

**CHALLENGES FACED BY MIDDLE MANAGEMENT AT SHOPRITE HOLDINGS LTD**

By

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## DECLARATION

I, **Lesabe Thomas Malemela**, hereby declare that this study: *The challenges faced by Middle Management at Shoprite Holdings LTD. A critical evaluation* is original and the result of my own work. I further declare that all information used and quoted was duly acknowledged by means of reference, and that this mini-dissertation was not previously in its entirety or partially, submitted by me or any other person for degree purposes at this or any other university.

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**LT Malemela**



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**Date**

## **DEDICATION**

This paper is dedicated to my single parent, Rachel for raising me hardly and well. To my lovely wife, Anikie and daughter, Lesedi for their continuous support and understanding. To all my family members and close friends

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This Mini-dissertation has been a long journey. However, it has been a rewarding experience. It has excited me, frustrated me, fascinated me and exhausted me in equal measure.

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**I thank the Almighty God, for His grace that was sufficient to give me strength and courage to persevere and complete this study. Glory to His Name.**

## **ABSTRACT**

Middle management at Shoprite faced challenges and their role is diverse and they lack strategies to cope with challenges within the organisation. Middle managers, in trying to balance the needs of senior and junior managers, often feel like 'piggy-in-the-middle', with potential for conflict and tension (McConville, 2006; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992). A lack of leadership from senior management may compromise middle managers' ability to take a professional approach to managing their area. Middle managers in Shoprite say that they want to be more professional Burgess, (2011) but are being inhibited by the lack of support and awareness from senior managers, with a negative impact on their motivation and their job satisfaction. In addition lack of middle manager's involvement in decision making and strategy formulation. Middle managers become reluctant to change due to lack of communication on strategy alteration. This study intends to investigate the challenges faced by middle management at Shoprite Holdings Limited in Limpopo Province. The findings of the study show that the roles are challenging and varied, strategy implementation is a major challenge and support for middle managers is generally insufficient. Middle managers require support in induction into the middle management role and ongoing mentoring and appraisal. The little studies have been conducted about the challenges faced by middle management from different perspectives and organisations. Finally, further research into the challenges faced by middle management at Shoprite Holdings Ltd is required as it could either endorse or challenge the findings of this study and might also inform Top management about the Challenges faced by middle management and prompt an evaluation of the existing role, challenges and needs.

**Key words; Middle management**

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1. Background

The Shoprite Group of Companies, Africa's largest food retailer, operates 1825 corporate and 363 franchise outlets in 15 countries across Africa and the Indian Ocean Islands, and reported turnover of R62.519 billion for the six months ended December 2015. The Company's headquarters are situated in the Western Cape province of South Africa. Shoprite Holdings Ltd is a public company listed on the JSE Limited, with secondary listings on both the Namibian and Zambian Stock Exchanges. Its ownership therefore lies in the hands of its shareholders. The Group is continuing its implementation of a strategic expansion programme to maintain its position as the leading food retailer on the continent. According to the Deloitte Global Powers of Retailing survey for 2015, Shoprite Holdings was named the number one retailer in Africa and the Middle East. The Financial Mail's Top Companies 2015 placed Shoprite Holdings as the Top Retail Company in 2015 and ranked it 14th in the 2015 SA Giants list.

Floyd and Wooldridge (1994) define middle management and the middle manager as the coordinator between daily activities of the units and the strategic activities of the hierarchy. Robinson (2001) says managers are responsible for the implementation of the organization's strategy on a day-to-day basis and it would be safe to say that a company's success or failure largely depends on the strength of this cadre. Middle managers act as a link between senior managers and operating staff Kuratko (2005), managing other managers Hales(2006), and therefore have a major input into the success of business. Their key role is to respond to the strategic decisions of senior managers, converting these into operational actions Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992; Harrington and Williams, 2004).Harvey (2002) state that it's clear that you need a head who is a leader with a clear vision but ultimately it's the people in the middle who implement the vision”

