As this study is not limited to a specific industry, companies in different industries can adopt the learnings from this research for use in their own industries for better understanding of strategy implementation obstacles and improve on their own implementation.

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implementation (Gębczyńska, 2016). It cannot be denied that there is a need to guide the actions of organisations in order to assist them to achieve their strategic objectives and thus out perform in the market place (Ferreira et al., 2019).

### **1.6 Limitations of the study**

Qualitative research is marred with a number of limitations. Firstly, qualitative research studies have an inherent risk of researcher bias. Secondly, the research findings from qualitative research are often deemed not measurable or provable. Another limitation is that qualitative research was not easy to repeat and therefore difficult to generalise findings from the sample to the population. Also, there was a possibility of participants misrepresenting information with the aim of painting a good picture on their work. Lastly, qualitative research by its very nature is subjective therefore making it difficult to investigate causation of identified problems. The study was a cross-sectional study, which limited the researcher to extend different intervals for the research and further observations.

The following specific limitations of this research study were noted:

- i. Sampling followed a non-probability sampling base from the researcher's professional network therefore compromising the study's generalisation possibilities.
- ii. The researcher's experience level in conducting semi-structured interviews and analysing qualitative data was limited to the current study.
- iii. Some interviews were conducted virtually therefore limiting the opportunity to detect non-verbal cues such as discomfort on specific discussions therefore limiting these to word choice and tone of voice.
- iv. The researcher was personally acquainted with the interview participants which could have influenced the depth to which the participants offered information perceived as negative.

### **1.7 Report outline**

#### **Chapter One**

This section introduces this entire report, with sections such as background and problem statement amplifying what needs to be investigated. The argument will be based on the rationale for using Business Process Management in strategy implementation for organisational effectiveness.

## **Chapter Two**

The central focus of this chapter is in-depth discussion of secondary research with a funnel approach to trends, events, and practices from a global to local perspectives. Theoretical frameworks are examined in this chapter and gaps are identified, which gives rise to the need for this investigation. Empirical literature review focusses on current literature and links this to seminal works on both strategy implementation and business process management. A critical analysis and synthesis is presented in a logical and coherent manner to support the rationale for the conceptualization of this research.

## **Chapter Three**

The third chapter deals with the research questions which are developed from the literature review. These research questions are pivotal in bounding the study to the desired outcome, including the strategy and procedures for the entire research.

## **Chapter Four**

This chapter presents the research methodology and the associated research design. The procedure to this investigation is primarily hinged upon the Research Onion, providing research paradigms and traditions pursued in this study, with justifications for choices.

## **Chapter Five**

The fifth section is the analysis of results found from the data collection. Analytical procedures are discussed, findings presented with excerpts from the participants in a topical and logical fashion. The section ends with a presentation of emerging themes, which are discussed in the next chapter.

## **Chapter Six**

This chapter discusses the findings and provides a nexus between literature review and research questions. These findings provide a basis for contents of chapter 7, which is the final chapter of the report.

## **Chapter Seven**

This chapter deliberations on principal conclusions, theoretical conclusions, implications for practice and recommendations.

## **1.8 Conclusion**

This section culminates in the end of the orientation chapter. In this chapter, an argument was presented for the study, supported by articulation of the research problems and the aims and objectives. Furthermore, the significance of the study was presented, demonstrating the contribution to existing knowledge. Lastly, limitations were presented to inform the research community the extent this investigation sought to respond to the research questions. The next chapter focusses on Literature Review.



## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This section analyses previous studies dealing with strategy implementation and business process management as a means of finding out how business process management (BPM) could be used for effective strategy implementation. The chapter starts by discussing strategy in general paying particular attention to the strategy management process. Thereafter, strategy implementation is defined and obstacles hindering implementation are analysed. Next, business processes are defined and analysed in their connection to strategy. Finally, it is an investigation of business process management and how it could be applied to improve strategy implementation. The approach to this chapter was linked to research objectives, which were:

- i. The main hurdles affecting strategy execution
- ii. The contextual factors that bring about strategy implementation hurdles
- iii. The role of business process management in improving strategy implementation

The flow of the research starts by contextual description of key variables that underpin the research investigation.

### **2.2 Contextual definition of key variables**

#### **2.2.2 Corporate strategy**

Different scholars have made an attempt in defining the term strategy (Zapletalová, 2022). What is common in most definitions is that strategy involves matching available resources, skills, risk mitigation and opportunities with the goals and objectives of the organisation (Thompson, 2013; Zapletalová, 2022). It therefore follows that strategy's main mandate is guiding and providing direction for the events of the organisation. Organisations make strategic choices and define strategy according to their purpose and the surrounding environment which choices also allows them to compete in the business arena (Zapletalová, 2022). In addition, strategy has been defined as a combined and incorporated corporate plan that is put in place to guarantee accomplishment of corporate goals. Other scholars have defined strategy as a concept that is meant to unite the organisation's objectives, actions and policies into a cohesive whole (Tawse, & Tabesh, 2021). Furthermore, strategy

has been defined as the origin of remarkable and susceptible setting of tradeoffs in competition (Porter, 2016). Moreover, strategy is defined as the scope and direction of a business over the long run that attains the benefit for the business through its alignment of the required resources and fulfills the company's purpose (Mailu, Ntale, Ngui, 2018).

Strategy is the plan that an institution uses to achieve its objectives, conduct its operations, position itself in the market place and attract and retain customers successfully (Obeidat et. Al., 2017). The ultimate goal of strategy is to assist the organisation build its long-term competitive advantage while achieving financial performance. Formulating a consistent strategy is a difficult task however, strategy implementation is more difficult. Strategy implementation is the processes that operationalises the strategy that has been formulated to achieve strategic objectives (Obeidat et. Al., 2017).

Strategy formulation is a key practice in companies, and it is what creates a difference between winners and losers (Whittle & Carter, 2020). Strategy formulation is about making choices, and it involves all the related actions that business leaders take to win against competitors (Khalifa, 2020). Similarly, strategy describes the goals and objectives of the organisation and provides direction in order to achieve a competitive advantage. Khalifa, (2019) says there are two functions of strategy, firstly, it is about creating power to win and lastly about supporting that power to win. Essentially, once a strategy is formulated it needs to be implemented (Zaidi et al., 2018). This means that once choices have been made, the organisation needs to align its actions and behaviours to those choices. Strategy is therefore, a processual and repetitive activity (Whittle & Carter, 2020). It consists of three processes being, planning or formulation, implementation and lastly control.

Strategy implementation is the second step in the strategy formulation process as the value of a strategy can only be seen through proper implementation (Rentes et al., 2018). Strategy implementation is the action stage where strategies are turned into action plans (Zaidi et al., 2018). Although strategy formulation is important for organisations, it is successful implementation that really gives companies a competitive advantage (Verweire, 2018). A well-formulated strategy that is not implemented or being poorly implemented will not amount to anything (Verweire, 2018). However, research has found that about over sixty percent of strategies are not properly implemented (Amoo, et al., 2019). Strategy implementation is said to be hard therefore resulting in companies failing to implement their strategies. Implementation is viewed as an integration of administrative activities and putting in place processes to attain strategic goals. Business processes are therefore a key element of strategy implementation (Verweire, 2018). Successful implementation of strategy involves ensuring that processes are aligned to the company's strategy (Gębczyńska, 2016).

### **2.2.2 Strategy management process**

The process of strategy management involves three levels, strategy definition or planning, strategy implementation and lastly, monitoring and reporting (Ivančić, 2013). However, many strategies do not usually go past the planning stage and even if they do, more often successful implementation is rarely achieved. One of the reasons for strategy implementation failure is the lack of practical models to guide leadership and staff actions as they go about implementing strategy (Ivančić, 2013). Further, Ivančić (2013), opines that research revealed that only about 10% of strategies were successfully implemented. Strategy is developed to provide a guide on how the entity will conduct its business to achieve an advantage over its competitors (Ivančić, 2013).

The first phase of strategy management is the definition of the mission and vision (Khalifa, 2020). The second phases consists of translating the strategy into operating activities. This phase requires definition of strategic themes and objectives and selection of measures and setting targets. This then results in the draw up of operational plans which also entail the enhancements envisaged in the scope of key processes. The third stage is strategy implementation of processes and initiatives based on the strategic and operational plans. Thereafter comes the monitoring phase where indicators are monitored and reported. The final stage entails testing and adjusting the existing solutions and a continuous search for new alternatives (Gębczyńska, 2016). The key elements of strategy implementation are business processes and organisational units. Efficient implementation of any strategy consists in ensuring that the structure and processes internally match the strategy envisaged (Whittle & Carter, 2020).

### **2.2.3 Strategy formulation and planning**

Strategy formulation involves strategic policy definition which includes, mission determination and setting the strategic objectives. As highlighted above, the process of strategy implementation is about allocation of resources and carrying out of strategic initiatives. It follows that strategy evaluation is about evaluation of activities after implementation to test achievement of strategic goals.

It has been said that strategy formulation is difficult however, strategy implementation is even more difficult than formulation (Cândido & Santos, 2019). There are several reasons that have been cited on why strategies fail, some researchers have suggested that organisational

structure, communication, coordination and reward systems as the primary reasons for failure in strategy implementation (Baker & Singh, 2019). It has been suggested that there are two dimensions to strategy implementation, the structural view and the interpersonal process view. The structural view refers to the structure of the organization and control mechanisms. On the other hand, the interpersonal process view is about consensus, behaviours, organisational climate and interaction processes. Similarly, for successful strategy implementation, there are two main factors, people-oriented factors and institutional factors. People oriented factors include, communication, consensus and commitment. The institutional factors include the organisational structure and the administrative system (Ivančić, 2013).

#### **2.3.4 Strategy implementation**

From the reading of the literature it is clear that poor strategy implementation is the leading reason why strategies fail. As mentioned above, over sixty percent of strategies fail due to poor implementation. However, literature has not given a clear distinction between strategy implementation and strategy execution as the terms have been synonymously used by different scholars (Vigfússon et al., 2021). Therefore, in this study the researcher will also be using the terms synonymously as done by previous researchers. There are several factors that affect effective strategy implementation. There are both internal and external factors. External factors include among others the economic environment, competitors and technology advancements. On the other hand, internal factors include among others, culture, organisational structure, communication and leadership. The focus of this research is on the internal factors with particular analyses of the organisational structure on the process aspect. Most early researchers did not pay attention to strategy implementation, but focused more on strategy formulation (Olson, Slater & Hult, 2005). As a result, business leaders felt they were left on their own to figure out how strategy could be implemented. This therefore indicates that the problem of strategy implementation is still as important today as it was 20 years ago.

Strategy implementation is an essential element in business strategy as true results of a well formulated strategy can only be realised through effective strategy implementation. Similarly, successful strategy implementation is dependent on the existence of a clear well formulated strategy (Zaidi et al., 2018). Research has found that obstacles to strategy implementation are the same for different type of organisations as studies from different companies in different industries all gave similar results (Vigfússon et al., 2021). Therefore, strategy implementation is about curving and forming organisational structures to align with the

corporate strategy (Merkus et al., 2019). Moreover, strategy works to initiate a new way of doing things that changes the organisation to be in a position to achieve its strategic objectives. Effective strategy execution requires the coordinated efforts of everyone in the organisation which makes it a very difficult thing to achieve (Teece, 2020). The interlink between strategy, structure and behaviour was also confirmed.

The essence of the strategy implementation problem is the mutual tuning of individual components to a more systematic conformity so that functions complement one another and trigger the synergy effect (Gębczyńska, 2016). It is through coordination that an internal environment favourable for accomplishment of strategic objectives is created (Feldman, 2020). Every strategy requires that it be first designed and then implemented.

## **2.3 The main hurdles affecting strategy execution**

### **2.3.1 Strategy implementation vs Strategy Formulation**

According to recent studies, implementing strategy appears to be more crucial than formulating it (Balarezo, 2017); yet, implementing strategy is more challenging than formulating it. This is primarily due to the fact that execution is more challenging and time-consuming. However, managers devote less time, effort, and money to the execution phase (Bolboli & Reiche, 2013). We can see a distinction between the scope of strategy execution and implementation in the literature. Strategy execution aims to turn implemented strategy into commercial success. As a result, strategy execution has a wider and more quantifiable viewpoint, which Bossidy and Charan also confirm (2011). The execution perspective was used as the research in this article examined revenue dynamics and the accomplishment of strategic goals.

Depending on the study approach used, between 50 and 90% of developed solutions were either not implemented or were realized with subpar results. The absence of a research protocol has led to the suggestion made by Cândido and Santos, (2015) that "part of the material supporting these statistics is obsolete, incomplete, lacks scientific rigor, or is plain lacking." An examination of the significance of the elements contributing to unsuccessful strategy implementation reveals the same incoherence. The gap between strategy formulation and implementation has received a lot of attention in publications (Khalifa, 2020), indicating that the issue of strategy execution failure is still a significant and ongoing challenge.

Though numerous execution obstacles (the things that prevent strategy execution) are revealed by the research, most of them are universal and do not vary depending on the type of organization that was examined because they are found in both private and public institutions (Whittle & Carter, 2020). In light of this, numerous models, concepts, and paradigms have been put forth. The majority of them share a similar set of convergent factors, though occasionally their names or range may vary. The relationships and interconnections between the issues impeding strategy execution, as outlined by Radomska & Kozyra (2020), merit greater consideration.

Therefore, the purpose of this section of the literature review is to examine the connections between strategy execution hurdles and comprehend their impact on performance as assessed by the achievement of strategic goals (as one strategy execution metric, as seen by managers), and revenue dynamics (a financial measure).

#### **2.4 The contextual factors that bring about strategy implementation hurdles**

Six silent killers to strategy implementation were identified by Beer and Eisenstat (2000) with the aim of assisting managers to confront and overcome these challenges and thus improve their organisational performance. The first killer was top-down or laissez-fair management. Secondly, unclear strategy and conflicting priorities. Thirdly, an ineffective senior management and fourthly, poor vertical communication. In fifth place was poor coordination across functions. Sixth and last was inadequate down the line leadership skills and development.

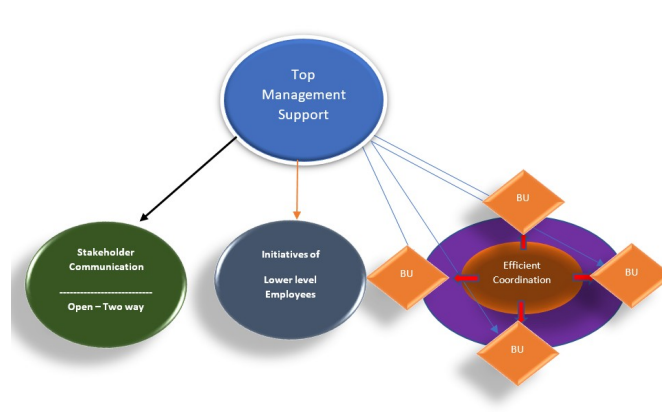
It has been said that strategy implementation must not be viewed as an opponent but rather an ally that needs to be embraced to improve organisational performance (Gębczyńska, 2016). Managers must realize that there are appropriate levers that can be pulled to improve strategy implementation. On that note, ten levers to strategy implementation have been identified (Doeleman, van Dun, & Wilderom, 2021) .

There are two main variables to strategy implementation, structures, and managerial skills (Gębczyńska, 2016). Structures include organisational configuration that enables effective operation while managerial skills speak to the behavioural activities of the managers within the structures. Strategy implementation occurs within an organisational structure and is carried out through managerial skills. The ten levers are divided into structure and skills (Crittenden & Crittenden, 2008). Structural levers include, actions, programs, systems and

policies. On the other hand skills programs include interacting, allocating, monitoring and organising Gębczyńska, 2016).

According to numerous studies, the strategy implementation process incorporates a number of intangible aspects, such as top management support for initiatives taken by lower-level employees, open and two-way communication, and efficient coordination within organizational units (Bandara et al. 2005). The conceptual flow of these intangible aspects is demonstrated in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1 Intangible Factors that affect strategy implementation (created by author)**



The intangibles integration model presented in Figure 1 necessitates modifications in resource distribution, task delegation, and organizational structure. These elements link the existing organisational system with the processes developed for plan execution (Whittle & Carter, 2020).

Accordingly, about 11 key implementation factors have been identified: strategy development, environmental uncertainty, organisational structure, organisational culture, leadership, operational planning, resource allocation, stakeholder communication, people, control and outcome (Obeidat et. Al., 2017).

Existing literature emphasises the importance of good strategy formulation and effective strategy implementation (Doeleman, van Dun, & Wilderom, 2021). Although many organisations seem to have mastered the art of strategy implementation, a majority of organisations about 50-90% still struggle with implementation. There are a number of factors that lead to poor strategy implementation. The main factors highlighted include poorly developed leadership skills, poor communication and poor change management (Gębczyńska, 2016). Strategy implementation is considered a laborious processes requiring

effective planning, communication, organisational alignment and change management. Strategy implementation is considered the most critical stage in the strategy process.

#### **2.4.1.1 Misaligned organisational structure**

There are three structural dimensions that influence strategy implementation and these include formalisation, centralisation and specialisation (Olson et al., 2005). Formalisation is concerned with the rules and procedures that govern decision making in the organisation. Rules and procedures also define appropriate behaviours for the leaders and employees and further allows for a formal way of defining activities (Tawse & Tabesh, 2021). Having rules and procedures is a form of preserving organisational memory for increased performance based on previous successes or challenges (Gębczyńska, 2016). Having defined rules and procedures also leads to having increased efficiency (Tawse & Tabesh, 2021). In terms of centralization, decision making power is shared and quick turnarounds can be achieved which improves implementation (Olson et al., 2005). Efficient management of processes is essential to strategy management deployment in the organisation (Gębczyńska, 2016).

Mastering effective strategy implementation can possibly lead to a competitive advantage and is a critical capability for an organisation (Tawse & Tabesh). Strategy implementation has been found to be a complex exercise thus resulting in many organisations failing to effectively implement their strategies (Tawse, & Tabesh, 2021). A process based approach to strategy implementation aims at systematic process management for optimal fulfillment of strategic objectives which is beneficial for the organisation (Gębczyńska, 2016). A prerequisite for the process approach is having mechanisms that enables the definition and monitoring of strategic post process objectives (Gębczyńska, 2016). To be effective the corporate strategy must be incorporated and reflect in specific plans and schedules. Thereafter, execution should be assigned to different departments, processes, and individuals (Gębczyńska, 2016). It is claimed that about 95% of good strategies fail because of poor implementation.

For companies to survive in the VUCA world they must have the capability to respond swiftly to the demands of the environment (Mailu et al., 2018). Organisational design can be considered as a strategic tool for executing corporate strategy. The organisational structure must be designed in a manner that enables implementation of strategic objectives (Tatic et.al., 2018). Organisational configuration entails four elements of organisational culture. The elements are centralizing, formalizing, span control and departmentalization (König, Linhart, & Röglinger, 2019). Defining the most efficient structure for an organisation can be very difficult because the process is constrained by the size, technology, external environment



and strategies employed. The most favourable structure could be determined by the complexity, stability, diversity or hostility of an environment (Mailu et al., 2018).

The organisational structure refers to poor organisational design which includes poor communication, coordination, monitoring and incentive systems. Poor coordination refers to lack of alignments between functions and processes on the one hand and insufficient definition of tasks (Tatic et.al., 2018). Poor communication is often as a result of poor communications between different hierarchical levels and poor transfer of information and knowledge. Improper monitoring and incentive systems refers to poor responsibilities allocations and inefficient incentive programs (König, Linhart, & Röglinger, 2019).

#### **2.4.1.2 Inadequate Resources**

Resources required to meet strategic objective are technological, physical, human, financial and time (Mailu et al., 2018). It is imperative for the organisation to support the strategy with the desired level of resources for successful strategy implementation. Insufficiency of resources is a major challenge in strategy implementation (Mailu et al., 2018). Similarly, other scholars have also found that resource availability is viewed in terms of personnel, finance and time (Obeidat et. Al., 2017). However, it is important to mention that resources alone do not guarantee successful strategy implementation unless they are appropriately combined with the other factors that affect processes. This therefore means solving for one area while leaving other areas lacking will not produce the results required for strategy implementation. Research has also revealed that majority of senior managers agreed that alignment of operational strategies with availability of resources ensures greater success in strategy implementation (Obeidat et. Al., 2017).

People is in reference to top management leadership and their role in strategy implementation. Previous research had found that senior management behaviours have an impact on successful strategy implementation (Obeidat et. Al., 2017). Employee capabilities are part of the people factor. It is important that the organisation invest in training and skills development to ensure that employees are capable and will be able to carry out strategic activities (Obeidat et. Al., 2017).