Lack of effective communication at Shoprite result in a reduction of morale and motivation for middle managers Conway and Monks(2010) and this lack of appreciation of the issues Burgess(2007) by senior management can result in limited positive action, affecting middle managers' ability to be professional Burgess(2011)

in their approach to their work. Middle managers perform several tasks, depending on the responsibility assigned to them. Some of the tasks are as follows: monitoring organisational achievement; evaluating programmes and plans; co-ordinating staff and programmes; monitoring workers' achievement; teaching designated classes; developing and implementing plans; appointing and appraising staff; developing staff, procedures and programmes; running meetings, communicating and monitoring procedures; contributing to organisation-wide decision-making; and contributing to the corporate life of the organisation Cardno (1995). Middle managers need motivation to perform their task effectively and efficiently.

### **1.2. Problem Statement**

Middle managers, in trying to balance the needs of senior and junior managers, often feel like 'piggy-in-the-middle', with potential for conflict and tension (McConville, 2006; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992). Fenton-O'Creevy and Nicholson (1994) discuss the 'conflicting demands' placed on middle managers, with Kuratko and Goldsby (2004) and Floyd and Lane (2000) both showing that change can cause conflict and disruption. A lack of leadership from senior management (Raghu Raman, 2009; Burgess, 2007) may compromise middle managers' ability to take a professional approach to managing their area. Middle managers in Shoprite say that they want to be more professional Burgess(2011) but are being inhibited by the lack of support and awareness from senior managers, with a negative impact on their motivation Conway and Monks(2010) and their job satisfaction Bulent Ozturk and Hancer (2011). Limited research has been conducted on middle management in Shoprite Holdings limited in Limpopo Province. This study investigates the challenges faced by middle management at Shoprite holdings LTD.

### **1.3. Objectives of the study**

The objectives of this research are as follows:

- To identify challenges faced by middle management at Shoprite Holding Ltd in Limpopo Province
- To determine the support that middle management receive from the company
- To develop strategies that will assist middle management overcome their challenges

### **1.4. Research questions**

The research questions of this study are:

- What are the challenges faced by middle management at Shoprite holdings limited?
- How does the company support the middle management?
- What are the strategies that Shoprite holdings LTD can develop to assist middle management to overcome the challenges?

### **1.5. Aims of the Study**

To investigate the challenges faced by middle management at Shoprite Holdings Limited in Limpopo Province

### **1.6. Motivation / Rational of the Study**

Middle manager have a poor reputation sometimes being seen as ineffective organisational barriers, although they are the ones with potential to reduce inefficiency and problems and have the greatest influence on strategic performance Haneberg (2005). According to insigniam 2014 findings reveal that many middle managers express a desire to be promoted, they perceive declining opportunities for their careers which in return lead to diminished aspirations. The study will highlight the knowledge gaps in the plight of middle management.

### **1.7. Significance of the Study**

This study intends to outline the problems that affect middle managers at Shoprite Holdings limited. The result of this study will enhance knowledge to academics, policy makers, non-government organisation, and community at large and entrepreneurs themselves. Moreover, this study will help the above mentioned stakeholders in planning ahead to help their middle managers to achieve the goals and objectives of organisation. I will also present some suggestions for future research based on the results and findings of this study.

### **1.8. Research Methodology**

Polit & Beck (2008) describe research method is the techniques used to structure a study and to gather and analyse information in a systematic fashion.

#### **1.8.1 Choice and rational of research design**

This study use qualitative research as most appropriate Henning, Rensburg and Smith (2005). Qualitative research has a longstanding history of contributing to an understanding of social structures, behaviours and cultures Snape & Spencer, (2003). Qualitative research gives us a clear and detailed account of actions and the representation of actions so that we can gain a better understanding of our world, hopefully in order to bring about a measure of social change Marshall & Rossman (1999). According to Pauline (2014) quantitative research is based on the measurement of quantity or amount. A qualitative approach was used to conduct the study. This approach permitted the researchers to take into account work activities and experiences of middle managers within their specific environment (Denzin and Lincoln 2003; Miles and Huberman 1994).

### **1.8.2 Study Area**

The study will be conducted at Provincial headquarters of Shoprite holdings limited which is based (Corner Schoeman and Landros Mare) in Limpopo province, Polokwane.

### **1.8.3 Population**

Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005) describe population as the total collection of all units of analysis about which the researcher wishes to make specific conclusion. The population will comprise ten middle managers of thirty Shoprite Stores in Limpopo, Polokwane.

### **1.8.4. Sampling and Sample Size**

A researcher will apply non-probability sampling methods. A non-probability purposive sampling was used to select the participants. Purposive sampling is also known as judgemental, selective or subjective sampling, and focus on sampling techniques where the units are investigated based on the judgement of the researcher. Bryman (2012) defines purposive sampling as a non-probability form of sampling whereby the researcher samples participants in a strategic way so that those samples are relevant to the research questions that will be posed. In this study, ten Middle Managers based at Shoprite Limpopo headquarters will be selected as participants, which is based in Polokwane at corner Grobler Street and Schoeman Street.

### **1.8.5. Data Collection**

This study will use primary data and secondary data analysis. It is the analysis of data or information that was either gathered by someone else (e.g., researchers, institutions, other NGOs, etc.) or for some other purpose than the one currently being considered, or often a combination of the two Crossen (1997). The researcher considers interview approach using open-ended questions.

### **1.8.6 Data analysis**

Thematic analysis will be use in this study. Thematic analysis is a form of pattern recognition within the data, with emerging themes becoming the categories for analysis Fereday & Muir-Cochrane(2006). The process involves a careful, more focused re-reading and review of the data. The reviewer takes a closer look at the selected data and performs coding and category construction, based on the data's characteristics, to uncover themes pertinent to a phenomenon. The researcher demonstrates objectivity (seeking to represent the research material fairly) and sensitivity (responding to even subtle cues to meaning) in the selection and analysis of data from documents.

### **1.9. Ethical consideration**

There are ethical considerations when carrying out this research, such as the issues of confidentiality, nonmaleficence and fidelity Thorne(1998), which are all relevant to a secondary data analysis, but in the space available, the issue of informed consent needs specific consideration when carrying out a secondary analysis. The Informationis publicly available, and data will not be edited and proper recognition has been made by citing and referencing. The researcher also considers using interview approach to this study.

### **1.10. Outline of the dissertation**

The research shall comprise of 5 chapters as outlined as follows:

#### **Chapter 1**

This chapter shall include Introduction and background of the study. It will also contain aim, objectives, research questions and methodology followed to conduct this study.

#### **Chapter 2**

This chapter shall include Literature Review. The review shall cover the theory regarding the problems that affect middle manager.

#### **Chapter 3**

This chapter shall comprise of Research Methodologies. The chapter gives a detailed approach on how data was collected and methods used to analyse the data.

#### **Chapter 4**

This chapter shall include results and discussion. The chapter outlines how results were interpreted and discussion reached.

#### **Chapter 5**

This chapter shall contain conclusion and recommendations. It will also provide a way forward on this study.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1. Introduction**

The research problem, questions and objectives were presented in chapter 1. The purpose of this study has been outlined namely, to identify challenges faced by middle management at Shoprite Holding limited in Limpopo Province. To determine the support that middle management receives from the company and strategies to be developed to assist middle management to overcome their challenges. To achieve this objective, this chapter focuses on the secondary research objectives and investigates and analyses all relevant literature regarding middle management at Shoprite Holdings limited. This chapter also gives a detailed description of the challenges faced by middle management with specific reference to the content.

#### **2.2. The definition of concepts**

##### **2.2.1 Middle management**

Another important item to be clear on is, what is meant by middle management. Herzing & Jimmieson (2006) state that these are individuals that operate below the senior management team. These senior executives develop and lead the strategy of an organisation. The middle management adopt and operate these strategies.