Strategy implementation requires the involvement of all employees at all levels in the organisation (Gębczyńska, 2016). Their involvement empowers the employees in the process of strategy planning and implementation through clarifying objectives and how they translate into tasks that the employees must carry out (Gębczyńska, 2016). Studies reveal that most middle and lower-level personnel are not aware of their corporate strategy and therefore do not participate in strategy implementation. However, it has also been claimed in

literature that in particular middle level managers have an important role in strategy implementation and that their exclusion is detrimental in achieving efficient strategy implementation (Gębczyńska, 2016). The intentional participation of all employees in strategy implementation ensures its acceptance and alignment of employee actions while performing their daily tasks and the decisions they make with strategic objectives which results in improvement in strategy implementation (Gębczyńska, 2016).

Control has been defined as the formal and informal mechanisms that allow the efforts and results of strategy implementation to be monitored and compared to predetermined objectives. Control includes monitoring activities for strategy implementation, communication and operational plans, impact of uncontrollable factors, availability of systems, effect of competing activities and measurable performance standards (Obeidat et. Al., 2017).

#### **2.4.1.3 Stakeholder Communication**

Communication is about coordination of activities as it involves transmission of information. It includes clear explanation of new responsibility, tasks and duties that need to be performed (Obeidat et. Al., 2017). Furthermore, communication is the medium through which strategic buy-in can be achieved through providing information on the reason behind job alterations if there are any and what the new activities aim to achieve (de Oliveira, Carneiro & Esteves, 2019). Communication also plays a role in training, knowledge dissemination and learning during the strategy implementation process. Effective communication enhances strategic consensus through fostering of shared attitudes and values (Obeidat et. Al., 2017).

#### **2.4.2 Strategy implementation and company performance**

The importance of effective strategy implementation and its inherent benefits on company performance cannot be over emphasised (Zaidi et al., 2018). Similarly, successful strategy implementation enables the company to realise the fruits of its strategy formulation and attainment of the company vision. It has been reported that firms are only able to achieve only 63% of the financial performance promised by strategy (Crittenden & Crittenden, 2008). Likewise, only about 66% of strategies are never implemented (de Oliveira et al., 2019). Poor implementation of strategy leads to poor performance both in the current and in the future formulation. The gap in implementation is perceived to lie somewhere in between formulation and implementation process.

Failure to carryout strategy implementation can result in lost opportunities and no attainment of corporate objectives. Disconsolately, a majority of organisations fail to implement their

strategic plans (Obeidat et. Al., 2017). It was estimated that more than 70% percent of organisations fail at strategic implementation (Obeidat et. Al., 2017). Strategy implementation was said to be very complicated and time-consuming. The main reason for poor strategy implementation was said to be management's failure to dedicate adequate time and resources required for strategy implementation (Obeidat et. Al., 2017). Another key to strategy implementation is having well-orchestrated management processes that go beyond day-to-day business processes (de Oliveira, Magalhães, Soares, & Bittencourt, 2018).

### **2.4.3 Summary of strategy implementation hurdles**

This section has discussed and itemized key barriers to effective strategy implementation in organisations. A conceptual map, drawing connections between top management, initiatives of lower-level employees and effective business unit (BU) coordination was further presented. Influence of structural dimensions such as formalization, centralization and specialization were discussed in line with the VUCA concept that requires agility in uncertain times. Other key issues such as resource allocation and stakeholder engagement were discussed. Since these are viewed as problematic in strategy execution, a panacea in BPM is proposed as a key objective and discussed in the next section. This section responded to the first objective that discussed the contextual factors that bring about strategy implementation hurdles.

## **2.5 The role of business process management in improving strategy implementation**

### **2.5.1 Business Process Management as a Concept**

BPM has been defined as a management discipline that integrates strategy and organisational objectives by focusing on end-to-end processes (Rentes et. al., 2019). It encompasses the strategy, structure and organisational culture. The main objective of BPM is to shift organisations from following a functional structure to process orientation. It does this by ensuring that major activities are well mapped out documented with a focus on quality performance. Furthermore, it may be described as an organised way of aligning fundamental company activities and other important elements of operations (van Looy & van den Bergh, 2018). On the other hand, BPM has also been defined as a way of achieving corporate goals through managing critical business processes (Lahajnar & Rožanec, 2016). Another description of BPM is that it is a management discipline that features corporate strategy and customer requirements through improvement of key processes. For BPM to be efficient, there must be

well documented procedures and systems. All individual processes are measured for quality performance and alignment with corporate goals. If it is found that there are gaps in performance the root causes must be determined. Adoption of BPM can result in enhanced high-performance processes giving the organisation a competitive advantage. The organisation can stop non-value adding processes and has an improved flexibility for process improvement. It can be seen from the different definitions that BPM is a complex issue that encompasses a number of different areas, including strategy, culture, alignment and leadership control.

Research reveals that BPM adoption has helped a number of organisations to improve their performance (Rentes et.al., 2019). It has been found that BPM provides organisations with a systematic way for achieving strategic objectives (Syed et al., 2018). Other research also revealed that failure rate of BPM was high because of poor alignment with organisational strategy (Rentes et.al.,2019). Its application should consist of clearly defined steps that translate into a life-cycle that is aligned with the organisation's strategic objectives (Syed et al., 2018). BPM methods are based on the process architecture, thus capturing the relationship between key business processes, support processes and their alignment to the organisation's strategic objectives (de Oliveira Dias et al., 2018). BPM can assist management to execute their strategic program which promotes improved correspondence between strategy and business processes (Gębczyńska, 2016).

Despite BPM having the ability to improve company performance, most companies however, fail to properly implement BPM (Caputo, Fiorentino & Garzella, 2019). Failures of BPM are usually related to poor alignment to corporate strategy and poor company structure. Essentially, there are five enablers to BPM (Danilova, 2019). Firstly, it is the process design which deals with specification of tasks to be performed. Secondly, the process must be supported by metrics that are aligned to the corporate strategy and customer needs. Thirdly, the company must train process performers who fully understand the process. Fourthly, there must be properly aligned infrastructure in the form of information technology and human resource systems that are properly aligned to support the new processes (Erasmus, Vanderfeesten, Konstantinos, Jie-A-Looi, Kleingeld, & Grefen, 2018). Lastly, there must be process owners in senior management who will assume full responsibility for the process (Erasmus et al., 2018).

It is also important to mention that there are many different types of business processes (de Oliveira Dias et al., 2018). These include operational processes whose main concern is the production and delivery of services to customers (Ferreira, Neto, & Batista, 2019). Next, there are support processes whose main job is to support operational processes. Thereafter,

there are direction setting processes which are concerned with strategy formulation and policy development. Lastly, there are managerial processes which are concerned with management of the whole value chain. These processes are central feature of the benefits provided by BPM implementation as part of organisational strategy. The following section provides a brief explication of these benefits.

### **2.5.2 Benefits of Implementing Business Process Management**

BPM enables organisations to take advantage of their internal resources and external potentials (Ferreira et al., 2019). Product and service differentiation are not the only drivers for successful organisation as it has been found that effective management of business processes is equally important (Lahajnar & Rožanec, 2016). BPM should be viewed as a standard for best practice techniques and tools. BPM can be adopted by organisations in different industries as forms of different sizes and sectors have recorded increased performance after adopting BPM (Rentes et al., 2018). The main aim of BPM is to change the company structure from functional to process oriented. It has been found that in the long run, function-oriented firms were outperformed by process-oriented firms (Ferreira et al., 2019). Over the years a number of companies have come to see the value of BPM as an enabler of high performance (Syed et. al. 2018). Companies have shown keen interest in adopting and applying BPM techniques to achieve process related changes (Syed et.al., 2018).

Like strategy implementation, successful implementation of BPM initiatives has not been without its challenges, as a number of challenges have been faced by organisations in their quest to implement BPM (Ferreira et al., 2019). Challenges include among other things, lack of management support through commitment of resources and lack of leadership, poor communication of BPM plans and poor change management (Syed et. al., 2018).

There are several life cycles proposed in the literature. For purposes of this research we shall adopt the life-cycles as presented by Morius (2014) as it was found to be the most relevant with the aims of the study. This aim of the Morius model is to provide an alignment between strategy and business processes. In the proposed life cycle you start by validating the strategic direction, then identifying relationships among stakeholders, consolidating the strategic criteria, establishing the business process architecture, identifying performance measures, aligning process governance, establishing process priorities, aligning capabilities or resources for processes and finally by defining the transformation portfolio (Morius, 2014). The alignment between strategy and process improvement initiatives is key for organisational success (Beerepoot , van de Weerd & Reijer 2019).

To be effective, the BPM program must be arranged in distinct steps that translate into a life cycle (Rentes et al., 2018). The life cycle comprises six steps that include, planning, analysis, design and modeling, implementation, monitoring and control and refining. The life cycle is meant at providing a definitive way of conducting business process management. The life cycle only commences after strategy formulation and is guided by the strategic objectives. Furthermore, BPM must be supported by a completed change of culture. BPM culture is totally dependent on alignment with strategic goals and focusing all employee efforts on value addition.

In addition, BPM must be aligned with the company's structure and strategy (van Looy & van den Bergh, 2018). Lack of alignment with company strategy has been found to be a leading failure of BPM (Rentes et al., 2018). BPM culture is born from having a methodical attitude designing and managing business processes. This in effect requires systems to work together to create efficiencies and improve on value addition. Proper implementation of BPM results in more efficient and effective processes resulting in better customer service, reduced cost of doing business and general competitiveness. It has been found that companies employing BPM outperform companies that have not adopted the system in the long run. Lastly, BPM is an important tool for differentiation among competitors.

### **2.5.3 Business processes and Strategy implementation**

Actions are about defining who, what and when of cross-functional integration and collaboration. Programs involve instilling organisational learning and continuous improvement practices while systems and policies are about strategic support systems and policies that need to be installed (Doeleman, van Dun, & Wilderom, 2021). On the other hand, interacting is about the exercise of strategic leadership. Allocating speaks to mastering resource allocation while monitoring is about tracking progress and making the necessary adjustments which then takes us to organising wherein we shape the corporate culture of the organisation (Abdulkader, Magni, Cillo, Papa, & Micera, 2020). In a study on operational processes affecting strategy implementation, five processes were studied including resource availability, communication, operational planning, people and lastly, control and feedback (Obeidat et.al., 2017). Results revealed that all four of the five factors studied strongly affected strategy implementation. Resource availability was found to be the most influential followed by control and feedback. In third place there was communication and lastly, operational planning. It is interesting to note that people were found to have no effect on the strategy implementation process (de Oliveira Dias et al., 2018).

At least every organisation has one form of business processes or another which are all crucial for strategy implementation (Abdulkader et al., 2020). As previously mentioned, business processes are about the ordering of tasks to turn input into output to achieve business goals (Beerepoot et al., 2019). Efficiently managed processes from end to end influence the organisation's performance (Brin et al., 2020). Efficient management of processes ensures predictability of the output achieved from the input (Brin et al. 2022). Essentially, business processes are derived from the organisation's strategy. Furthermore, business processes are essential for strategy implementation to take place (Beerepoot et al., 2019). There are, however, many other variables that affect business processes during strategy implementation (Burgelman, Floyd, Laamanen, Mantere, Vaara, & Whittington, 2018). For example, people, skills, and resources. People perform business processes based on strategic principles. Most successful organisations invest a lot of time and resources that create powerful structural foundations that enable strategy implementation (Burgelman et al., 2018). On the other side, it was found that the absence of a well-defined methodology for implementation of strategy results in poor achievement of company objectives as derived from strategy (Baker & Singh, 2019). It is agreed that strategy implementation is to a large extent about integration of structures and management of organisational processes to achieve strategic goals.

Among other things, processes are part of the impediments that encumber fruitful strategy implementation (Vigfússon et al.,2021). Business processes consist of a number of factors. Firstly, there is the communication element. Communication is imperative for successful strategy implementation. Clarity and conciseness of strategy form one part in many. To be effective, the strategy must be communicated at all levels and interpreted into meaningful action plans (Galpin, 2018). It is important to highlight that effective communication of strategy is a leadership obligation. Secondly, another important factor is with regard to time frames. Time frames allocated for strategy implementation must be meaningful, and realistic (Vigfússon et al.,2021). Thirdly, and finally, resources were also highlighted to be a vital ingredient in the process element. It is imperative that adequate resources are allocated for the organisation to achieve optimum strategy implementation (Galpin, 2018).

BPM is an important element in strategy implementation therefore strategy implementation and BPM have to be linked to improve chances of the strategy's success (Rentes et.al., 2021). For alignment of BPM to strategic objectives, organisations need to outline the assessment of its objectives and performance indicators. BPM objectives must be selected based on strategic objectives, project performance must be measured against strategic objectives. Processes capabilities must be considered during strategy formulation. Major processes that support strategic objectives should be identified and prioritized (Burgelman et

al., 2018). The key function of strategic management is ensuring that it is implemented in the organisation's daily operational processes.

BPM assumes the existence of strategy and therefore start with strategy validation. In that regard, BPM only comes after strategy formulation. However, for either strategy implementation or BPM to be successful, it is imperative that they both be aligned. Therefore, BPM has been found to be an important element in successful strategy implementation. BPM supports corporate strategy through strategically aligning internal processes and structures. Furthermore, for BPM to be successful it must be introduced by the top management (Rentes et al., 2018).

#### **2.5.4 Summary – BPM in Strategy Implementation**

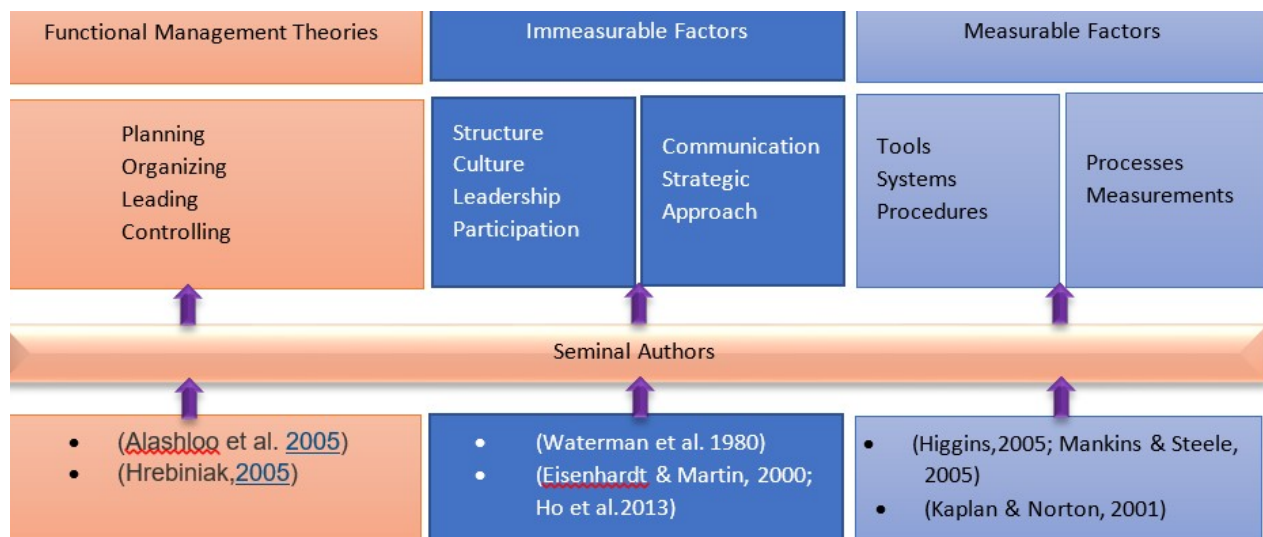
In this section, the rationale and benefits of using BPM in strategy implementation was discussed. An argument was presented for inclusion of BPM as an effective element of successful strategy execution within an organisation. This section responded to the third research objective that sought to address the role of business process management in improving strategy implementation.

#### **2.6 Moderated Mediation Analysis of Strategy Implementation Barriers**

The connections between departments, organizational culture, climate, and policy are all influenced by these intangible factors (Grover et al. 1999; Willcocks et al. 1997). As a result, viewpoints on the implementation of strategies are composed of distinct but linked parts. It is therefore challenging to compare the existing research findings that are based on various research paradigms.



**Figure 2.2 Mapping Leading Paradigms in Strategy Implementation Barriers**



Despite the fact that Figure 2.2 depicts the collection of critical components that are essential for strategy execution, their reciprocal interactions and connections have not been examined, which is a limitation in this research. Theoretically, seminal authors such as Beer and Nohria (2000) suggested integrating a top-down approach (with an emphasis on changing structures and processes) with a bottom-up approach in order to support such a comprehensive strategy (focusing on changes in communication and employee participation). As top-down and bottom-up techniques typically consist of a number of coexisting components that have an overall effect rather than appearing independently, it would be crucial to look into their reciprocity and dependency. This is the area of research that has to be filled. The EFQM idea (Fundamental Concepts of Excellence, 2013), which identified the six domains of leadership, strategy, employees, resources, processes, and measurement system, represents such an operational and all-encompassing viewpoint, which is the basis of BPM.

When compared to Balanced Scorecard, the idea is considered an alternative because it places all of the emphasis on strategy execution measurement (Wongrassamee et al. 2003). Both financial (measurable) and nonfinancial (unmeasurable) aspects are examined in this case. Based on the research findings of Radomska and Kozyra, (2020), a nexus and examination of six constructs that were merged under the measurable and difficult-to-measure perspective and selected due to the fact that they consistently featured throughout literature. These constructions were described as a collection of elements thought to pose obstacles to effective strategy implementation, yet were central features of BPM.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

It can be safely concluded from the literature that strategy implementation is important for company success. However, even though company leaders are aware of its importance, strategy implementation is still a hurdle for a majority of companies resulting in their inability to meet targets and achieve strategic objectives. In the same vein, BPM is an important element in company operations and strategy implementation cannot be fully achieved without BPM.

## **CHAPTER 3 - RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This study seeks to understand the role of business process management in resolving strategy execution hurdles by responding to three research questions. These research questions were formulated based on information discovered from the literature review. This chapter presented the research questions and discusses their relevance for the study.

### **Research Question 1: What are the main hurdles affecting strategy execution?**

Through this research question, the researcher aims to identify strategy implementation hurdles in organisations. This will provide deeper insight regarding the problems often faced

by organisations in their strategy execution journeys. It will further provide an improved understanding of strategy execution. As the study is based on the experience of different organisations across different industries, it will help the researcher identify whether strategy implementation hurdles are common across different industries or whether different industries suffer different execution hurdles.

**Research Question 2: What are the contextual factors that bring about strategy implementation hurdles and how can organisations avoid them to improve strategy implementation performance?**

In research question 2, the researcher aims to identify the situational variables and the availability of solutions for dealing with strategy implementation hurdles. This will assist by providing an understanding of the different solutions and their applicability to entities across different industries.

**Research Question 3: What role can business process management play in improving strategy implementation?**

This research question aims to identify the role that can be played by business process management in helping organisations achieve successful strategy implementation. This will support the development of a theory around the use of business process management in achieving successful strategy implementation

The research questions are supported by Pauline Schilpzand, Pater and Erez (2016) who called for more research investigating strategy execution hurdles.

## **CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The aim of this research study was to explore the most prominent reasons for failure in strategy implementation and explore business process management as a potential vehicle to address strategy implementation challenges. Strategy implementation is more of a personal journey in terms of choices made and informed by personal experiences, though challenges in strategy implementation could be generalised.

This chapter discusses the research methodology that was used in the study. The researcher adopted a qualitative, exploratory approach to the research design, sampling, gathering and analysis of data. Data was collected through face to face and virtual interviews

using Zoom Virtual Conferencing or Microsoft Teams. The interviews were one on one, semi structured with senior leaders responsible for strategy execution in different organisations. Quality controls and limitations will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

## **4.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN**

According to literature, there are five key philosophies that underpin research methodology and subsequent design that the researcher may decide to pursue, predicated by the type of research question and the phenomenon under investigation (Bashir, Syed, & Qureshi, 2017). These philosophical assumptions are (1) positivism; (2) critical realism; (3) interpretivism; (4) postmodernism; and (5) pragmatism. While the most popular research paradigms in business and academic research are positivism, interpretivism and pragmatism (Saunders & Lewis, 2019) there is a notable utility of either positivism or interpretivism in business research, with the convergence being pragmatism. In the following section, the researcher will comment briefly about these research paradigms and provide a rationale for the chosen approach.

### **4.2.1 Positivism**

Within the pure sciences perspective, the philosophical assumption of school of thought for investigators or researchers who work with the observable reality within society and produce generalizations is known as positivism (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). Positivism thinkers emphasize the significance of what is presented in general while placing a stricter emphasis on taking into account only the facts and pure data, untainted by the interpretation of human bias (Saunders & Lewis, 2019). Furthermore, positivism as a philosophy and its methods of inquiry are not able to relate to the social world.

### **4.2.2 Interpretivism**

Through the subjective perspective of positivism's critique, interpretivism emerged. As humans produce deeper meanings than physical phenomena, interpretivism is more interested in in-depth variables and context-related aspects (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). It makes the presumption that humans cannot be studied in the same way as physical phenomena (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). As a result, research in the social sciences must be distinguished from research in the natural sciences. Interpretivism takes into account the variations in cultures, situations, and historical periods that led to the formation of various social realities. In contrast to positivism, which tries to give clear, universal laws that can be generalized and applied to everyone independent of some important elements and factors, interpretivism seeks to integrate richness in the insights acquired (Saunders & Lewis, 2019).

#### **4.2.3 Justification for chosen approach**

The researcher followed an interpretivist approach since the purpose of the study was to draw meaning regarding the phenomenon of the role of business process management in resolving strategy execution hurdles from the participants' points of view as people's understanding of their realities is subjective. An interpretivist study was found to be more relevant as it did not only limit itself to objective behaviour but also considered the meanings ascribed by those who were being interviewed (Aspers & Corte, 2019). In an interpretivist study, the researcher studies subjects of research in their natural environment (Basias & Pollalis, 2018) . Thereafter, conclusions could be drawn based on the participants' perspectives and interpretations.

#### **4.2.4 Linking Study Purpose to Research Paradigm**

The purpose of the study was to gain understanding of the role of business process management in resolving strategy implementation hurdles. This was investigated by exploring the views of business leaders and the contextual factors around strategy implementation hurdles and business process management. Research relating to strategy implementation hurdles was found to be fragmented and limited (Aladag, Köseoglu, King, & Mehraliyev, 2020), therefore an inductive approach was adopted where themes were designated from data from the interviews. Kyngäs, Mikkonen & Kääriäinen, (2020) state that the inductive approach is appropriate in instances where little is known about the topic or phenomenon being studied. Induction follows a bottom-up approach where the first point is data reduction followed by grouping of the data into common themes and then lastly formation of concepts that are then used to answer the research questions (Cypress, 2019). This was achieved through analysing data that was obtained through interviews from participants across different industries and identifying patterns and common themes with the aim to answer the research questions (Woiceshyn & Daellenbach, 2018).

Researchers have often adopted a narrow approach when studying strategy implementation hurdles, focusing mainly on leadership barriers. The purpose of the study was to understand the role of business process management in resolving strategy implementation hurdles by first understanding the problems and the contextual factors that affect strategy implementation and the role of business process management. As the researcher seeks to uncover new insights on how business process management can resolve strategy implementation hurdles, an exploratory and qualitative approach was deemed most suitable for this kind of study (Aspers & Corte, 2019). The researcher selected the qualitative method

because she believed it would give the researcher an opportunity to dig deeply on the concepts which would enable the researcher to uncover rich, meaningful insights from organisation leaders and senior management tasked with strategy implementation. Interviewees provided information based on their interpretation and experiences related to each research question therefore providing a theoretical understanding of the concepts. The study was cross-sectional where data was collected from multiple sources at a single point in time (Melnikovas, 2018). Consequently, data collected from participants was at one period in time, described by Saunders & Lewis, (2018) as a “snapshot”. The data was classically collected over a period of about two months. This means that there was no opportunity to note changes, which on its own was a limitation.

#### **4.3 POPULATION**

It has been said that to clearly define the population in qualitative research using interviews as a data collection method, a set of inclusion and or exclusion criteria must be specified (Robinson, 2014). The criteria must be aligned to the purpose of the study.

The aim of this research study was to explore the most prominent reasons for failure in strategy implementation and explore business process management as a potential vehicle to address strategy implementation challenges. This required that the interview participants should have experience in strategy implementation. For this reason the researcher identified executive and senior managers within her network who are responsible for strategy implementation as the most relevant population for the study. The interview participants were selected from entities operating in different industries and operating in different countries. It was anticipated that the insights they shared from their personal experiences was very valuable for the study. Suitability of participants to the sample criteria was confirmed prior to the interviews as all the participants were personally known to the researcher and their roles and experience in the subject were known. In addition, participants were requested to share personal experiences and provide examples of the use of business process management to resolve strategy execution hurdles.

A homogenous sample was targeted considering that individual experience of phenomena is subjective, the purpose of the study was to gain deep understanding of individual experiences in strategy implementation and business process management. A sample consisting of a particular sub-group would allow characteristics to be explored in greater depth with minimum variations (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

#### **4.4 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUE**

The data was collected through semi-structured, face to face and virtual interviews using Zoom virtual conferencing and Microsoft Teams. In addition, an in-depth interview strategy was employed to allow the researcher to have personal interaction and build rapport with the participants. Where virtual interviews were conducted, the researcher requested participants to switch on their cameras to allow the participants to be visible on video at all times. The semi-structured, face to face and virtual interviews were selected in order to minimise the risk of miscommunication and their ability to provide comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon as it allowed for the adjustment of interview questions to get more information or clarify ambiguities. Interview questions used were based on existing literature.

#### **4.5 UNIT OF ANALYSIS**

Most research on strategy implementation focuses on strategy implementation obstacles with little work on business process management in strategy implementation. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the role of business process management in resolving strategy execution hurdles. For purposes of this study, and as guided by Kumar, (2018) the unit of analysis was focused of in-depth and thick descriptions of individual perspectives of executives and senior managers responsible for strategy implementation in their respective organisations. The researcher believed that these were in a position to provide valuable and unique insights based on their individual experiences, interpretations and perspectives (Vindrola-Padros & Johnson, 2020).

#### **4.6 SAMPLING METHOD AND SIZE**

The sample was selected based on their relevance. The relevance was based on leaders with experience in strategy implementation and managing business processes. The candidates were selected predominantly because researcher believed they would be able to provide good insights based on their firsthand experience dealing with strategy implementation hurdles and business processes. The researcher implemented a purposive non-probability sampling technique that involved the researcher's judgment in selecting participants best suited for the study to provide answers to the research questions. This technique was also deemed relevant because of its employability in instances where there was no sampling frame and as it was most aligned to phenomenological studies (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). It was not possible for the researcher identify and conduct interviews with all people having experience in strategy implementation and business process management.

Furthermore, a sample of subjects using business process management to overcome strategy implementation challenges was not known.

The sample was obtained from the researcher's networks and were personally known to the researcher. Their selection was based on the sample criteria. Snowballing was further employed to identify further potential interview candidates in the event that any participant pulled out of the interview. Snowballing was selected because it allowed the researcher to gain access to certain candidates through referral by the interview candidates from their network. In cases of referrals for interview, the researcher requested the referrer to personally introduce the researcher to such other person. This was to safeguard unauthorized sharing and use of personal information in compliance with POPI, Act. The choice of a homogenous sample was to allow the phenomenon to be explored in sufficient detail. The sample consisted of 12 executives and senior managers that had experience in strategy execution and managing business processes. As a direct consequence of the sampling techniques employed, industries, gender, executives and senior managers were not equally represented in the sample. For further emphasis, a crucial qualifying condition was experience in strategy implementation and general understanding of business process management.

As described in the sample population, the sample was purposefully selected to achieve homogeneity in order to support the aim of getting a deep understanding of individual's experiences (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Homogeneity in the sample allowed individual characteristics to be explored in greater depth with minimum variations. It is important to highlight that in qualitative research, a suitable sample size is not a definite number, rather a consideration of a variety of aspects should be used to determine the sample size. These aspects include suitability of the sample to the type of study including practical considerations such as time available for data gathering. Data saturation is achieved where no new themes and no new data emerge from the interviews (Malterud, Siersma, & Guassora, 2021). In studies where individual views of experience was studied in homogenous, purposive, non-probability samples it was reasonable to expect saturation in a sample of 12 to 16 participants (Malterud, Siersma, & Guassora, 2016). A total of 12 semi-structured interviews were conducted in this current study.



## **4.7 INTERVIEW INTRUSMENT AND PROCESS OF DATA GATHERING**

### **4.7.1 Interview Guide Development**

In line with qualitative research, the measurement instrument was the researcher, it was noted that the researcher's ability and effort would have direct influence on the credibility of the study. The researcher was guided by an interview guide during the data gathering process. As the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews, the measurement instrument was a semi-structured interview guide containing 12 questions with sub-question under the main questions. It has been said that the quality of the interview guide was fundamental to the quality of the research outcome. In addition, ethical considerations were given priority throughout the data gathering process to ensure that the research questions did not have potential to cause harm to the participants and only which was aligned with the research purpose was gathered. A consistency matrix was used to ensure that the interview guide was aligned to the research questions and the presented literature (Moser & Korstjens, 2018).

The researcher drew a measurement tool in the form of an interview guide based on the learnings from literature review and aligned with the main research questions (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). The interview questions were mapped against each research question to ensure that there was alignment with the literature in order to guarantee quality of data collected (Barrett & Twycross, 2018). The interview questions were open ended to allow open discussions which could assist in uncovering new insights. Clarification was provided to enable participants to respond fully to questions. Subsequent to this being an exploratory study, questions design sought to allow interviewees in-depth discussions of their experiences to get as much insights from the discussion. The interview guide also contained questions relating to suitability of the participant by confirming their experience dealing with business process management and strategy implementation. Furthermore, because of the nature of interviews, the researcher had the opportunity to ask follow-up questions which she believed would assist in bringing more clarity and get full insight on issues (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). A single interview guide was used for interviewing all participants. Nevertheless, the interview guide's main purpose was only to guide the interview and guarantee some degree of uniformity in the data that was gathered from all participants (Barrett & Twycross, 2018).

Lastly, for quality testing, the researcher began with three pilot interviews with participants who were not included in the main sample. This was to give the researcher an opportunity to make improvements and ensure that interviews provide relevant information to result in a

meaningful study (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Table 1 shows how the questions in the interview guide map to the research questions discussed in chapter 3.

*Table 1: Mapping of research questions to interview questions*

<p>Research Question 1: What are the main hurdles affecting strategy execution?</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is your organisation's strategy orientation? (reactive/proactive)             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Who is responsible for setting the tone of what the orientation should be?</li> <li>b. In the past, what indicators guided what the orientation should be?</li> </ol> </li>   <li>2. How are your corporate strategic decisions made?             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Who are the responsible people for the decisions?</li> <li>b. What role do they play?</li> </ol> </li>   <li>3. What challenges, if any, have you faced when implementing strategy?             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. In your observation, what was the cause of these challenges?</li> <li>b. Could the challenges have been avoided?</li> <li>c. At what level of implementation are the challenges often met?</li> <li>d. Are they related to a particular department or they are organisation wide?</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
<p>Research Question 2: What are the contextual factors that bring about strategy implementation hurdles and how can organisations avoid them to improve strategy implementation performance?</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. What is it in an organisation could bring about strategy implementation hurdles?             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Please share examples, if any, of strategy implementation hurdles either from experience or observation and how they came about?</li> <li>b. How were these hurdles identified?</li> </ol> </li>   <li>5. What is your approach to strategy implementation?             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. How is the approach communicated to the rest of the team?</li> <li>b. How is consistency in the message ensured?</li> <li>c. How often is the approach reviewed?</li> </ol> </li>   <li>6. In your knowledge/ experience/ observation, what factors influence successful</li> </ol>

strategy implementation?

- a. How is the company organized (structures)?
  - b. How does the company equip the leadership team to capacitate them for strategy implementation?
  - c. How are resources allocated for strategy implementation?
  - d. How is the work organized?
7. What steps do you take to ensure that your strategy is implemented?
- a. How is success of your strategy implementation measured?
  - b. What steps were taken in the past to remove implementation obstacles?
8. What important lessons have you learned in your strategy implementation journey?
- a. How have you applied these lessons to improve strategy implementation?
  - b. How have they assisted the organisation?

Research Question 3: What role can business process management play in improving strategy implementation?

9. How are processes managed in your organisation?
- a. How were they previously managed?
  - b. Who is involved in the management of processes?
  - c. What is their role?
  - d. What kind of factors play a role in influencing execution of processes?
10. What is your understanding of business process management?
- a. How should it be applied in organisations?
  - b. What impact does it have?
  - c. What are the advantages and disadvantages of having a BPM?
  - d. How can BPM be aligned to corporate strategy?
  - e. At what point should the alignment happen? (planning/ formulation/ implementation)
11. How can BPM be used, if deemed useful, to guide strategy implementation?
- a. What impact could BPM have on strategy implementation?
  - b. What challenges could be faced when using BPM for strategy implementation?
  - c. How can BPM affect achievement of strategic objectives?

12. What role if any, can BPM play in strategy implementation?

- a. How could the role be defined?
- b. How could an organisation take advantage of BPM for successful strategy implementation?

The research questions were informed by existing literature and calls for research and also formed the basis of the interview guide. An initial pilot interview was conducted successfully to test for clarity in the interview guide questions. During the pilot interview questions it became apparent that some aspects of the questions were similar resulting in participants giving almost similar answers. In order to address this, some adjustments were made to the interview guide as noted below.

#### 4.6.1 Multifaceted questions: strategy implementation challenges/ Causes for strategy implementation hurdles

During the pilot interviews it was discovered that the original interview guide had these questions in the multi-faceted form. It was found that all the participants would give similar answers for both questions. Therefore, to address this the researcher adapted the questions to be single sided questions.

#### **4.7.2 Data Gathering Process**

A total of twelve interviews were conducted for data gathering with senior managers and executives involved in strategy implementation. Some of the interviews were conducted face to face and a voice recorder used to record the interview. Other interviews were conducted on Zoom and Microsoft Teams virtual conferencing and were recorded using the functionality provided by the platform. During the virtual interviews all participants had their cameras on therefore allowing the researcher to observe non-verbal cues to changes to the participant's voice tone. The interviews were conducted after ethical clearance was granted. All participants were informed of the purpose of the research and voluntarily participated in the interviews. Participants were warned prior to recording that the interviews would be recorded to allow for accurate transcription and analysis.

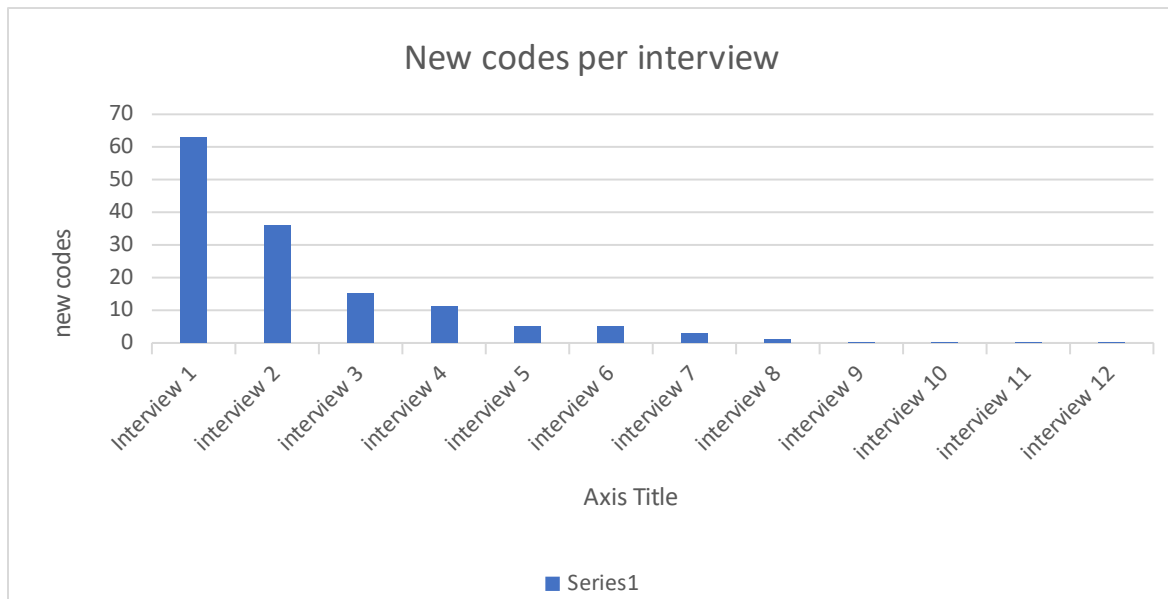
Data was gathered through the use of semi-structured interviews to adhere to achieving the study objective in exploring complex phenomenon. The advantage of semi-structured interviews was their ability to allow the researcher to direct the conversation within the confines of the interview guide and derive more insight (Moser & Korstjens, 2018).

Interviews were face-to-face and through virtual conferencing for some participants due to distance with a few of the participants in their respective places of work or on Zoom virtual conferencing or Microsoft teams. A single interview guide was used for all the participants. Using a single interview guide, gave an assurance that the data would be aligned to the research problem. The budgeted time per interview was no less than 45 minutes and no more than one hour.

Also, the researcher conducted pilot interviews with three participants who would not be part of the sample (Busetto Wick & Gumbinger, 2020). They however, qualified using the same relevance criteria as the sample. The aim of the pilot interviews was to test clarity of questions in terms of participants' ability to understand what was being asked and be able to provide relevant responses that would be useful for purposes of the study. The interviews were conducted at the participant's normal place of work with no requests for an alternate location. As well, the researcher engaged in pleasantries and explaining of the interview process prior to the interviews. This was aimed at giving details about the topic to the participants to allow them to understand the basis of the interviews and also get them to the correct frame of mind. Participants were expressly guaranteed of privacy protection as their names and entities would not be mentioned in the study. Unstructured interviews have the advantage of allowing the interviewee the opportunity to go back and forth in time to reconstruct the past, interpret the present, and predict the future thus giving a comprehensive story (Cypress, 2018).

During the interview, the researcher also took handwritten notes to keep track of what had been covered in the conversation and ensure all relevant aspects of the interview were covered. This also allowed for specific aspects to be identified for further probing. All interview recordings were transcribed verbatim by an independent third party. The data gathering process was continued in conjunction with analysis of already gathered data until no new findings emerged from the data. Figure 2 below shows the number of new codes that emerged from each interview that was analysed. The graph indicates that saturation was reached on the eighth interview.

*Figure 2: number of codes identified per interview analysed.*



#### 4.8 DATA ANALYSIS APPROACH

Data analysis is about making sense of the data that was collected from the interviews. Analysis includes consolidating, reducing and interpreting responses from the interview. Raw data collected from interview participants that was given as responses from the interview questions needs to be interpreted to enable the researcher to form a narrative of the issues. To allow for easy analysis interview recordings were transcribed through the use of a professional transcriber and analysed using ATLAS. ti 8 thematic analysis software. Cloud storage was used to store interview audio records and interview field notes for maximum data safety. All audio records were encrypted and password protected to warrant safety from cyber risks and data confidentiality. Thereafter, the researcher employed the services of a professional digital transcriber who transcribed the audio recordings into text verbatim from the recordings. The transcriber was first requested to sign a non-disclosure agreement as a condition of engagement and also create a legal obligation to maintain confidentiality before she could be given access to the recordings.

Firstly, categories were constructed which included coding using short sentences and assigning codes to categories. This was then followed by sorting the data categories, rationalizing the categories to a manageable number and thereafter making inferences and or developing theories and models. The approach was conducted in a cyclical manner where the researcher conducted interviews, sent them for transcription and once transcriptions were received coded. Interviews were conducted in parallel therefore giving the researcher an opportunity to hone the interview approach and probe specific aspects in later interviews that were identified in the analysis of earlier interviews. Research has also identified this process as part of the process through which saturation is achieved wherein the researcher

moves from an inductive approach to a deductive one in the later interviews where confirmation of earlier findings is sought from the data however, while keeping an open mind for new possibilities.

After transcription, field notes and transcripts were used for the data analysis process. Atlas TI was used for data analysis. Codes and themes developed through a thematic content analysis approach (Barrett & Twycross, 2018). The codes were derived from the data which was assigned into code names. In addition, themes were used to identify relevant information on which findings and generalisations could be made for theory development (Williams & Moser, 2019). Categories used for assigning codes were assigned based on common meaning (Williams, & Moser, 2019). Categories were further allocated into pre-defined themes. To show harmony of responses, the researcher produced a data saturation chart. Data analysis was conducted in the context of the research questions. The data analysis followed an iterative process wherein the researcher read the transcript, listened to the audio recordings, coding and grouping to ensure alignment between data, codes, categories and themes. The iterative process helped improve understanding regarding data meaning.