Young (1990) defined middle managers as the group that is able to link vertical and horizontal levels. Mills (2000) indicated that middle managers make decisions in order to achieve goals and understand and implement decision from a higher level within the business. They are able to accomplish goals through other people

The traditional definition of line management implies that there is a scalar chain of authority within the organisation from senior management, through ranks of middle and first line managers to individual employees. Middle managers represent an important group in organisations, performing a critical function between strategic and front-line management (Floyd and Wooldridge 1992, 1994, 1997, Currie and Procter 2001, Huy 2002, Balogun 2003). As organisations seek greater flexibility, they tend to devolve broader sets of responsibilities down to middle and front-line managers (Dopson and Stewart 1990, Cunningham and Hyman 1999, Hales 2006/7).

**Source: (Robinson, 2001)**



*Figure 1. Three level of management*

Robinson (2001) outlines middle-level managers as the backbone of organisations, particularly large ones. Nuewenhuizen (2005) describe Middle manager as the intermediate manager of a hierarchical organization, being subordinate to the senior management but above the lowest levels of operational staff. In the business world, middle management is defined as “two levels below the CEO and one level above line workers and professionals” Huy(2001).With the view that middle managers are an integral part of a control system within organizations, Floyd and Wooldridge (1994) suggested that middle managers are the formidable bridge between top managers and front-line supervisors and help the change process to be successfully implemented.

### **2.3. The role of the middle management**

Wooldridge, Schmidt and Floyd (2008,) state that middle manager’s primary role is to implement the top management team’s decisions. Mintzberg(1990) highlighted that the traditional role of middle managers consists of planning and organizing, directing and controlling and rewarding and punishing. in his earlier work, he further identifies top management as the place for work associated with systematic change. Middle manager’s task is thereby restricted to operational planning and implementation, resulting in routine bureaucratic and supervisory tasks Fulop(1991). Middle Manager translates the vision and strategies and to plan, coordinate, budget, control, and



allocate resources to reach the goals (Rollins 2008; Floyd and Wooldridge 2000) and further elaborated that middle manager is a basis for strategic renewal, a bottom up process where strategy is adapted to a changing environment. Middle managers is a powerful facilitators of change bridging the gap between the macro level focus of change proponents such as designing structures, administrative processes, missions, cultures, strategies and protocols and micro level implementation that shape process changes (Becker, 2008; Kuyvenhoven & Buss, 2011; Yang, Sun & Eppler, 2009).

Fenton- O'Creedy (2001) 1994 noted that the middle managers' role in processes of organizational change is particularly interesting since they are often simultaneously both the victims and the agents of change. Middle managers, as mentioned earlier, are playing a pivotal role in the change process and therefore the successful implementation of the change. Middle managers paradigm shift regarding their new roles requires a new set of competences. These competences, according to Farnham (2002) consist of a set of interpersonal skills: listening, communicating, teambuilding, facilitating, and negotiating and conflict resolution. They also are expected to display a positive "change orientation" as demonstrated by personal flexibility, dealing with uncertainty and risk taking.

The role of middle manager is to translate the visions and strategies and to plan, coordinate, budget, control, and allocate resources to reach the goals (Rollinson 2008; Floyd and Wooldridge 2000). Further, as leadership theories often highlight, an inspirational leader figure is required to drive change and ensure employee satisfaction; employee perform best when they feel that their needs are listened to and taken into account. Therefore middle managers should also perform leadership tasks, in addition to management task, (Northouse 2013; Bass and Bass 2008).

Hrebiniak (2008) sees middle managers as implementers of top-management, defined strategy. The second represented by Floyd and Wooldridge (2000), defines middle management's role as participants in strategic conversations and as boundary spanners between top-management and lower levels. In this view, middle management makes an important contribution both upwards and downwards in strategic-change implementations. In the third view represented by Balogun and Hailey (2008), middle management is the key strategic actor who is "making sense" of the need, plan and actions required to make strategic changes within their team.