#### **4.9 QUALITY CONTROLS**

The critical aspects to cover to ensure quality relate to trustworthiness liability and bias (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017). Data validity is described as the extent to which research findings are credible. In line with quality criteria for rigor determination, trustworthiness for this research was supported by keeping detailed field notes and reflective commentary, recording and transcribing all interviews verbatim, keeping coding records (Stahl & King, 2020). The interview guide was informed by previous research into similar constructs. To ensure completeness in conducting interviews three pilot interviews were conducted.

Since the data collection for this research was subjective in nature based on the participants' lived experiences the only feasible method of obtaining the data was capturing self-reported responses. To address possible common method bias that could arise from the use of self-reported data was adopted from other similar researcher. Questions were presented clearly and framed in a manner suitable to the context. Respondents were also assured of confidentiality and that reported data would be anonymised. Further, respondents were informed that the purpose of the research was to learn about their lived experiences and that there were no desired answers. Data reliability is described as the extent to which there is

consistency in the findings. Reliability will be ensured by documenting all processes as they are followed and consistently applying these in a uniform manner.

Researcher bias was also the number one problem of qualitative studies because of the researcher's intimate involvement in the research process (Abutabenjeh & Jaradat, 2018). Therefore, to improve data collection quality, pilot interviews were conducted to be of assistance in assessing the researcher's influence on the whole data collection process and further create awareness of problem areas identified (Holmes, 2020). Furthermore, the researcher sought to clarify the participant's responses to ensure that the interpretation of responses was aligned with what the participant wanted to convey. Moreover, the interview guide also served as a consistency tool on the data gathered (Abdalla, Oliveira, Azevedo & Gonzalz, 2018). The researcher on an ongoing basis checked the interviewees' understanding of interview questions. Another safety measure was verbatim transcription of interview records. Lastly, for quality control, triangulation was also used. Questions in the interview guide were the same for all participants with no demarcation for executives and senior management. Reliability of the findings were ensured by continuing with interviews until data saturation was reached.

#### **4.10 RESEARCH ETHICS**

The researcher obtained ethical clearance from Gordon Institute of Business Sciences (GIBS) Ethics Committee before commencing collection of data. Before beginning a research endeavor involving humans and animals, ethical consent must be obtained (Tolich, 2016). The study's objective was to fulfill the demands of the institutional ethics committee. According to Hammersley (2015), research ethics rules should be ideal rather than explicit instructions and prescriptions. Any intended research involving humans should follow a good code of conduct, guided by fundamental and widely acknowledged principles of research ethics. In this regard, the author (Hammersley, 2015) came to the conclusion that principles are important and should be observed in ethical science. (Tolich, 2016) (Hammersley, 2015)

According to academics and well-known specialists on ethics, the researcher has an ethical duty to be truthful and considerate to everyone who may be impacted by their research or the outcomes of their work (Knezek, Morreale, Keddis, & James, 2015). As shown in Table 3.2 below, Costa (2020) proposes adherence to four key principles of ethics, that are consistent with the Belmont Principles for ethical conduct in research.



**Table 4.1: The Belmont Principles of Ethics**

	Principle	Descriptor	Application in this study
1	Duty toward human dignity and respect	Respect for humans, according to the Belmont Report, is predicated on two independent principles: individuals should be regarded autonomous, but those with impaired autonomy should be entitled to additional safeguards. Respect for individuals is believed to mean that researchers should obtain informed consent from subjects wherever possible, and the Belmont Report defines informed consent as having three components: information, comprehension, and voluntariness. That is, respect for individuals necessitates providing participants with relevant information in an understandable format, followed by their willing participation.	This study was subjected to institutional review board guidelines of the university.
2	Nonmaleficence	The nonmaleficence principle requires that researchers expressly commit to avoid harm to others. The fundamental argument for this principle is rooted on the maxim of <i>primim non nocere</i> , which may be executed through observation of the following cardinal rules no to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• do harm anyone</li> <li>• inflict harm on others</li> <li>• make somebody unable to function</li> <li>• cause any commotion</li> </ul>	Confidentiality and anonymity were discussed with participants, including their rights to withdraw from the study without being expected to provide reasons.
3	Beneficence	This principles, which requires selfless integration of participants or researched	Benefits were explained such that there could be improvement in knowledge

		groups interests first, provides guidance for risk reduction and benefit maximization.	development specifically for strategic business decisions in the participants respective organisations and to the entire knowledge community.
4	Justice	The distribution of the expenses and benefits connected with research is central to the idea of fairness. In other words, one group in society shouldn't bear the burden of research expenses while another does. Concerns about justice are especially strong when it comes to participant selection.	As much as application of fairness was ensured, there was no threat of unjust behaviour or implications emanating from participant's role in this study.

All participants were requested to sign consent forms which were explained to participants and also giving them the option to opt out. The consent forms did not include any identifying information of the participants apart from signatures.

#### 4.11 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

Qualitative research marred with a number of limitations. Firstly, qualitative research studies have an inherent risk of researcher bias. Secondly, the research findings from qualitative research are often deemed not measurable or provable. Another limitation is that qualitative research was not easy to repeat and therefore difficult to generalise findings from the sample to the population. Also, there was a possibility of participants misrepresenting information with the aim of painting a good picture on their work. Lastly, qualitative research by its very nature is subjective therefore making it difficult to investigate causation of identified problems. The study was a cross-sectional study, which limited the researcher to extend different intervals for the research and further observations.

The following specific limitations of this research study were noted:

- v. Sampling followed a non-probability sampling base from the researcher's professional network therefore compromising the study's generalisation possibilities.
- vi. The researcher's experience level in conducting semi-structured interviews and analysing qualitative data was limited to the current study.

- vii. Some interviews were conducted virtually therefore limiting the opportunity to detect non-verbal cues such as discomfort on specific discussions therefore limiting these to word choice and tone of voice.
- viii. The researcher was personally acquainted with the interview participants which could have influenced the depth to which the participants offered information perceived as negative.

## **CHAPTER 5 – PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents results from the interviews that were conducted to respond to the research questions introduced in Chapter 3 of this research. The chapter begins with a description of the sample and justifies their suitability to validate their fit to the sample criteria. Thereafter themes that emerged from the qualitative thematic analysis are presented and aligned to each research question. The main objective of this thesis is to explore the most prominent reasons for failure in strategy implementation and explore business process management as a potential vehicle to address strategy implementation challenges.

As presented in the methodology section, all recordings from the research interview were transcribed verbatim by an independent transcriber. For rigour determination and fulfillment of quality criteria for credibility, the researcher used member checking strategy by reading and confirming the transcripts with the participants before coding. Furthermore, using the principle of immersion as postulated by Braun and Clark (2019), the researcher iteratively read and internalised contents of data documents subsequent to the transcription process before data coding. In terms of scholars such as Saldaner coding involved attaching labels to the data. For data analysis, the researcher used ATLAS.ti to develop codes which were then structured according to a developed code book. The code book guided the researcher to structure posteriori (inductive) codes that were followed by axial coding (categorisation) that culminated in the development of themes (Guest, Namey & Chen, 2020) as required in thematic analysis. A total of 160 codes were generated at the first cycle coding stage. The list was thereafter reviewed for duplications and all duplicate codes were merged into one. The unique codes were assigned into themes that collectively aligned to the different research questions. The process was repeated for all the interviews and all research questions. During the process, descriptive codes were assigned to specific portions of the responses for further review and analysis therefore creating bits of data.

Further, some themes were split while others were combined to ensure consistency in abstraction. Finally, themes were grouped into primary constructs or categories that consolidated the results into high level themes. Data on a single code was assigned to one theme and each theme to a single category. To prevent counts from being skewed by repeated references to specific factors, reference to a frequency or cumulative count refers to the total number of participants whose responses were categorized under the specific construct.

For the presentation of the research result, in each instance the primary constructs that relate to the specific section is presented together with a detailed presentation of each primary construct, secondary construct and supporting data.

## 5.2 SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

The main objective of this paper is to explore the most prominent reasons for failure in strategy implementation and explore business process management as a potential vehicle to address strategy implementation challenges. The sample was selected in accordance to experience in the subject and its relevance is presented in section 4.3 of the methodology in chapter 4. The sample was limited to Executive and Senior Managers with experience in strategy execution. Experience in business process management was not a requirement. Years of experience were not required. The sample was selected from different industries and different roles in executive and senior managers. It is important to mention that the sample was selected from eight different industries and from all operating in four different countries including, Eswatini, Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa.

For purposes of the sample, a total of 12 interviews were conducted. The sample was not homogeneous as they came from different industries with different strategy requirement as provided in the sampling purpose under the methodology section. The candidates were selected predominantly because researcher believed they would be able to provide good insights based on their firsthand experience dealing with strategy implementation hurdles and business processes. The researcher implemented a purposive non-probability sampling technique that involved the researcher's judgment in selecting participants best suited for the study to provide answers to the research questions. Four of the twelve interviews were conducted face to face while the rest were conducted virtually via Microsoft Teams and Zoom virtual conferencing.

Data related to the 12 interview participants is presented in table 4 below:

*Table 4*

Participant	Industry	Position	Experience Strategy Execution	Experience Business Process Management
G01	Banking	Chief of Strategy	15	5
G02	Banking	Chief Risk Officer	12	3
G03	Communications	Chief Strategy	12	7
G04	Insurance	CEO	20	9
G05	Insurance	Board Chair + former CEO	30	20

G06	Investments	CEO	8	2
G07	Telecomms	COO	16	10
G08	Tax	Commissioner General	15	5
G09	Manufacturing	Continuous Improvement	7	7
G10	Manufacturing	CFO	5	3
G11	Construction	CEO	6	6
G12	Strategy consulting	Consultant	9	9

Although the researcher aimed to achieve heterogeneity in the sample to enhance data variation, greater emphasis was however placed on relevance pertaining to experience in strategy execution. Experience in business process management was not a requirement. It has been said that the most appropriate approach in qualitative research was to consider the interview participant's ability to provide relevant data (McGrath, Palmgren & Liljedahl, 2019). The participants' tenure in strategy execution ranged between 6 and 30 years while experience in business process management ranged between 2 and 20 years.

### 5.3 DATA SATURATION

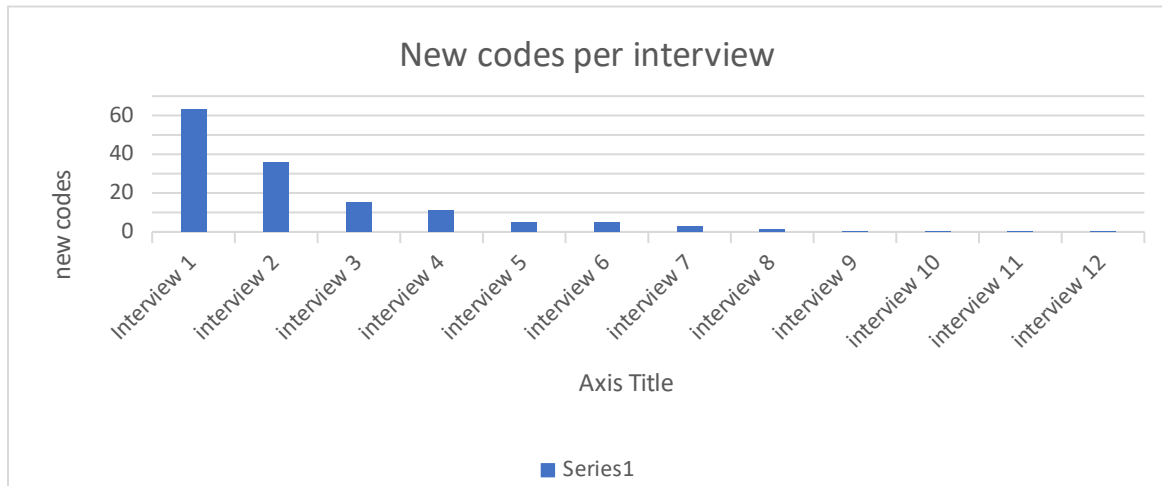
As a general rule for qualitative research, data must be collected until there are no new themes that emerge from the data therefore signaling data saturation (Bazen, Barg & Takeshita, 2021). Once saturation was reached any further data collection would be of little value. Data collection was with 12 participants and lasted between 30 minutes and 75 minutes as can be seen from table 2 below:

*Table 2*

<b>No. Interview</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Pages</b>
Interview 1	60min	12
interview 2	40min	13
interview 3	35min	10
interview 4	60min	15
interview 5	30min	8
interview 6	60min	15
interview 7	75min	21
interview 8	45min	10
interview 9	75min	15
interview 10	50min	10
interview 11	45min	10
interview 12	45min	10

Data collection in this research seized after the twelfth interview even though saturation was reached on the eighth interview as shown in figure 3 below.

Figure 3



For validity of the findings of this study, it was important that all the participants be experienced in strategy implementation. The researcher felt that experience in strategy implementation would allow them to understand the issues around hurdles to strategy implementation and also be able to share their experiences in dealing with the problem. It was found that only a few organisations implement business process management and even those that do are not always successful. As a result, even though question three dealt particularly with business process management, there was no requirement that participants have experience in BPM. It was assumed by the researcher that as executives and senior managers, all participant had working knowledge of business processes at the basic level and had a working understanding of same.

#### 5.4 UNIT OF ANALYSIS

For purposes of this study, and as guided by Kumar, (2018) the unit of analysis was executives and senior managers responsible for strategy implementation. The researcher believed that these were in a position to provide valuable and unique insights based on their individual experiences, interpretations and perspectives (Vindrola-Padros & Johnson, 2020). As previously highlighted in section 4.4 of the research methodology, most of the literature reviewed for this study focused on strategy implementation obstacles with little work on business process management in strategy implementation. Therefore, in gathering data from the interview participants emphasis was placed on strategy implementation experience even

though this study aims to investigate the role of business process management in resolving strategy execution hurdles. Further, even though the participants claimed to have experience in BPM only a few were able to give data that was aligned to BPM requirements therefore showing a lack of understanding.

#### **5.4.1 Suitability of participants- Strategy implementation**

Participants were selected due to their experience in strategy implementation as they were all executives and senior management with responsibility for strategy implementation. The interview questions included a question on responsibility for strategy implementation and all participants confirmed having strategy implementation responsibility due to being members of the executive team. As noted from table 4 above that the lowest level of experience in strategy execution was five years.

#### **5.4.2 Suitability of participants – Business Process Management**

Experience in business process management was not a requirement for selection. However, due to the level in their organisations all participants did have some basic experience in business process management although in some institutions it was not properly defined.

### **5.5 PRESENTATION OF RESULTS**

This study sought to understand the role of business process management in resolving strategy execution hurdles by responding to three research questions. These research questions were formulated based on information discovered from the literature review. The results are grouped around the research questions and emerging themes from the data analysis are presented. The following section will reflect both the questions and its elements, while at the same time providing *in vivo* statements from some of the participants in relation to questions being asked.

The interviews revealed that most companies follow a proactive approach to strategy rather than a reactive approach. Although some participants felt it had a potential to move from proactive to reactive depending on the situation that the company was faced with. One respondent felt it was a function of the size of the organisation, where smaller companies fail to take a proactive approach because of inability to influence. The environment and other external factors affect a company's ability to execute their strategies and sets the tone on how aggressive or relaxed you are going to be. Additionally, the results revealed that the



strategy process began using a proactive approach while the strategy was being defined based on the market conditions and information available at its disposal. However, when the strategy moves to the implementation stage, it takes a reactive approach which was important to enable the company to respond to the environment and change course if necessary, in order to achieve its strategic goals.

*G09 “Naturally at planning stage you are being proactive on issues as to why it is very critical that strategy planning is based on information. You need to understand, fully understand your environment, your business itself and the stakeholders in that environment. So you proactively plan how to deal with those in order to achieve your objectives. But where I then say reactive is that as you now implement, built into your strategy must be flexibility that keeps on aligning to reality on the ground so in that sense you are now reacting to the situation on the ground.”*

*G02 “I would say the Bank is proactive. Why I am saying that is because the approach that we adopt is that it is fixed. Every 3 (three) years we have to re-craft our strategy but annually we review that strategy based on assessing our performance as well as analysing the operating environment that is why I am saying it is proactive because we need to understand what is going around, we track that continuously throughout the year and then analyse that at the end of the year to review our strategy to respond to the conditions that are prevailing in the environment or threaten opportunities as well as address our performance gaps or strengthen where we are doing well.”*

*G11 “Smaller businesses I think they are more reactive. I don’t think that they believe that they can influence their future, they wait for something to happen and then they get some sort of reaction down.”*

*G07 “You know what you want to achieve, so you come up with a strategy on how you are going to achieve that, you are being proactive.”*

*G08 “the tone is largely driven by the external environment in this case the market dynamics.”*

*G05 "I think there is a difference between the scope of strategy in a small business than in the bigger corporates."*

*G10 "I think there is a difference between the scope of strategy in a small business than in the bigger corporates."*

*G04 "it is very critical that strategy planning is based on information."*

Furthermore, it was mentioned that the company's ability to take a reactive role was determined on how agile the company was and that agility was important for the strategy success.

*G05 "your ability to adjust your own vision to what your realities are. So very often they would have certain dreams and expectations but either your market or your products or your own capabilities are not able to actually make that possible. So, ja it is probably the 2 (two) that is, information and your own ability to adapt. The adapt you need and in strategy I think you have to be able to adapt reasonably quickly because things change all the time."*

*G12 "A flexible mind set so you don't get fixated on things. You need to be open to the signals"*

It is also important to mention that most participant came from organisations wherein strategy was defined from the top as in most organisations strategy definition and implementation responsibility was the ambit of the CEO either alone or with the executive team.

*G11 "so it has been, strategy sits with the CEO or the Managing Director of the Institution that is the high level of strategy"*

*G05 "shareholders and the board generally give the longer-term expectations and then senior management bring that into deliverables which are then controlled and implemented."*

*G02 "The Governor being the CEO of the company or of the Bank, rather, ... is ultimately responsible but it is a delegated responsibility that is conducted by the Strategy Office, there is a Strategy and Communications Office that is responsible for driving the strategy. So they mainly drive or coordinate the process, otherwise the responsibility*

*rests with the Governor so he has to make the pronouncement at the end of the day.”*

## Data Triangulation

To obtain comprehensive insights and to assure validity of findings a qualitative analysis on the frequency of themes that emerged per research question is presented in table 4 below:

*Table 4: Triangulation matrix*

No. of respondents	Theme
<b>Research Question 1</b>	
10	Misaligned organisational structure
12	Inadequate resources
9	Poor communication
<b>Research Question 2</b>	
10	Structural factors
12	Resource factors
<b>Research Question 3</b>	
9	Adoption of BPM
3	Against BPM in strategy implementation

## Results for Research Question 1

### Research Question 1: What are the main hurdles affecting strategy execution?

Research question 1 aims to identify strategy implementation hurdles in organisations. This will provide deeper insight regarding the problems often faced by organisations in their strategy execution journeys. It will further provide an improved understanding of strategy execution. As the study is based on the experience of different organisations across different industries, it will help the researcher identify whether strategy implementation hurdles are common across different industries or whether different industries suffer different execution hurdles.

An overview of the results relating to research question 1, presenting the categories that emerged related to each theme are presented in table 5 below:

*Table 5*

Theme	Category
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vision</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership</li> <li>• Corporate culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time</li> <li>• Financial</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resources</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategy alignment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisational structure</li> </ul>

A key finding regarding strategy implementation was that strategy implementation was considered tough marred with a number of challenges. The results that emerged showed that the biggest challenge was centered around people, from the leadership team down to the lowest level. The result indicated that the leadership team was responsible for setting the strategic direction. Others mentioned that the leadership consulted all levels while in other organisations it was more of a top-down approach.

*G04 “Generally, strategy formulation and setting is the easier part.”*

## **Vision**

The results revealed that alignment of vision was a challenge in strategy implementation. Often, companies in a group set up found it difficult to align to the group strategy especially if they operate in different markets or different countries. As mentioned above, the CEO and the leadership team and sometimes the board and shareholders are responsible for defining the company visions and also cascading it to the rest of the company.