The change and the growing dynamism of the environment lead organizations to a strategy formation process requiring the involvement of all the organization hierarchical levels forcing the evolution of the top-down perspective towards a more bottom-up one –considered under a micro organizational perspective that sets the emphasis in the process– or towards a middle-up-down perspective. Around these perspectives we can find different studies focused on the emergence of the strategy based on the middle manager role and their involvement in the strategic process (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992, 2000; Floyd and lane, 2000; Nonaka, 1988; Wooldridge and Floyd, 1990; Balogun, 2003).

Middle managers play a critical role in the implementation of organizational strategies. Middle Manager is mainly focus on two aspects: „position“ in the hierarchy and „function“ rendered by them. (Wooldridge, Schmidt and Floyd(2008) propose that middle management, ranges from the level below top management to the first level of supervision. Examples of middle managers include general line managers, divisional heads, functional line managers, marketing head, deputy heads and team or project based executives or project leaders.

From the perspective of function, middle management is defined as the coordination of a firm’s daily routine activities with the activities of vertically related groups Floyd (1992). Middle Managers are responsible for a sub-functional work flow of a departments and divisions. Few academicians state that aspects like number of staff working under a person, years of working experience, and total emoluments need to be considered to define middle management.

The role of middle level managers as quoted by Kuratko et.al (2002; 2005; 2006; 2007; 2008), is to communicate effectively between top-level and operating level managers. To accomplish this goal, middle level managers need to play strategic roles. As suggested by Floyd and Wooldridge (1992), they have to synthesize information to be exchanged for championing innovative ideas, facilitate adaptability among subordinates and implementing strategy by integrating subordinates activities.

According to Floyd & Woodridge (1994) middle management implements the decision taken by the company executives. They provided feedback and are a soundboard for the senior management team to gauge the temperature of the

workforce. Middle management turns the executive's vision into reality. Marichal & Serge (2012), state that the role of a middle manager is one that translated a high level strategy into actionable objectives. Woodridge, Schmid & Floyd (2008) make an interesting point, by pointing to the fact it is not very important where they are in the organisation chart. They argue what is important is that they have unique position to access both their direct report and how to influence their actions. They also have direct access to the senior executives. This enables them to function as mediator between the organisations strategy and the day to day activities. Mollick (2013) propose that the middle managers are a vital cog in the business machine. They can perform in the traditional role of the task managers but they can also support and encourage innovation. Mollick (2013) adds that they act as facilitators, nurturers and selectors of creativity. He continues by stating they are the ones that firm's count on to get excited about projects and motivate the team to deliver objectives. Good middle managers will have developed interpersonal relationship with their teams and can manage conflicts and resolve differences to mould a high performance culture.

Middle manager roles often involve 'spreading the word' Huy(2001). Although this activity is related to the role of synthesising information, communication as an identified action refers to the activity of sharing information and excludes the formulation of the message or the medium of transfer. According to Floyd and Wooldridge (1992) middle managers supply information to top management concerning internal and external events. Middle managers also communicate with subordinates. In this capacity, Floyd and Wooldridge (2000) refer to middle managers as 'linking pins' in hierarchical networks. As a communication link they often serve as the starting point for action to be taken by upper and lower levels Nonaka, (1988). According to Briggs (2005) middle managers are bridges between senior management and the work teams. In a position where they have the knowledge and experience to connect divergent ideas generated from within the organisation to strategic issues Floyd & Wooldridge(2000), the theme of interpreting and communicating information confirms the importance of middle managers as strategic actors.