*G11 “challenges come from, there are certain strategies that come from a group environment which probably is not domiciled in your country, that are not applicable to your market.”*

*G07 “a challenge to align the 2 (two) to say at group level you are looking at this strategy, you are driving this agenda but at a local level which is country level, the market dynamics cannot adapt to that. So to reconcile the 2 (two) has always been a challenge.”*

Another key factor in terms of the vision was that the leadership found it hard to communicate the vision in a clear and precise manner in order to ensure buy-in from all. For everyone in the organisation to understand the leadership team needs to not only communicate what the vision is but to also engage with the employees to ensure that everyone was aligned and no one left behind.

*G04 “sometimes you then tend to have expectations which are not eh, interlinking, expectations of the shareholder, expectations of the team,*

*expectations of your markets are not talking to each other therefore you then have a situation where your strategy is irrelevant and therefore implementation becomes very, very difficult.”*

*G05 “I think the first factor is how real is your, is your view of where you are going? In other words, you need to really know, you know what market you are going to go to, what that market looks like; you could understand what do you bring to that”*

*G07 “when you are communicating a strategy you need to be as clear, as precise, as assertive as you can”*

*G08 “So you take time to explain, you take time to unpack it, clearly putting out what the objectives are, what outcome we are chasing, what the role each one of them is going to play or is expected to play and also emphasize on the part to say we own this as a team, so team work has been very key for me to drive whatever strategy I would like to drive.”*

*G03 “if you don’t keep these people informed of what is happening and where you are going to, you will find that they will not buy-in.”*

## **People**

The issues around people pertain to all people in the organisation including the leadership team and employees at all levels. The main issues were centered around behaviour and how it affected strategy implementation. Participants mentioned that for strategy to be successful there needs to be buy in and the strategy needs to be owned by everyone in the organisation. Another hurdle is with regard to capacity and skill of the staff as the team must possess the necessary skills to enable them to efficiently execute the strategy.

*G03: “then there will be some elements of resistance or no buy-in”*

*G08 “The challenges where one has faced, has been at the middle management and lower level. The middle management I would talk about it in terms of a void is somehow created where the middle managers do not want to fully own the responsibility they have because as a middle manager you are in between the professionals or the clerk of the lower, the operations, ja, call it the Operations and the Executive.”*

*G09 "...at senior level it has always been easier to understand and to adapt or acclimatize to that strategy but at a lower level it takes a little bit more explanation to drive or implement the changes that you are driving in that strategy."*

*G04 "on people issues the major issues are to do with capacity to implement strategy and appreciate it."*

Another hurdle concerning people was with regard to the corporate culture of the organisation. The participants believed that the culture was a major influence on strategy implementation.

*G05 "Never underestimate culture"*

*G01 "That your strategy no matter how good it may be on paper, if the culture of that institution is wrong, the strategy won't work."*

*G10 "I think the cultural personalities are incredibly important."*

*G04 "Culture in the organization comes into it in a big way"*

In order to deal with the problem of a poor corporate culture, there needs to be change management to introduce a new culture that will support the strategy and enable implementation.

*G09 "change management to adapt to what strategy is now in place, has been a challenge in the past as well."*

## **Resources**

In order for strategy to be successful it needs to be supported by resources. Required resources include skills, time and financial resources. Resource planning is always a problem since they are never in abundance and as such companies need to understand their key drivers for purposes of resource planning and structuring.

*G04 "I think that is one major one then the other one is resources. Resources here are sometimes there is a misalignment between what the strategy demands and what is available on the ground in terms of okay, people, yes numbers, but money itself, time itself"*

*G07 “So you would need to understand what are your key drivers of your business. 60-80% (Sixty to eighty per centum) which units or which area needs to be empowered to ensure that objectives or overall the strategy is achieved. That is where you allocate more resources.”*

*G06 “I would say resources they are always a constraint.”*

*G03 “There is quite a number of challenges that you face. I would say the principal one is availability of funds.”*

A number of companies suffer from the problem of poor resource allocation which in turn affects strategy implementation because certain important strategic objectives may not be supported with the necessary resources to enable them to be executed properly.

*G08 “there is Strategy which is projects and then there is processes. Processes speak to the operations so we have got operations, we have got Strategy and these 2 (two) pool their resources from the same basket.”*

*G12 “I said major challenges is strategy implementation are team issues”*

### **Organisational structure**

Organisational structure was found to be a challenge that affects execution. Most respondents believed that how the organisation was structured was important for attainment of strategic goals. It was said that if the organisational structure was not properly handled it could create a disconnect in the organisation.

*G04 “The structure must talk to what you said you are going to do. So it is very, very important that as soon as you have finished dreaming to say this is what we want to achieve, you start looking at resources and you start by people”*

*G07 “Okay, so it has been, strategy sits with the CEO or the Managing Director of the Institution that is the high level of strategy, then the different Heads of Department, the Executive Committee or the Executive Team sits now with Departmental Strategies on how they are going to deliver the key performance indicators for those particular departments so they own the strategy at departmental level and they ensure delivery.”*

*G09 “No that one has got a very huge effect on how the strategy will be implemented because the structure if not well handled can actually create*

*a disconnect between top management and the troops on the ground like the lower levels who implement the strategy.”*

The results indicated that departments were working in monolithic trajectories which make it hard to achieve organisational strategies, and appear in this study as main hurdles. Participants mentioned that there was no fluidity nor flexibility in the way things was done, and that made it hard for their organisations to be proactive and agile.

*G07 “Also the structure of these departments they can also lead to working in isolation.”*

*G04 “A structure can never be something that lives and thinks, it must live within the currency of a strategy so that if you change strategy the structure must change to align to the structure but in a lot of cases people do not do that.”*

*G06 “Every organization must be structured to deliver on the strategy.”*

*G06 “when you are reviewing your strategy you need to see and review that you are structured to deliver to the strategy goals hence then you get to things like re-engineering an organization, restructuring it, so that it is structured in the way that will help you deliver your KPI’s not the other way round.”*

## **Monitoring and measurement**

The participants mentioned the importance in the strategy execution process to be able to review progress and measure success. They felt that monitoring and measurement enables the organisation to notice hurdles while it is early and make the necessary adjustment to allow the organisation to meet its strategic objectives. Review and feedback periods must be short for it to be effective. It is also important to have a real measurement methodology to allow you to realise the benefits of strategy monitoring.

*G05 “So that feedback loop, you know, being able to say, okay I am trying this what is the effect of that? That feedback loop you must try to keep as open and short as possible so that you can keep on reviewing am I on the right track? So an open attitude to it is probably the best.”*

*G02 “So if it is not in my score card then even if I don’t do it and then you find that the strategy suffers”*



G01 *“In the balance score card you will have your target and deliverables, you will have a time frame but the execution of the deliverables becomes like, for lack of a better phrase, a normal day to day thing which could be overtaken by other more important things.”*

G09 *“make sure that you have a real measurement methodology so that you do know, you know, exactly what is the effect of what you are doing.”*

G02 *“The alignment should hmmm be tracked through our performance assessment but you find that we have different targets in our score cards that don't relate to the target, corporate target that is, hence you find that we excel in our performance, individual performance however you find that the strategy is not delivered, which is then reflecting some inconsistency or some incongruence in terms of alignment.”*

G01 *“the issue of keeping that score card compelling score card... the score pushes you. ...keeping that compelling score card so that in our periodic meetings we know where we are with delivery, we know how much you have covered, we know how much we are missing and we know how much time we have which is also aligned with the projects approach.”*

G12 *“we track that continuously throughout the year and then analyse that at the end of the year to review our strategy to respond to the conditions that are prevailing in the environment or threaten opportunities as well as address our performance gaps or strengthen where we are doing well.”*

**Research Question 2: What are the contextual factors that bring about strategy implementation hurdles and how can organisations avoid them to improve strategy implementation performance?**

In research question 2, the researcher aims to identify the situational variables and the availability of solutions for dealing with strategy implementation hurdles. This will assist by providing an understanding of the different solutions and their applicability to entities across different industries.

**Challenges**

The interviews revealed that there were a number of challenges that were faced by organisations during strategy implementation. It was however, interesting to note that though the challenges were many, they were quite similar for all the eight different industries and for all four different countries. For example, lack of understanding of vision, lack of buy-in<sup>3</sup> and poor communication were listed among the top challenges for strategy implementation across the different industries and different countries.

*G07 "truth be told in any strategy implementations challenges are always there."*

*G01 "The normal challenge like most people, like most institutions it is the execution part"*

*G03 "There is lack of communication that goes through."*

*G04 "So that is how I then found that the implementation of strategy becomes a bit better because that is where the problem is generally, strategy implementation and ensuring that there is buy-in and effective implementation by everybody in the organization and it starts from the top."*

*G08 "The main challenge is, the buy-in by business"*

*G02 "business does not appreciate how strategy links with their day-to-day processes"*

*G09 "Okay some of the challenges come from, there are certain strategies that come from a group environment which probably is not domiciled in your country, that are not applicable to your market. So to reconcile the 2 (two) has always been a challenge."*

The participants felt that to a large extent most of strategy implementation hurdles can be avoided by organisations. The commitment of the leadership team towards the vision of the company and achieving strategy success is what makes a difference in avoiding most of the strategy implementation hurdles. It was found for instance that quite often the leadership team puts more effort in strategy formulation and completely disregard implementation. However, they did acknowledge that some of the hurdles cannot be avoided and in that case it was reason enough to build risk management into the strategy.

*G01 "some people find it difficult to balance between the, the, the strategic performance, deliverables with the whirlwind"*

*G07 "I think some could be avoided, others you can't avoid them because you don't have control over them therefore there is very little you can do about it."*

*G04 "a lot of leaders and I have been a victim of it sometimes, focus too much in coming up with strategy but do not apply a lot of thinking which is equally important into how you are going to effectively implement that strategy"*

*G11 "The major challenges have always been on ensuring you benefit, the organization benefits out of the plan which is mainly the implementation side"*

*G01 "I will go back to the 4 (Four) Disciplines of Execution which are to focus attention where it matters most, track progress, keep score and continuous engagement and accountability"*

Furthermore, it was found that the environment in which the organisation operated had a huge bearing on influencing strategy such that the leadership team had a responsibility to ensure that they really understood the environment and built internal capabilities to enable them to efficiently respond to the demands of the environment.

*G05 "if you don't understand or really know what your environment is it becomes very difficult to implement a strategy and to adjust that strategy."*

*G02 "...another challenge that we are still facing because we don't have a scientific approach to ensure that our alignment is standard across the organization."*

In addition, it was mentioned that success in strategy implementation came with the availability of systems. It was important for organisations to be systems oriented.

*G04 "an organization must be system oriented first, that is the starting point."*

*G01 "our strategy is processed, based, by that we mean... you start with the processes the processes will guide your strategy."*

## **Vision**

Strategy starts with the definition of a vision based on the company's mission statement. Most companies do not struggle with definition of the vision and setting of strategic objectives. It has been said that strategy formulation is easy as it involved organisations planning about their future. The difficulty came with regard to turning the vision into reality through actions that are supposed to be done by employees in the organisation.

Once the vision is formulated it is important to cascade it down to all employees in the organisation as this guides them as they go about their duties. The approach was to make sure that the strategy was as inclusive as possible so that it would be owned by everyone in the organisation.

*G07 "the, the approach that I try to take it is an inclusive one. What I mean by that is, I try as much as possible for my senior management team to be part of the strategy so that it is owned by everyone."*

*G02 "cascading is not effective enough to get the people at lower levels to appreciate what this is about and how it infuses with the day-to-day operations."*

*G08 "you take time to explain, you take time to unpack it, clearly putting out what the objectives are, what outcome we are chasing, what the role each one of them is going to play or is expected to play and also emphasize on the part to say we own this as a team, so team work has been very key for me to drive whatever strategy I would like to drive."*

*G05 "build competencies that match your critical success factors and I think then that is how I see strategy in broad terms."*

## **People**

The main issues highlighted concerning people were around corporate culture, wherein a bad corporate culture had a negative effect on strategy implementation. Culture also went with attitude of the employees towards strategy. For example, the operations team often found it difficult to accept strategy as they did not realise how it was part of their day-to-day operations. Capacity and training were also major issues for people as the employees and management must be fully capacitated to meet the demands of the strategy and to ensure

smooth strategy implementation. Strategy implementation requires a mindset shift to move from formulation to implementation and also to embrace change to be able to accept the change in the way of doing things which may be a requirement from the strategy or to adapt and respond to the dictates of the environment.

*G07 "if the strategy calls for a mind-shift change in the workforce or in the team it has been a challenge because generally human beings minds do not change over a week, or over a month, it takes time."*

*G04 "...I mean the team issues which are basically culture, attitude, capacity, training and other issues."*

*G02 "...they then feel like it is an added responsibility because it takes some of their time"*

## **Resources**

Resource allocation also tends to be problem for companies. Companies often struggle with which resources to prioritise over others particularly when it comes to financial resources.

*G04 "... you agree on resource allocation which is structure, money and everything else"*

*G06 "Again, because of those processes that basically influence, and the resources that you must be allocated by group where things are standardized, you will not be able to move until it is your turn for you to start implementation, so I would sight that as the challenge that I have observed previously."*

*G02 "all resources being assets, people, the information how well you manage those"*

## **Organisational structure**

It has been said in the interviews that structure was what implemented strategy such that a structure that was not aligned to strategic requirements would affect efficient strategy implementation. In addition, it was important to ensure that the organisation was organised in such a way that there was no room for silos.

*G12 “for a successful implementation of a business strategy, you need to break the silos. “*

*G02 “I realized that that becomes a big challenge because if you are function based, you become, it, it, it encourages the silo approach whilst strategy requires integration. ”*

*G11 “structure implements strategy”*

*G01 “structure is at the end. It comes after strategy”*

## **Processes**

Processes are important in organisations as they guide the actions of the people and help them operate a seamless service delivery. All actions in organisations have a number of processes and procedures that employees must follow while executing their duties. The processes are usually owned by the heads of the departments who have the responsibility of ensuring that they are followed. Processes are put in place to achieve a certain objective and standard in the output of work.

*G01 “Strategy comes after processes.”*

*G02 “It is very critical for processes eh to be clearly defined for delivery of the strategy”*

*G07 “...each department has one or a number of processes that they should have or they have in place to ensure that they deliver. Therefore, the departmental heads own those processes and they ensure that their teams follow those processes.”*

*G04 “it guides you on to how to say what you do in terms of your policies and procedures, everything is documented, everything is according to plan and you find then how it also guides you on how to inculcate a culture to follow systems in your organization.”*

*G12 “if the target is informed by the Process Target it is not possible to manipulate that and this will enhance the correctness or the accuracy of our Performance System which will then translate to delivery, effective delivery than just playing around with the numbers.”*

*G11 "Because the process is put in place to achieve a certain agenda or to put in certain controls, so to get that result those processes have to be followed."*

*G02 "If your targets are not well informed by the, or the process targets, it is easy to manipulate "*

Several standards have been defined for the management of processes. One such process is ISO 90001/ 2015. The standards

*G04 "adoption of the ISO 90001/2015 that applies to our industry was the solution, the good thing was standards that it does not prescribe that put this process or put this procedure but it tells you the dictates of what must be on the ground.*

*G12 "So, it is through that standard that we have effectively managed and it dictates also that you must have a review process, if something, if something is working that is fine, but even when it is working after a given period you must review it. If something has got a problem it dictates how you review it, how it must also be authorised and documented"*

Processes are guided by policy documents that define the required processes which are then supported by procedure manuals that define the processes and give a step by step direction that is to be followed in execution of the process. To achieve efficient application of processes, process champions are elected whose main duty is to monitor compliance and are a key component of performance management.

*G04 "So there is a policy document that is there, it is a bible..."*

*G12 "we have got champions of that in the organization whose job is mainly to monitor compliance to the standards and also it also becomes a key component of our performance management."*

Process monitoring is also built into the performance management system in order to ensure its effectiveness and achieve targets that have been set by the company or department.

*G04 "It is built into the performance management system so that is how we found it becomes very easy even to implement anything in the organization because you follow policies and procedures.*

In terms of some organisations, they have adopted a process approach for strategy implementation. The strategy is defined into different action items and allocated to different action owners and monitored on a regular basis on predefined dashboards that show performance at given times.

*G04 “when it comes to strategy that is what, this is how we approach strategy.”*

*G09 “We have defined how we then allocate responsibilities to units, teams and individuals. We have defined the dashboards that align, that show us how performance has happened.”*

*G11 “So it is defined process that is monitored by the standard champions in the organization and obviously my key responsibility as CEO is to monitor that.”*

## **Projects**

A number of organisations have also opted to turn their strategic initiatives into different projects and follow principles of project management in order to achieve strategy implementation.

*G01 “our strategy is projects based so we start a project to fix the bottle necks and a project has a start date and an end date. For us that is where we are trying to deal with the execution problem because in, in, in the other, let me make an example of the balance score card.”*

*G02 “Project Based Approach where every new initiative or every change is implemented through a project because we understand that it is going to take, it has a start and finish date.”*

## **Research Question 3: What role can business process management play in improving strategy implementation?**

This research question aims to identify the role that can be played by business process management in helping organisations achieve successful strategy implementation. This will support the development of a theory around the use of business process management in achieving successful strategy implementation

## **Processes**



Processes are part of the operations of a business. All activities carried out are done through processes. A formula presented for use of processes in strategy implementation is that you need to start by defining your processes before you define what the strategy is. Linking of processes to the strategy ensures that the organisation will be able to deliver on its mandate. Processes are put in place to achieve a certain agenda.

*G01 “my formula is process, strategy, structure”*

*G07 “each department has one or a number of processes that they should have or they have in place to ensure that they deliver. Therefore the departmental heads own those processes and they ensure that their teams follow those processes.”*

*G12 “the process is put in place to achieve a certain agenda or to put in certain controls, so to get that result those processes have to be followed.”*

Successes rate in terms of adopting a process based approach comes with regard to the organisation’s ability to be agile.

*G07 “The success rate has depended on how agile that business is.”*

*G05 “the process is now more important than the actual, actual delivery of the service ”*

*G04 “Amongst other things, one thing that is going to benefit out of this systems approach is strategy implementation. So obviously, we sat back and documented how we are going to implement, thought and implement, and document it rather how we are going to implement strategy.”*

## **BPM**

Business process management starts with documenting the processes that the organisation has in place. Thereafter, the processes need to be streamlined. Attempts to implement business process management have been made however, without tangible results. Success rate for BPM is influenced by the organisations level of agility to enable fast and easy decision making allowing for the processes to respond to strategy requirements quickly.

*GO1 “That is documenting the processes, streamlining them to see which because the processes when we document you document as is.”*

*G07 “it has not always been successful but attempts have been made. The success rate has depended on how agile that business is. If you are not agile decision making takes a little bit longer so adapting the processes to the strategy has taken longer and sometimes that had led to missing the plot or time running out, but the ones that have been agile, it has been a little bit of an easy conversation.”*

*G04 “I believe there is best practices that must be documented and that is what my understanding of processes or procedures are and their link to strategy.”*

Furthermore, the results revealed that BPM presents a structured approach to ensure that work is done efficiently. It talks to what you need to achieve. Processes are developed to either address a challenge or to improve efficiency. Implementing BPM also helps to standardize activities across the organisation.

*G07 “Business Process Management speaks to, it is a structured approach that is put in place to ensure that there are certain processes that are followed, adopted, or put in a workplace to ensure that work is done...”*

*G05 “I think it was a great thing to do because what happened is you could now standardize across, well firstly across all the various parts of your own business, how you would deal, but also businesses could learn from each other”*

*G09 “implementing a process talks to what, you need to be very clear on what the process intends to achieve.”*

*G09 “a process is always developed to address a challenge or to improve efficiency.”*

Adoption of a BPM program enables the business to draw lessons and understand how certain activities are delivered. It is important while implementing a process to monitor and ensure that the purpose is being achieved.

*G05 “I think it was great to do because very often management did not actually realize how a service was being delivered until we started documenting it and putting it down.”*

*G07 “So even when you are implanting that process it has to demonstrate that the challenge that was identified is actually being addressed by that process.”*

*G09 “So the benefits of Process Management can be increased efficiencies.”*

Furthermore, BPM gives organisations a platform to realise opportunities for continuous improvement. BPM simplifies activities and ,makes it easy to train people and get them to understand their role in the process and its impact better. This helps bring uniformity of actions while also guaranteeing some sort of security of results.

*G07 “a process also gives the platform for opportunities how to continuously improve your operations”*

*G05 “it simplifies and takes away all the costly variations”*

*G09 “it makes it much easier to train and get people to understand what their role is. You can come in and say this is exactly how we, and this is why, and they then understand that,”*

*G10 “it brings a uniformity to it, it makes it possible for you to transfer the knowledge because it is established that you can train people and I also think that it clarifies expectations”*

*G04 I... I think without them first it would be hard to deliver on any goal or any expectation because you wouldn't know or for instance if you are hiring someone to come and work in your organization you need to orient them, you need to induct them, they need to know what they are supposed to do, what expectations are there on them, but if you don't have procedures what are you going to induct them on”*

The process that is adopted is the implementation that is required to be carried out. On the contrary, it was mentioned that BPM on its own cannot have much influence on strategy implementation because it still remains dependent on the actions of the individual responsible for carrying out the process.

G09 *"You have got to understand that the processes is your implementation."*

G05 *"I don't think that Business Process Management as such can influence well, it is not the Business Process that influences that, the Business Process is how you do it, but you have to adapt it as your strategy changes so you have to keep on adapting it because the environment changes"*

For business process management to be successful it is important for the leadership team to ensure that there is adequate engagement with employees at all levels to get their understanding and also offer guidance. Engagement comes from communication which is a key element for BPM. Communication requires a structured approach that continuously engage all stakeholders at all levels.

G12 *"Engage them or get their understanding. If there is a misunderstanding you will be able to pick it (up) and provide guidance."*

G07 *"communication is very key."*

G08 *"after you communicate you also engage, engage, because communication can be one traffic."*

G03 *"Communication continuously engage your stakeholders, report to them"*

G11 *"So what you need to then do you need to then sit down with them, have regular sessions where you update them so that they understand ..."*

G05 *"As soon as you have more than one team member, you need to communicate."*

In addition, BPM success is dependent on the organisation's aggression in ensuring that the process is implemented. Monitoring for results is another important factor.

G07 *"on how aggressive or relaxed you are going to be."*

*G04 “The major challenges have always been on ensuring you benefit, the organization benefits out of the plan which is mainly the implementation side.”*

It is equally important to have the ability to adjust your vision to the prevailing economic requirements.

*G05 “Tied to that would be your ability to adjust your own vision to what your realities are. So very often they would have certain dreams and expectations but either your market or your products or your own capabilities are not able to actually make that possible.”*

*G05 “The adapt you need and in strategy I think you have to be able to adapt reasonably quickly because things change all the time.”*

Another view was that BPM was more suitable for stable environments and often failed to produce similar results if the environment is unstable. On the positive side BPM was found to bring some form of stability while on the other and it came with rigidity which affects improvement as situations change.

*G01 “BPM Processes are fine, Business Process Management is fine for a stable environment but if there are disruptions, you have to have alternatives like your whatever business continuity plan that you may have. You must be flexible to adjust to say, well there are disruptions.”*

*G02 “Business Process Management comes with some form of stability and to some extent rigid. It is rigid in nature because it says this is the process that you must follow for the next 3 (three) years but disruptive environments will say to you yes you have a process but now Covid has disrupted you, that process of yours will not work.”*

## **5.6 EMERGING THEMES**

Close analysis of these findings indicate the emergence of the following thematic expressions.

- i. The main hurdle impeding on strategy implementation is bureaucratic red-tape and inflexible approach to contemporary meaning
- ii. Agile and flexible elements such as BPM could enhance strategy implementation and improve company-wide adoption
- iii. Strategy communication channels should be inclusive and engaging in a two-way approach to all stakeholders at different levels.

## **5.7 CONCLUSIONS**

The purpose of this section was presentation of data after a rigorous analysis. Analytic procedures were discussed and stratification of participants presented. Data was organized in accordance with research questions and was presented with *in vivo* statements from participants. The next chapter presents an in-depth discussion of findings and a nexus of these outcomes with literature.

## **CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter will be discussing the results as presented in chapter five. Data was collected from 12 interview participants who are executives and senior managers in their organisations. A thematic analysis was applied to reach a suitable point of aggregation as presented in the results chapter. Interviews were guided by an interview guide which was approved for ethical clearance. The interview guide was aligned to the main research questions and existing literature which informed the research questions.

The research findings presented in chapter five are discussed in detail by illuminating and contracting them with references drawn from literature through the literature review in chapter two. The discussion aims to extract responses to the research questions presented in chapter three. Rich insights are presented which informed the academic and management implications. This is enabled by establishing an understanding of and reporting on how business process management can be applied to improve strategy implementation and reporting on management's view on the applicability of business process management to strategy implementation. Strategy implementation hurdles are discussed herein at the hand of identified factors and current literature on the subject. This chapter is concluded with an

integrated presentation of the results and a discussion of the possible synthesis among constructs.

This chapter will be presented in a similar manner to that adopted in chapter five of the research. The discussion will be in the context of the three research questions as presented in chapter three with the aim of exploring the prominent reasons for failure in strategy implementation and exploring business process management as a potential vehicle to address strategy implementation challenges. The themes identified around strategy implementation hurdles are around inconsistent interpretation of the vision, internal capabilities around people, poor communication and misaligned organisational structure.

## **6.2 Discussion of results for question 1**

### **Research Question 1: What are the main hurdles affecting strategy execution?**

Research question one aims to identify strategy implementation hurdles in organisations. This provided deeper insight regarding the problems often faced by organisations in their strategy execution journeys. It further provided an improved understanding of strategy execution. As the study was based on the experience of different organisations across different industries, it helped the researcher identify whether strategy implementation hurdles were common across different industries or whether different industries suffered different execution hurdles.

#### **6.2.1 Strategy implementation hurdles**

This question was designed to determine what strategy implementation hurdles were faced by organisations and begins by looking how companies defined their strategies and how they carried it forward to the rest of the organisation that is not part of formulation. The participants in this study confirmed that they found strategy implementation to be complex and tainted with a number of challenges as opined by Tawse & Tabesh, (2021) . This was the case across different industries and different countries. This was also confirmed in the literature wherein it was found that obstacles to strategy implementation are the same for different type of organisations as studies from different companies in different industries all gave similar results (Vigfússon et al.,2021). All different participants gave different views on the challenges and the trend that emerged from the responses showed that the biggest challenges were centered around people, resources, organisational structure and

communication. Hurdles identified by the participants included poor communication and inconsistent definition of company vision, lack of strategy buy-in, inadequate resources and mis-aligned structure to company strategy. The interlink between strategy, structure and behaviour was also confirmed.

### **6.2.2 Inconsistency of vision**

Prior studies have noted the importance of consensus and ensuring consistency of the vision (Gębczyńska, 2016). The vision gives the strategic direction of the organisation, and it is the basis of which strategic objectives are formed (Zaidi et al., 2018). The results of the study revealed that understanding of the organisation's vision was often a challenge in strategy execution. From the view of some participants, the leadership often failed to translate the vision to lower-level employees resulting in poor understanding of the vision. The participants mentioned in addition that, quite often, the vision was not consistently communicated for the common understanding of all employees especially at lower levels. Moreover, some participants mentioned that consistency was affected by communication and could also be solved through effective communication and highlighted the need for continuous engagement. This finding was aligned to the literature that was reviewed wherein it was found that communication is the medium for which strategic buy-in could be achieved (Obeidat et al., 2017).

Moving in harmony and cooperating with the vision allows for efficient strategy implementation (Brinkschröder, 2014). The leadership have a responsibility to promote a unified direction. As mentioned by most participants in most organisations they worked in, the leadership team was responsible for setting the vision and also getting it across to the rest of the organisation. In order to get the message across there must be consensus in what the vision is as opined by one of the respondents in the interviews. According to Khalifa (2019), consensus is vital as the vision can be interpreted in many ways. In addition, most participants mentioned that they believed consistency in the message is key and like consensus important in ensuring that the organisation is moving in a single direction.

As a means of enhancing consensus and consistency, a majority of the participants stated that it is important to have frequent vertical communication. According to Wołczek, (2018) communication is vital for transmitting of the vision and increases involvement across different levels as it is important for every person in the organisation to know the direction of the organisation. It has been said that the lack of common understand is a major barrier in strategy implementation (Brinkschröder, 2014). Poor communication often leads to lack of strategic consensus and clarity about goals and direction. Participants agreed that it is the



leadership's duty is to ensure that communication takes place. It has been agreed in literature that poor communication inhibits effective strategy implementation.

### **6.2.3 Internal Capabilities of People**

There are several aspects on the discussion of people for strategy implementation. According to the literature, people has to do with the behaviour of all people in the organisation from senior to lower level employees which includes effective leadership, culture, training and development, capacity to perform the tasks and buy-in of the strategy (Mailu et al., 2018). An important finding from most of the participants concerning people was that they perceived culture of the organisation which comes from the behaviours of the people to have an impact on strategy implementation. The respondents felt that it was important for the leadership to ensure that the people had the right skills and were therefore capable of implementing the strategy. In terms of the culture, some participants said it was important for the organisation to put in place a change management program which could in turn also influence buy-in of strategy therefore translating to implementation.

The concept of people in this regard is encompassing of their culture, behaviour and skills. For example, one participant said people are an important part of an organisation as a they carry the culture and also help to shape it. He went on to mention that in order for the organisation to have a good corporate culture, employees have to share the company values and possess a willingness to embrace them which will make the values embedded in everyday company practices as mentioned by Käpylä, (2019). In that regard it is acknowledged that human behaviour is very hard to change (Brinkschröder, 2014). This was also acknowledged by most participants who said it is the duty of the leadership team to increase commitment and involvement of the employees. It is the involvement that creates ownership in the new strategy and in turn increase commitment (Brinkschröder, 2014). Communication and engagement is a means by which to shape the organisational culture. Equally important is ensuring that the right staff is recruited and providing training on an ongoing basis (Obeidat et.al, 2017). Obediat e.t al., (2017) also confirmed the responsibility of the leadership team in influencing the lower-level employees for strategy implementation. In addition, two participants said managers must also be capacitated to enable them to efficiently carryout their duties. It was also added by a majority of the participants that the interaction between the leadership team and lower-level employees builds more commitment and helps lead to successful strategy implementation as envisaged by Obediat et. Al., (2017) in the literature.

In addition, previous research had found that senior management behaviours has an impact on successful strategy implementation (Obeidat et. Al., 2017). Most participant mentioned that the behaviour of the leadership team was critical for influencing strategy execution. In addition, employee capabilities are part of the people factor. Almost all participants were in agreement with each other that it is important that the organisation invests in training and skills development to ensure that employees are capable and will be able to carry out strategic activities. Therefore, some participants mentioned that employees in their organisations did not have the requisite capabilities required for strategy implementation and quite often the company failed to see the mismatch.

Furthermore, it is confirmed by more than half the participants and aligned with previous research that strategy implementation requires the involvement of all employees at all levels in the organisation (Gębczyńska, 2016). It was mentioned by some participants that the involvement of employees across different levels in the organisation empowers the employees in the process of strategy planning and implementation through clarifying objectives and how they translate into tasks that the employees must carry out. In that regard, literature revealed that most middle and lower-level personnel are not aware of their corporate strategy and therefore do not participate in strategy implementation (Mailu et al., 2018). However, it has also been confirmed by several participants that in particular middle level managers have an important role in strategy implementation as they are in charge of the day-to-day execution on the ground and that their exclusion is detrimental in achieving efficient strategy implementation. The intentional participation of all employees in strategy implementation ensures its acceptance and alignment of employee actions while performing their daily tasks and the decisions they make with strategic objectives which results in improvement in strategy implementation (Gębczyńska, 2016).

#### **6.2.4 Inadequacy of Resources**

All participants uniformly agreed that the issue of resources in strategy implementation was of the foremost problems affecting effective strategy implementation. The participants agreed in line with the literature review that in order for strategy to be successful it needs to be supported by resources. Required resources include skills, time and financial resources (Mailu et al., 2018). In addition, it was mentioned by most participants that organisations generally struggle with resource planning since resources are never in abundance and as such companies need to understand their key drivers for purposes of resource planning and structuring. In addition, some participants indicated that their organisations usually suffer from the problem of poor resource allocation because of lack of structure and prioritisation in

the allocation of resources. This in turn affects strategy implementation because certain important strategic objectives may not be supported with the necessary resources to enable them to be executed properly.

As pointed out by literature, it is imperative for the organisation to support the strategy with the desired level of resources for successful strategy implementation (Mailu et al., 2018). As indicated by some participants and supported by previous studies insufficiency of resources is a major challenge in strategy implementation. Resource availability is viewed in terms of efficient allocation of personnel, finance and time (Obeidat et. al., 2017). Most participants also mentioned that alignment of operational strategies with availability of resources ensures greater success in strategy implementation.

### **6.2.5 Organisational Structure**

Another important ingredient in strategy execution is organisational structure, majority participants mentioned that based on their experience they found that a misaligned organisational structure to be a challenge that affects strategy execution. This was confirmed in the literature wherein it was found that organisational design could be considered as a strategic tool for executing strategy (Mailu et al., 2018). Most respondents confirmed that they believed that how the organisation was structured was important for effective strategy implementation. Some of the participants expressed how they related to the challenges of organisational structures. These participants indicated that if the organisational structure was not properly handled it could create a disconnect in the organisation as some structures encouraged working in silos which was a problem for the organisation's ability to achieve strategic goals. For example, it was mentioned in the literature that poor organisational design begets poor communication, coordination and monitoring therefore resulting in an overall failure in strategy implementation (Ivančić, 2013). In addition, participants highlighted as important to ensure that the structure is fluid to allow it to adapt to all strategic requirements. The key take away was that structure follows strategy. It was therefore important for the leadership to pay attention to the manner in which the organisation was structured.

While literature review identified three structural dimensions that influence strategy implementation and these include formalisation, centralisation and specialisation (Olson et al., 2005), participants further postulated that there was a direct link between formalisation and implementation. Formalisation is concerned with the rules and procedures that govern decision making in the organisation. Rules and procedures also define appropriate behaviours for the leaders and employees and further allows for a formal way of defining

activities (Gębczyńska, 2016). Some participants mentioned that having rules and procedures is a form of preserving organisational memory for increased performance based on previous successes or challenges. Another participant mentioned that having defined rules and procedures also leads to having increased efficiency. In terms of centralisation, decision making power is shared and quick turnarounds can be achieved which improves implementation (Tawse & Tabesh, 2021).

For companies to survive in the VUCA world they must have the capability to respond swiftly to the demands of the environment (Mailu et al., 2018). In line with this statement, about three participants confirmed that organisational structure can be considered as a strategic tool for executing corporate strategy. They confirmed the notion as provided by Mailu. Et.al (2018) that organisational structure must be designed in a manner that enables implementation of strategic objectives.

### **6.2.6 Monitoring and Measurement**

Some participants said they found it important in the strategy execution process to be able to review progress and measure success. They mentioned that monitoring and measurement enable the organisation to notice hurdles while it is early and make the necessary adjustment to allow the organisation to meet its strategic objectives. Similarly, it was mentioned in the literature that it was important for organisations to have the opportunity to measure progress and performance (Zaidi et al., 2018). One of the participants said review and feedback periods must be short for it to be effective. It is also important to have a real measurement.

## **6.3 Discussion of results for question 2**

**Research Question 2: What are the contextual factors that bring about strategy implementation hurdles and how can organisations avoid them to improve strategy implementation performance?**

### **6.3.1 Challenges**

All interview participants clearly agreed with each other and supported the literatures that there are a number of challenges that are faced by organisations during strategy implementation. This was mentioned in alignment with literature as it was found in the

literature that there were a number of challenges to strategy implementation (Amoo et al., 2019). What was interesting to note was that though the challenges were many, they were quite similar for all the eight different industries and for all four different countries as previously provided in literature (Ivančić, 2013). For example, all participants mentioned some directly and some indirectly in their responses that lack of understanding of vision, lack of buy-in, poor communication, inadequate resources and ineffective leadership were listed among the top challenges for strategy implementation across the different industries and different countries. The participants affirmed that to a large extent most of strategy implementation hurdles could be avoided by organisations. A solution advanced by some participants was with regard to the commitment of the leadership team towards the vision of the company and achieving strategy success. It was mentioned that a common mistake that is made by the leadership in the different organisations is putting more effort in strategy formulation and completely disregarding implementation. It was mentioned that a possible cause of this was the capacity of the leadership team as strategy implementation has been found to be complex.

On the other hand, some participants accepted that some of the hurdles such as inadequate resources could not be avoided which may be influenced by prevailing economic conditions. In that case one participant suggested that it was reason enough to build risk management into the strategy. Furthermore, most participants stated that the external environment in which the organisation operated had an enormous influence on strategy implementation such that the leadership team had a responsibility to ensure that they really understood the environment and built internal capabilities to enable them to efficiently respond to the demands of the environment before they impede on their strategy implementation ability.

Another factor that came out from a majority of the participants was with regard to systems as they mentioned that success in strategy implementation comes with the availability of systems and therefore it is important for organisations to be systems oriented. This was in support of findings from a previous research in the literature review which stated that a systemic process was essential for optimal fulfilment of strategic objectives (Gębczyńska, 2016). Moreover, Brinkschröder, (2014) in the literature review mentions similar contextual factors which include poorly developed leadership skills, poor communication and poor change management. As provided in previous research some participants revealed that strategy implementation is considered a laborious processes requiring effective planning, communication, organisational alignment and change management. It was also confirmed by the literature that there was an inter-relationship between strategy, structure and behaviour (Brinkschröder et.al, 2014).

Furthermore, some participants mentioned that in some of their organisations the leadership team employed a top-down management resulting in ineffective cascading of the strategy therefore resulting to poor implementation. The issue of conflicting priorities was also mentioned as a challenge in some organisations as some leaders would be affected by their ego at the expenses of the organisation. This was also said to be true in the allocation of resources where leaders would fail to be objective and disregard important strategic initiatives therefore resulting in poor strategy implementation. A number of factors in relation to above were stated by participants. The following are selected few:

*G07 "truth be told in any strategy implementations challenges are always there."*

*G01 "The normal challenge like most people, like most institutions it is the execution part"*

*G03 "There is lack of communication that goes through."*

*G04 "So that is how I then found that the implementation of strategy becomes a bit better because that is where the problem is generally, strategy implementation and ensuring that there is buy-in and effective implementation by everybody in the organization and it starts from the top."*

*G02 "The main challenge is, the buy-in by business"*

*G02 "business does not appreciate how strategy links with their day-to-day processes"*

*G07 "Okay some of the challenges come from, there are certain strategies that come from a group environment which probably is not domiciled in your country, that are not applicable to your market. So to reconcile the 2 (two) has always been a challenge."*

The analysis of the literature revealed that inadequate planning, unclear responsibility, a lack of knowledge of the organizational structure, an inability to manage change, and a failure to provide the necessary resources when needed are the main causes of strategy implementation failure (Doeleman et.al., 2021). The responses of a majority of the participants alluded to the findings from the literature and stated that the organisation, could be hindered in implementing its strategy by issues such as reporting structure, decentralisation of operations, low staff competency, high staff turnover, misalignments,

manual systems, inadequate analysis of system needs, non-compliance with policies, inadequate policy reviews, and resource scarcity. Given the commonalities between the factors found in the literature review and the interview responses, there are common issues that may be expected and planned for in the implementation of the strategy.

Key points arising from the participants' responses was that implementation of strategies was found to need careful consideration of organisational structure. The organisation's reporting structure led to a number of secondary issues, such as inefficient communication channels, a lack of alignment between the strategy and operations, and decentralised operations that produced inefficiencies and inaccurate information. Some participants felt that inadequate examination of policies meant that the policy did not provide for the circumstances under which the strategy would succeed. It was mentioned that documenting and reviewing policies and procedures offers the structural direction and specifies the function of people and technology in terms of how they need to operate in order to fulfill the strategy. A number of participants mentioned that in their organisation, the organisational structure, technological infrastructure, and human resource capabilities were never assessed for alignment with the strategy and did not match the strategy.

## **Solutions**

It has been said in the literature that strategy implementation must not be viewed as an opponent but rather an ally that needs to be embraced to improve organisational performance (Crittenden & Crittenden, 2008). Several participants acknowledge the availability of levers that could be pulled to drive performance and improve on strategy implementation. On that note, participants agreed that organisational configuration could be used as one of the levers for effective strategy implementation. In addition, the importance of change management was highlighted by some of the participants as very critical in dealing with behaviour of the people in the organisation. Moreover, the participants mentioned that nothing could be achieved without effective leadership combined with effective communication and engagement at all levels. Similarly, existing literature emphasises the importance of good strategy formulation and effective strategy implementation (Wołczek, 2018). Although some organisations seem to have mastered the art of strategy implementation, a majority of organisations about 50-90% still struggle with implementation(Wołczek, 2018).

### **6.3.1 Structural Factors**

#### **Organisational structure**

It has been said by the participants in the interviews that structure was what implemented strategy such that a structure that was not aligned to strategic requirements would affect efficient strategy implementation. In addition, it was important to ensure that the organisation was organised in such a way that there was no room for silos. Structures comprise organisational configurations that allow for effective operation, whereas management skills refer to the behavioral activities of managers inside structures (Olson et al., 2005). Majority of participants agreed that strategy implementation takes place within an organisational framework and is accomplished through managerial abilities.

Furthermore, just as it appeared in the literature review, participants asserted a consensus regarding to clarity of priorities in relation to organisational structure. This was associated with poor cross-functional coordination. Participants alluded to the concept of formalisation, centralisation, and specialisation being three structural characteristics that influence strategy implementation.

### **6.3.2 Resource Allocation Factors**

The issue of resources was featured by all participants as a key impediment to strategy execution. Resources needed to fulfill strategic objectives include technological, physical, human, financial, and time resources (Mailu et al., 2018). It was mentioned by most participants that for successful strategy execution, the organization must provide the necessary resources to support the strategy. Some participants felt it is vital to note that resources alone do not guarantee successful plan execution unless they are properly coupled with the other factors that affect processes. As a result, it was stated that addressing one issue while leaving others unaddressed will not yield the results required for plan implementation. However, according to research, a majority of senior managers believed that aligning operational strategies with resource availability assures greater success in strategy implementation (Obeidat et. Al., 2017).

Some of the following are verbatim excerpts from participants in relation to resource allocation:

*G04 "I think that is one major one then the other one is resources. Resources here are sometimes there is a misalignment between what the strategy demands and what is available on the ground in terms of okay, people, yes numbers, but money itself, time itself"*



*G07 “So you would need to understand what are your key drivers of your business. 60-80% (Sixty to eighty per centum) which units or which area needs to be empowered to ensure that objectives or overall the strategy is achieved. That is where you allocate more resources.”*

*GO6 “I would say resources they are always a constraint.”*

*G03 “There is quite a number of challenges that you face. I would say the principal one is availability of funds.”*

### **6.3.3 Processes**

A few participants emphasised the importance of processes in organisations as they guide the actions of the people and help them operate a seamless service delivery. It was mentioned in the literature that processes define tasks to be carried out (Caputo et al., 2019). Most participants agreed that all actions in organisations have a number of processes and procedures that employees must follow while executing their duties. They mentioned that the processes are usually owned by the heads of the departments who have the responsibility of ensuring that they are followed. Processes are put in place to achieve a certain objective and standard in the output of work (Burgelman et al., 2018). Several standards have been defined for the management of processes (Burgelman et al., 2018). One participant referred to the use of ISO 90001/ 2015 as a process his organisation has implemented to ensure quality processes which also extends to the strategy implementation process. He mentioned that the processes are guided by well documented policies and procedure manuals. Processes are guided by policy documents that define the required processes which are then supported by procedure manuals that define the processes and give a step-by-step direction that is to be followed in execution of the process (Caputo et al., 2019).

It was mentioned further by the same participant that to achieve efficient application of processes, process champions are elected whose main duty is to monitor compliance and are a key component of performance management. In support, literature provided that process monitoring is also built into the performance management system in order to ensure its effectiveness and achieve targets that have been set by the company or department (Caputo et al., 2019). In terms of some organisations, some of the participants mentioned that they have adopted a process approach for strategy implementation where the strategy is defined into different action items through a cascading process that seeks to translate strategic objective into everyday duties and allocated to different action owners and

monitored on a regular basis on predefined dashboards that show performance at given times.

A process-based strategy implementation technique focuses on systematic process management for effective fulfillment of strategic objectives that benefit the organization (Gębczyńska, 2016). Mechanisms that enable the creation and monitoring of strategic post-process objectives are required for the process method (Gębczyńska, 2016). The company strategy must be implemented and reflected in specific plans and schedules in order to be effective. Following that, execution should be delegated to various departments, processes, and persons.

#### **6.3.4 Projects**

A few of the participants mentioned that they had opted to define their strategy implementation in terms of mini projects geared towards ensuring effective strategy implementation. The participants described that they translated the strategy objectives into initiatives which are then allocated to project owners and a project sponsor. The finding was different from what was studied in the literature and not fully aligned to BPM. However, since the aim of the paper is to improve strategy implementation through BPM the investigation was not taken any further. However, it could be interesting to investigate the concept further in another research.

### **6.4 Discussion of results for question 3**

Research Question 3: What role can business process management play in improving strategy implementation?
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#### **6.4.1 General Discussion on Processes and BPM**

In response to this question, there was a consensus from a majority participants in relation to the importance and benefits of integrating strategy execution with BPM. A crucial component of management is process management. Process management must adhere to the organisation's declared strategic goals, design, implementation of the process architecture, and established metrics. To manage these processes well, it must be in line with organisational goals and management training. Companies of all sizes and sorts face intense competition in the modern world (Bolboli & Reiche, 2013). Business Process Management (BPM) is used to enhance procedures so businesses may remain competitive,

enhance results, and adapt to the market. So, we can define business process management as a methodical approach to process mapping, analysis, and improvement. Society must adjust to new technology as a result of the adoption of the fourth industrial revolution and its digital transformation (Dumas, La Rosa, Mendling, & Reijers, 2018).

These ideas were expressed by participants as indicated by a select few below:

*G01 “my formula is process, strategy, structure”*

*G07 “each department has one or a number of processes that they should have or they have in place to ensure that they deliver. Therefore the departmental heads own those processes and they ensure that their teams follow those processes.”*

*G11 “the process is put in place to achieve a certain agenda or to put in certain controls, so to get that result those processes have to be followed.”*

It was supported by the participants that BPM supports firms in the short term by lowering expenses and boosting productivity. However, a few participants felt that in the long-term, BPM reduces organisational agility through having to comply with predefined processes. However, a majority of participants felt that any business, in both the public and private sectors, can benefit from using BPM by becoming more effective, agile, and successful. We may point out that organizations can gain greatly from implementing BPM (Ubaid & Dweri, 2020).

#### **6.4.2 BPM**

A few of the participants confirmed that they were using a form of business process management in their organisations. BPM has been defined as a management discipline that integrates strategy and organisational objectives by focusing on end-to-end processes (Rentes et al., 2019). The participants mentioned that the business process management was commenced with documenting the processes that the organisation has in place. Thereafter, the processes are streamlined. However a few of the participants stated that their attempts to implement business process management has been without tangible results. It was highlighted in the literature that the success rate for BPM is influenced by the organisations level of agility to enable fast and easy decision making allowing for the processes to respond to strategy requirements quickly (Caputo et al., 2019). Furthermore, it was confirmed by a majority that BPM presents a structured approach to ensure that work is

done efficiently. For example one participant mentioned that he believed that processes are developed to either address a challenge or to improve efficiency. He went on to mention that he also believed implementing BPM also helps to standardise activities across the organisation.

Furthermore, it was stated by most participants that adoption of a BPM program enables the business to draw lessons and understand how certain activities are delivered. It was said that this is so because BPM encourages the documentation of all processes and promotes uniformity of action. Similarly, the participants emphasised the importance while implementing a process to monitor and ensure that the purpose is being achieved. Furthermore, one participant stated that through experience in his former organisation that BPM gives organisations a platform to realise opportunities for continuous improvement. It encompasses the strategy, structure and organisational culture. The main objective of BPM is to shift organisations from following a functional structure to process orientation. Research reveals that BPM adoption has helped a number of organisations to improve their performance (Rentes et al., 2019). BPM simplifies activities and, makes it easy to train people and get them to understand their role in the process and its impact better. This helps bring uniformity of actions while also guaranteeing some sort of security of results. For business process management to be successful it is important for the leadership team to ensure that there is adequate engagement with employees at all levels to get their understanding and also offer guidance. It has been found that BPM provides organisations with a systematic way for achieving strategic objectives.

However, on the contrary, about two participants mentioned that they believed that BPM on its own cannot have much influence on strategy implementation because it still remains dependent on the actions of the individual responsible for carrying out the process. In addition, the participants alluded to the fact that BPM success like strategy implementation is dependent on the organisation's aggression in ensuring that the process is implemented. On the same note, some participants felt that monitoring for results is another important factor. Furthermore, it is equally important to have the ability to adjust your vision to the prevailing economic requirements. Another related view from some of the participants was that BPM was more suitable for stable environments and often failed to produce similar results if the environment is unstable. Research has also reported some failures in BPM however, most findings indicated that BPM failed as a results of poor alignment with organisational strategy (Rentes et al., 2019). To be successful, the BPM program should consist of clearly defined steps that translate into a life-cycle that is aligned with the organisation's strategic objectives as BPM methods are based on the process architecture thus capturing the relationship between key business processes, support processes and their alignment to the

organisation's strategic objectives. Moreover, research has not completely denied the usefulness of BPM as it was found that it can assist management to execute their strategic program which promotes improved correspondence between strategy and business processes (Gębczyńska, 2016).

On the positive side, a majority of participants mentioned that they found BPM to bring some form of stability while on the other hand it came with rigidity which affects improvement as situations change. The main purpose of BPM is to increase the efficiency of all business processes in the organisation (Gębczyńska, 2016). It is mentioned in the literature that BPM is an important element in strategy implementation therefore strategy implementation and BPM have to be linked to improve chances of the strategy's success (Rentes et al., 2019). It was provided in the literature BPM assumes the existence of strategy and therefore start with strategy validation (Syed et al., 2018). In that regard, BPM only comes after strategy formulation. However, for either strategy implementation or BPM to be successful, it is imperative that they both be aligned. For alignment of BPM to strategic objectives, participants suggested that the organisation needs to outline the assessment of its objectives and performance indicators. It was also stated that process capabilities must be considered during strategy formulation. Major processes that support strategic objectives should be identified and prioritised (Rentes et al., 2019). The key function of strategic management is ensuring that it is implemented in the organisation's daily operational processes.

The most important process improvements occur on the operating level however, for maximum benefit, first a framework for principles of process performance at the strategic level must be established (Gębczyńska, 2016).

Business process management (BPM) is an organised way of aligning fundamental company activities and other important elements of operations (Bergh, 2018). On the other hand, BPM has also been defined as a way of achieving corporate goals through managing critical business processes (Lahajnar & Rožanec, 2016). BPM has also been described as a management discipline that features corporate strategy and customer requirements through improvement of key processes. Its main objective is to ensure that major activities are well mapped out documented with a focus on quality performance. For BPM to be efficient, there must be well documented procedures and systems. All individual processes are measured for quality performance and alignment with corporate goals. If it is found that there are gaps in performance the root causes must be determined. Adoption of BPM can result in enhanced high-performance processes giving the organisation a competitive advantage. The organisation can stop non-value adding processes and has an improved flexibility for

process improvement. It can be seen from the different definitions that BPM is a complex issue that encompasses a number of different areas, including strategy, culture, alignment and leadership control.

Despite BPM having the ability to improve company performance, most companies however, fail to properly implement BPM (Caputo et.al, 2019) . Failures of BPM are usually related to poor alignment to corporate strategy and poor company structure. There are five enablers to BPM (Danilova, 2019). Firstly, it is the process design which deals with specification of tasks to be performed. Secondly, the process must be supported by metrics that are aligned to the corporate strategy and customer needs. Thirdly, the company must train process performers who fully understand the process. Fourthly, there must be properly aligned infrastructure in the form of information technology and human resource systems that are properly aligned to support the new processes (Erasmus et.al, 2018). Lastly, there must be process owners in senior management who will assume full responsibility for the process (Erasmus et al., 2018).

It is also important to mention that there are many different types of business processes (de Oliveira et.al, 2018). These include operational processes whose main concern is the production and delivery of services to customers (Ferreira, Neto, & Batista, 2019). Next, there are support processes whose main job is to support operational processes. Thereafter, there are direction setting processes which are concerned with strategy formulation and policy development. Lastly, there are managerial processes which are concerned with management of the whole value chain.

BPM enables organisations to take advantage of their internal resources and external potentials (Ferreira et al., 2019). Product and service differentiation are not the only drivers for successful organisation as it has been found that effective management of business processes is equally important (Lahajnar & Rožanec, 2016). BPM should be viewed as a standard for best practice techniques and tools. BPM can be adopted by organisations in different industries as forms of different sizes and sectors have recorded increased performance after adopting BPM (Rentes et al., 2018). The main aim of BPM is to change the company structure from functional to process oriented. It has been found that in the long run, function oriented firms were outperformed by process oriented firms.

Over the years a number of companies have come to see the value of BPM as an enabler of high performance (Syed et. al. 2018). Companies have shown keen interest in adopting and applying BPM techniques to achieve process related changes (Syed et.al., 2018).

Like strategy implementation, successful implementation of BPM initiatives has not been without its challenges, and a number of challenges have been faced (Syed et. al., 2018). Challenges include among other things, lack of management support through commitment of resources and lack of leadership, poor communication of BPM plans and poor change management (Syed et. al., 2018).

### 6.5 Linking Themes to Research Questions

Research Questions	Research Question	Theme
Research Question 1	What are the main hurdles affecting strategy execution?	The main hurdles impeding on strategy implementation are organisational structure, unavailability of resources and people capabilities.
Research Question 2	What are the contextual factors that bring about strategy implementation hurdles and how can organisations avoid them to improve strategy implementation performance?	Strategy communication channels should be inclusive and engaging in a two-way approach to all stakeholders at different levels. Capabilities of the people were another important factor.
Research Question 3	What role can business process management play in improving strategy implementation?	Agile and flexible elements such as BPM could enhance strategy implementation and improve company-wide adoption could help curtail strategy implementation hurdles

### 6.6 Strategy Execution Considerations for Participants Assertions

Strategy is mostly implemented through business processes, which are defined by activities or tasks that allow strategies to function. The primary function of business processes is to put strategy into action by directing how work is completed. People provide knowledge,

skills, and competences to business processes, while technology contributes tools and techniques to make the process more efficient. Thus, for the effectiveness of strategy execution, there is a socio-technical influence on business operations. This study's empirical findings generated socio-technical elements that influence strategy execution. They are intended to be the foundation upon which organizational management can select and support strategic outcomes. Communication, training, adaptation, control, integration, structure, and policy were discovered to be factors that facilitate plan execution. Key concerns arising from the findings were determined based on the empirical evidence. The organizational structure contextualized the majority of obstacles, such as people and technology, by having a favorable impact on organizational strategy, operations, and execution. Effectively, the organizational structure is the most crucial point of departure, and it has an impact on the key resources that carry out the strategy. As a result, its influence extends beyond traditional routes of communication. The structure determines how people, technology, and reporting are organized, which effects the success of the work flow in achieving the plan.

Structure, for example, increases efficiencies by clarifying duties, reporting lines, dispersing people and technology across the entire organization, distributing capability, and facilitating decision-making. Structure establishes the road map for how procedures must be created in order to have the right people and technology producing the right results. Another important enabler for successful strategy implementation is policy. Policy is critical for providing structure advice as well as giving people and technology rules on how to work within the organization. It is a thoughtful appraisal of the status quo that creates a plan for the strategy's resource capacity. Adopting policy in the organization creates a level of conformity, which is critical for influencing plan implementation. The policy review creates the circumstances for flexibility, and consequently transformation in response to measurement outcomes. Finally, purposeful and consistent communication was discovered to be the most important and overarching enabler for strategy execution.

According to the BPM framework, this enabler is required for each phase of strategy implementation. Communication ensures that management and employees are on the same page. It also ensures that what is meant to be accomplished and what is available as resources on the ground are in sync. It ensures that all affected parties provide consistent input throughout the implementation stages, that there is feedback for policy review, and that there is a consultation process during planning and transformation. As a result, adaptability becomes the culture of the organization, information and reporting are accurate, employee buy-in is acquired, and this holistically provides congruence between people, processes, and the strategy.



## **6.7 Conclusion**

This chapter presented a nexus between literature and findings. The chapter offered an opportunity for data triangulation whereby the findings were compared to empirical debate already presented in the literature review section of this report. Lastly, the emerging themes were linked to research questions as well. The next chapter is the final chapter of the report and provides conclusions and recommendations.

Therefore, BPM has been found to be an important element in successful strategy implementation. BPM supports corporate strategy through strategically aligning internal processes and structures. Furthermore, for BPM to be successful it must be introduced by the top management (Rentes et al., 2018).

## **CHAPTER 7 – CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **7.1 Introduction**

This chapter will conclude the study by summarising the key research findings in relation to the research aims which were to examine main hurdles in strategy implementation, determine contextual factors that bring about strategy implementation hurdles and methods of curtailing those and finally to discover what role business process management could play in strategy execution. The chapter also looks into the role and contribution of the findings, considers theoretical and practical implications of the results and makes recommendations for future research. The chapter begins with a brief overview of the chapters before moving on to principal conclusions from the research.

### **7.2 Overview of Chapters**

Chapter One provided the orientation and rationale for this investigation. It set the tone for the entire investigation and presented a cogent argument and justification for the type of the inquiry. A background presentation also featured the problem statement and research objectives. Chapter Two was focused on the empirical and theoretical literature review. Its purpose was to provide an account of scientific evidence, mapping outcome to operationalised objectives of this study. The review examined hurdles of strategy implementation and associated factors that cause such hurdles. Methods of curtailing these factors were discussed and linked to the role that BPM could play in strategy execution. Chapter Three gave the research questions as built from the literature and aligned to the research aims. Chapter Four was centered around methodological trajectory of this study. In this chapter, procedures and activities, including philosophical assumptions and research design. Furthermore, the population, sampling strategies, data collection and data analysis activities were discussed in this chapter. Chapter Five focused on the presentation of findings. The presentation was supported by a researcher's contextualisation of each account of analysed data on one hand while further juxtaposed to the verbatim *in vivo* quotations of the participants. These findings were organized in line with the research objectives. The chapter ended up with presentation of three emerging themes. Finally chapter six provided a discussion of the findings, linking them to literature, which in itself provided an opportunity for data triangulation.

### **7.3 Principal Conclusions**

Principal conclusions emanating from this study are derived from the final themes that emerged from the analysis of findings in Chapter 5 of this report. The organisation and layout of this section is informed by each of the themes as follows:

#### **7.3.1 Main hurdles affecting strategy implementation**

The research was designed to determine what strategy implementation hurdles are faced by organisations and begins by looking how companies defined their strategies and how they carried it forward to the rest of the organisation that is not part of formulation. The study found in alignment with the literature that strategy implementation was considered complex and tainted with a number of challenges (Cândido & Santos, 2019). This was the case across different industries and different countries. This was also confirmed in the literature wherein it was found that obstacles to strategy implementation are the same for different type of organisations as studies from different companies in different industries all gave similar results (Vigfússon et al.,2021). The results that emerged showed that the biggest challenges was centered around people, resources, organisational structure and communication. Hurdles included poor communication and definition of company vision, lack of strategy buy-in and mis-aligned structure to company strategy. The interlink between strategy, structure and behaviour was also confirmed.

#### **7.3.2 contextual factors for organisations**

The research findings indicated a number of challenges that are faced by organisations during strategy implementation. For example, lack of understanding of vision, lack of buy-in, poor communication and ineffective leadership were listed among the top challenges for strategy implementation across the different industries and different countries (Ivančić, 2013). A common leadership mistake in the different organisations is putting more effort in strategy formulation and completely disregarding implementation (Bolboli & Reiche, 2013). It was mentioned that a possible cause of this was the capacity of the leadership team as strategy implementation has been found to be complex.

Furthermore, the results revealed that the environment in which the organisation operated had an enormous influence on strategy implementation such that the leadership team had a responsibility to ensure that they really understood the environment and built internal capabilities to enable them to efficiently respond to the demands of the environment. Success in strategy implementation comes with the availability of systems and therefore it is

important for organisations to be systems oriented. Wołczek, (2018) agrees that there are a number of factors that lead to poor strategy implementation. He mentions that the main factors include poorly developed leadership skills, poor communication and poor change management.

Strategy implementation is considered the most critical stage in the strategy process (Wołczek, 2018). The findings are supported by the Six silent killers to strategy implementation as identified by Beer and Eisenstat (2000) with the aim of assisting managers to confront and overcome these challenges and thus improve their organisational performance. Listed as killers included top-down or laissez-fair management; unclear strategy and conflicting priorities; ineffective senior management; poor vertical communication; poor coordination across functions and lastly inadequate down the line leadership skills and development.

The other key aspect of the findings in this study that there was lack of inclusive consultation and engagement communication in organisations where this study was conducted. Based on the outcomes of the findings and participants assertions, it is hereby concluded that inclusivity and engagement is of paramount importance for effective strategy implementation.

### **7.3.3 Role of BPM in strategy implementation**

The conclusions of whether BPM can play a role in improving strategy implementation were primarily about recommending an alternative approach to strategy execution by systematically addressing the obstacles while drawing on the enablers. As a result, the study used the BPM framework as a guiding principle to create a refined framework that borrows from the well-established BPM framework while accounting for the socio-technical elements impacting strategic change. By drawing on empirical data, the goal was to establish a framework for more consciously managing the strategy implementation process throughout the BPM lifecycle.

BPM is an important element in strategy implementation therefore, strategy implementation and BPM have to be linked to improve chances of the strategy's success (Rentes et al., 2019). It was found that for alignment of BPM to strategic objectives, organisations need to outline the assessment of its objectives and performance indicators which must then be measured against strategic objectives. In addition, the results revealed that process

capabilities must be considered during strategy formulation. Contradictory findings were noted with regard to the definition of processes. Some participants suggested that processes were to be defined before strategy was put in place while other stated that processes must be defined once the strategy is in place. However, both literature and research are in agreement that major processes that support strategic objectives should be identified and prioritised (van Looy & van den Bergh, 2018). The key function of strategic management is ensuring that it is implemented in the organisation's daily operational processes.

## **7.2 Theoretical Conclusions**

This study's theoretical contribution is new insights on strategy implementation under the direction of the BPM framework. This study reveals fresh data about strategy implementation in the context of BPM. BPM was thought to play a vital role in addressing the link between strategic considerations and socio-technical influences, but no research has addressed this major relationship to yet. An interpretive research methodology was used to provide contextual information, allowing fresh viewpoints to be examined and changing how strategy implementation and its associated hurdles could be approached. This study concludes that the BPM theory should be adopted due to the principles of BPM which give a definitive method of handling actions therefore allowing for strategy to be defined into the BPM life cycle and solving for the problem of complexity in strategy implementation.

## **7.3 implications for practice**

This study's practical value is that it provides an in-depth understanding of the sociotechnical variables that allow strategy to be successfully executed. Furthermore, the study offers a pragmatic way to integrating these socio-technical factors with BPM frameworks, as well as an in-depth examination of the issues at each stage of the BPM lifecycle. As a result, there is a systematic method to strategy implementation that anticipates strategy influences and adheres to the Enterprise architecture. The research findings are useful for strategists, organisations embarking on strategic change, and managers in charge of strategy implementation. The proposed broad framework will help organizations predict socio-technical elements that influence the occurrence and address them methodically. Furthermore, bricolage notions bring new insights into how organizations might begin on strategic change within limited circumstances. Integration of BPM requires understanding of different typologies that should be carefully selected to suit organisational needs. Below is a list of some of the most popular BPM methodologies and theoretical frameworks.

#### **7.4 Limitations of the Study**

Qualitative research is marred with a number of limitations. Firstly, qualitative research studies have an inherent risk of researcher bias. Secondly, the research findings from qualitative research are often deemed not measurable or provable. Another limitation is that qualitative research was not easy to repeat and therefore difficult to generalise findings from the sample to the population. Also, there was a possibility of participants misrepresenting information with the aim of painting a good picture on their work. Lastly, qualitative research by its very nature is subjective therefore making it difficult to investigate causation of identified problems. The study was a cross-sectional study, which limited the researcher to extend different intervals for the research and further observations.

The following specific limitations of this research study were noted:

- i. Sampling followed a non-probability sampling base from the researcher's professional network therefore compromising the study's generalisation possibilities.
- ii. The researcher's experience level in conducting semi-structured interviews and analysing qualitative data was limited to the current study.
- iii. Some interviews were conducted virtually therefore limiting the opportunity to detect non-verbal cues such as discomfort on specific discussions therefore limiting these to word choice and tone of voice.
- iv. The researcher was personally acquainted with the interview participants which could have influenced the depth to which the participants offered information perceived as negative.

#### **7.5 Suggestions for Future Research**

There is scanty research on the theoretical and pragmatic nexus between BPM and strategy execution. This gap needs to be thoroughly investigated in other related topics within the scope of this study using qualitative research, as this study has used. The reason for more studies within the interpretive paradigm is predicated by the need to get more perspectives, views and opinions of managers from a broader view. One of the strategies that could be employed could be multiple case studies to provide inter-generalisation capability.

Furthermore, more studies using mixed methods could be beneficial to both knowledge creation and professional practice as mixed methods always provide a triangulatory capability within the principles of "what works" philosophy.

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## **Appendix 1: Research Questions**

### Research Question 1: What are the main hurdles affecting strategy execution?

13. What is your organisation's strategy orientation? (reactive/proactive/ preactive)
  - c. Who is responsible for setting the tone of what the orientation should be?
  - d. In the past, what indicators guided what the orientation should be?
  
14. How are your corporate strategic decisions made?
  - c. Who are the responsible people for the decisions?
  - d. What role do they play?
  
15. What challenges, if any, have you faced when implementing strategy?
  - e. In your observation, what was the cause of these challenges?
  - f. Could the challenges have been avoided?
  - g. At what level of implementation are the challenges often met?
  - h. Are they related to a particular department or they are organisation wide?

### Research Question 2: What are the contextual factors that bring about strategy implementation hurdles and how can organisations avoid them to improve strategy implementation performance?

16. What is it in an organisation could bring about strategy implementation hurdles?
  - c. Please share examples, if any, of strategy implementation hurdles either from experience or observation and how they came about?
  - d. How were these hurdles identified?
  
17. What is your approach to strategy implementation?
  - d. How is the approach communicated to the rest of the team?
  - e. How is consistency in the message ensured?
  - f. How often is the approach reviewed?
  
18. In your knowledge/ experience/ observation, what factors influence successful strategy implementation?
  - e. How is the company organized (structures)?
  - f. How does the company equip the leadership team to capacitate them for strategy implementation?
  - g. How are resources allocated for strategy implementation?
  - h. How is the work organized?

19. What steps do you take to ensure that your strategy is implemented?
- c. How is success of your strategy implementation measured?
  - d. What steps were taken in the past to remove implementation obstacles?
20. What important lessons have you learned in your strategy implementation journey?
- c. How have you applied these lessons to improve strategy implementation?
  - d. How have they assisted the organisation?

**Research Question 3: What role can business process management play in improving strategy implementation?**

21. How are processes managed in your organisation?
- e. How were they previously managed?
  - f. Who is involved in the management of processes?
  - g. What is their role?
  - h. What kind of factors play a role in influencing execution of processes?
22. What is your understanding of business process management?
- f. How should it be applied in organisations?
  - g. What impact does it have?
  - h. What are the advantages and disadvantages of having a BPM?
  - i. How can BPM be aligned to corporate strategy?
  - j. At what point should the alignment happen? (planning/ formulation/ implementation)
23. How can BPM be used, if deemed useful, to guide strategy implementation?
- d. What impact could BPM have on strategy implementation?
  - e. What challenges could be faced when using BPM for strategy implementation?
  - f. How can BPM affect achievement of strategic objectives?
24. What role if any, can BPM play in strategy implementation?
- c. How could the role be defined?
  - d. How could an organisation take advantage of BPM for successful strategy implementation?

**APPENDIX 2: List of Respondents**

Lungile Nxumalo	Continuous Improvement Executive
Brightwell Nkambule	Commissioner General
Eugene Simelane	Strategy Executive
Zithulele Gina	Strategy Executive
Dr. Gerrit Sandrock	Director, former CEO
Dr. Makuzwa	CEO
Dumi Dliwayo	CFO
Sydney Sichula	CEO/ Strategy Executive
Derek Hendrikz	Strategy consultant
Maloba Musenge	COO
Mlungisi Lukhele	MD
Zandile	Chief Risk Officer

### **APPENDIX 3: NON DISCLOSURE AGREEMENT SAMPLE**

## CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

I \_\_\_\_\_ confirm that I have been contracted by Gcinekile Nkambule to do transcriptions for her research project. I confirm that I will keep all information shared with me confidential. I will return all copies to her and will not keep copies for myself after completing the project.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Full Name : \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 4: LIST OF CODES



benefits of Process Management can be increased efficiencies.	BPM
Business Process Improvement	BPM
Business Process Management	BPM
Business Process Management is fine for a stable environment	BPM
Business Process Re-engineering	BPM
management of processes	BPM
managing the processes of the business so that they operate efficiently.	BPM
significant impact if it is managed properly	BPM
Strategy and Business Process Improvement because those 2 (two) they really go together	BPM
cascade the Strategy Plan to the Departments	Cascading
cascading is not effective enough	Cascading
strategy it is cascaded into the next level of implementation because at the Organizational Level it is the Organizational Strategy	Cascading
they then cascade everything that needs to be done and keep the information flowing.	Cascading
challenges to strategy	Challenges SI
challenges with execution has been that people	Challenges SI
change management	Challenges SI
could these challenges have been avoided	Challenges SI
expectations which are not eh, interlinking	Challenges SI
level were such challenges faced	Challenges SI
normal challenge like most people, like most	Challenges SI

institutions it is the execution part	
not appreciating where you are taking the Organization to	Challenges SI
strategy implementations challenges are always	Challenges SI
upper level there have been less challenges	Challenges SI
after you communicate you also engage	Communication
anything that needs to be done is communicated through the heads of department	Communication
communicate what is relevant not all	Communication
communication is very key.  MS NXUMALO: Hmm.	Communication
communication so those channels you must have defined	Communication
Engage them or get their understanding. If there is a misunderstanding you will be able to pick it (up) and provide guidance	Communication
feedback loop	Communication
getting the message accross	Communication
make the engagements to be as informal as you possibly can	Communication
town hall sessions	Communication
You interact also as, as, as head of department, taking time to interact with the lower levels	Communication
at planning stage you must align your dreams to your capacity	Formulation
development of the strategy itself is not a problem	Formulation
difference between the scope of strategy in a small business than in the bigger corporates	Formulation

factors that are contributing to the change in environment then you find a mitigation plan but most of the time	Formulation
for you or for the Organization to then fulfil that mandate you need to craft a strategy.	Formulation
guiding indicators	Formulation
strategy formulation and setting is the easier part	Formulation
strategy planning is based on information	Formulation
strategy will identify areas that you need to focus on	Formulation
As a manger you are a leader	leadership
at Ex-Co I am not representing strategy. I am representing the Organization	leadership
capacitation of the leadership team	leadership
importance of leadership in strategy	leadership
it is the responsibility of the departmental heads	leadership
lack of effective leadership	leadership
leadership is more operational,	leadership
responsibility for strategic tone or direction	leadership
the approach that I try to take it is an inclusive one	leadership
the leadership	leadership
balance score card.	measurement
different targets in our score cards that don't relate to the target	measurement
excel in our performance, individual performance however you find that the strategy is not delivered	measurement

measurable deliverables the lead measures and the lag	measurement
Performance Contract	measurement
performance contract should be linked to the strategy targets	measurement
specific standard for measuring performance for the projects.	measurement
You know what you want to achieve, so you come up with a strategy on how you are going to achieve that	measurement
you must have a score card against which you will measure yourself	measurement
consistency	Monitoring
consistent monitoring of the environment	Monitoring
continuous improvement of the processes	Monitoring
delegate in terms of monitoring implementation and reporting	Monitoring
strategy monitoring	Monitoring
adjustment to structure they normally take a bit of a challenge	organisational structure
departments that are not clearly mapped to the corporate objectives	organisational structure
put in place a structure that is going to assist you implement	organisational structure
structure follows development of a strategy	organisational structure
the way the company is structured	organisational structure
mindset shift employees	People
people	People
recruiting relevant people into the Organization	People

A process also ensures continuity	processes
a process also gives the platform for opportunities how to continuously improve your operations	processes
a process is always developed to address a challenge or to improve efficiency.	processes
automate that process it eliminates a lot of inefficiencies	processes
business does not appreciate how strategy links with their day-to-day processes	processes
Business Process is very, very important because it also eliminates inefficiencies.	processes
clear demonstration of why do you need a process in that aspect of the business	processes
critical for processes eh to be clearly defined for delivery of the strategy	processes
dapting the processes to the strategy has taken longer	processes
define our processes	processes
departmental heads own those processes and they ensure that their teams follow those processes	processes
disturbing the smooth running of the processes	processes
documenting Business Processes it is very important	processes
each department has one or a number of processes that they should have or they have in place to ensure that they deliver	processes
in every area of operation there is a process	processes
ISO 9000 120/15	processes

know when it then becomes a procedure not a process	processes
neglecting the day-to-day processes and pursuing change	processes
o implementing a process talks to what, you need to be very clear on what the process intends to achieve.	processes
process based approach strategy	processes
process is put in place to achieve a certain agenda or to put in certain controls,	processes
Processes speak to the operations so we have got operation	processes
start with the processes the processes will guide your strategy	processes
to get that result those processes have to be followed	processes
you develop a process to achieve a certain objective or agenda	processes
a project has a start date and an end date	projects
allocated in relation to their area of expertise and responsibility	projects
here is Strategy which is projects and then there is processes	projects
Not everyone will participate in the projects	projects
project approach forces people to focus on the strategic objectives	projects
Strategy as it is implemented, it is implemented through projects or programs	projects
Strategy is projects	projects

strategy is projects based	projects
Annual Operational Plan	Strategy implementation
being agile enough and empowered	Strategy implementation
break each year into annual operational plans so that is how we operationalize the strategy	Strategy implementation
business is just interested in running the business while strategy seeks to change the organization	Strategy implementation
corporate culture	Strategy implementation
corporate strategic orientation	Strategy implementation
definite eh, tenants (?) that you need to follow in implementing it.	Strategy implementation
ensure that our alignment is standard across t	Strategy implementation
he success rate has depended on how agile that business is.	Strategy implementation
if the culture of that institution is wrong, the strategy won't work.	Strategy implementation
if you ignore the future you are never going to effectively implement the strategy	Strategy implementation
implementation from time to time I need to check what is the progress, are there any challenges	Strategy implementation
It helps to have some kind of a small team	Strategy implementation
Manageable objectives, the fewer the better	Strategy implementation
managing your risk	Strategy implementation
Most of the work will be done outside of that camp	Strategy implementation
need to highlight what is the end game	Strategy implementation
need to understand what are your key drivers of your business.	Strategy implementation

programs are informed by the focus areas	Strategy implementation
programs that you want to put in place in order for the strategy to work	Strategy implementation
re-prioritize in terms of how we are going to operate the company	Strategy implementation
refocusing the agenda for Ex-Co meetings	Strategy implementation
resource allocation	Strategy implementation
buy-in from Executive	strategy ownership
owned by a team not one individual	strategy ownership
ownership of strategy	strategy ownership
strategy should be, wholly owned by all executives	strategy ownership
very important to have an appreciation that each person the role he/she is in	strategy ownership
You can't delegate strategy as a Head of the Organization	strategy ownership
Octology	systems
systems based approach	systems
<b>Code Name</b>	<b>Theme</b>
alignment between Strategy and Business Processes	
continuous engagement is very, very important even eh, the progress.	
critical to ensure these are aligned	
Head of the Organization sets the tone in terms of the Strategic Direction	
Executive in terms of overseeing, in terms of facilitating their implementation of the action items in the Operational Plan	



inconsistency across projects on the weights	
innovative means of proceeding	
my formula is process, strategy, structure	
allowing based on what our strategy is driving, these are the key resources that are required, you pay attention on those to ensure that they are empowered or they are taken care of.	
you need to break the silos.	
Practical Success Practice	
Smaller businesses I think they are more reactive.	
Strategic Development and Implementation there is a process for that.	
Strategy is not a thing that you do on the side	
Strategy it is something unique	
structured approach that is put in place to ensure that there are certain processes that are followed, adopted, or put in a workplace to ensure that work is done	

## APPENDIX 5: ETHICAL CLERANCE

### GIBS ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPLICATION FORM 2021/22

#### G. APPROVALS FOR/OFF THIS APPLICATION

When the applicant is a student of GIBS, the applicant must please ensure that the supervisor and co-supervisor (where relevant) has signed the form before submission

#### STUDENT RESEARCHER/APPLICANT:

29. I affirm that all relevant information has been provided in this form and its attachments and that all statements made are correct.

Student Researcher's Name in capital letters:	GCINEKILE NKAMBULE
Date:	11 Jul 2022
Supervisor Name in capital letters:	CAREN BRENDA SCHEEPERS
Date:	18 Jul 2022
Co-supervisor Name in capital letters:	
Date:	11 Jul 2022

**Note:** GIBS shall do everything in its power to protect the personal information supplied herein, in accordance to its company privacy policies as well the Protection of Personal Information Act, 2013. Access to all of the above provided personal information is restricted, only employees who need the information to perform a specific job are granted access to this information.

#### Decision:

Approved

#### REC comments:

**Gordon Institute  
of Business Science**  
University of Pretoria

**Ethical Clearance**  
**Approved**

Dear Gcinekile Nkambule,

Please be advised that your application for **Ethical Clearance** has been approved.

You are therefore allowed to continue collecting your data.


We wish you everything of the best for the rest of the project.

[Ethical Clearance Form](#)

Kind Regards

APPENDIX 6: COPYRIGHT DECLARATION

22.1 COPYRIGHT DECLARATION FORM

Student details			
Surname:	NKAMBULE	Initials:	G. K.
Student number:	21820164		
Email:	21820164@mygibs.co.za		
Phone:	+268 7802 7411		
Qualification details			
Degree:	MBA	Year completed:	2022
Title of research:	GIBS <sup>Executive</sup> Mastering Process Hurdles to Strategy		
Supervisor:	Prof. Careen Scheepers		
Supervisor email:			
Access			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A. My research is not confidential and may be made available in the GIBS Information Centre and on UPSpace.			
I give permission to display my email address on the UPSpace website			
Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
B.			
<input type="checkbox"/> My research is confidential and may NOT be made available in the GIBS Information Centre nor on UPSpace.			
Please indicate embargo period requested			
Two years	<input type="checkbox"/>	Please attach a letter of motivation to substantiate your request. Without a letter embargo will not be granted.	
Permanent	<input type="checkbox"/>	Permission from the Vice-Principal: Research and Postgraduate Studies at UP is required for permanent embargo. Please attach a copy permission letter. Without a letter permanent embargo will not be granted.	
Copyright declaration			
<p>I hereby declare that I have not used unethical research practices nor gained material dishonesty in this electronic version of my research submitted. Where appropriate, written permission statement(s) were obtained from the owner(s) of third-party copyrighted matter included in my research, allowing distribution as specified below.</p> <p>I hereby assign, transfer and make over to the University of Pretoria my rights of copyright in the submitted work to the extent that it has not already been affected in terms of the contract I entered into at registration. I understand that all rights with regard to the intellectual property of my research, vest in the University who has the right to reproduce, distribute and/or publish the work in any manner it may deem fit.</p>			
Signature:		Date:	14/04/22
Supervisor signature:		Date:	

APPENDIX 7: CERTIFICATION OF ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

25. APPENDIX 6 CERTIFICATION OF ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

(Additional support retained or not - to be completed by all students)

Please note that failure to comply and report on this honestly will result in disciplinary action

I hereby certify that (please indicate which statement applies):

- I DID NOT RECEIVE any additional/outside assistance (i.e. statistical, transcriptional, and/or editorial services) on my research report: \_\_\_\_\_
- I RECEIVED additional/outside assistance (i.e. statistical, transcriptional, and/or editorial services) on my research report  
Transcriptional \_\_\_\_\_

If any additional services were retained- please indicate below which:

- Statistician
- Transcriber
- Editor
- Other (please specify: \_\_\_\_\_)

Please provide the name(s) and contact details of all retained:

NAME: Linda Jorge - Antonio  
 EMAIL ADDRESS: linda.thegreat@gmail.com  
 CONTACT NUMBER: +265 7604 3464  
 TYPE OF SERVICE: Transcriber

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NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
 EMAIL ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
 CONTACT NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_  
 TYPE OF SERVICE: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
 EMAIL ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
 CONTACT NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_  
 TYPE OF SERVICE: \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby declare that all statistical write-ups and thematic interpretations of the results for my study were completed by myself without outside assistance

NAME OF STUDENT: GUNHLE NKAMBULE  
 SIGNATURE: [Signature]  
 STUDENT NUMBER: ~~21820164~~ 218 20164  
 STUDENT EMAIL ADDRESS: 21820164@uny.gibs.co.za