Middle managers stand at a crossroads in the information and knowledge creation process within organizations (Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995; Mintzberg 1997). In charge of strategic, tactical and operational decisions, they act as entrepreneurs, innovators and communicators within their organizations (Huy 2001; Kanter 1982;

Floyd and Wooldridge 1996). To do so, they make use of multiple information sources (Katzer and Fletcher 1992; Choo and Auster 1993). However, very little is known about information behaviours of middle managers in organizations, especially in the public sector and, more specifically, in municipalities. Rather, studies have generally explored information behaviours of senior managers in private corporations Choo (2006). Little empirical data exist on how contextual components impact the creation and solving of problem situations. Examining the role of the information use environment on middle managers' information behaviours might be useful to help refine strategies to design information systems and services with enhanced retrieval capacities.

Schaafsma (1997) suggested that middle managers are forced to change more and learn even faster due to changes companies have to endure which lead to more restructuring and rationalization. According to Ekarterini (2011) middle managers are playing an integrative role in the vertical communication about the formulation and implementation of the strategy. They also play a pivotal role in the translation and change of organizational culture as a means of achieving organizational flexibility.

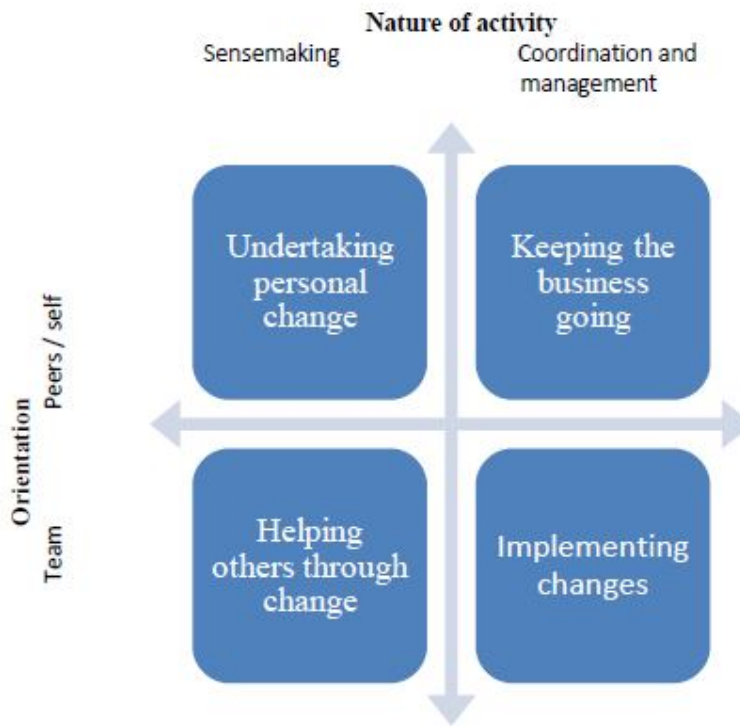
Caldwells (2003) definition of successful manager underscores the new role of middle managers. He defines successful managers as "those middle level managers and functional specialists who carry forward and build support for success within business units and key functions".

### **2.3.1. Middle managers role during change**

The changing role of middle managers is also indicated by the findings of (Balogun 2003). Balogun identifies four key roles that middle manager takes during change illustrated in figure 2.

The middle manager undertakes personal change, keeps the business going during the change, implements the changes that are needed and helps others through the change.

**Source: (Balogun, 2003)**



*Figure 2. Middle managers as change mediaries*

#### **2.3.1.1. Undertaking personal change**

Organizational change requires middle managers to undergo personal change regarding their roles and the way they thought of their roles.

#### **2.3.1.2. Helping others through change**

Middle managers must help their team to go through changes. In doing so they must act as role model, be responsible in communicate the nature of the changes in a formal and informal way and provide coaching, training and support as needed.

#### **2.3.1.3. Keeping the business going**

While changes are taking place the middle manager has to keep the business going. This dual responsibility requires constant change of focus of attention between the day to day business and the change activities.

#### **2.3.1.4. Implementing changes needed**

Middle managers have the responsibility to contribute to the implementation of the changes. This has impact on their workload.

Balogun (2003) suggests that undertaking personal change is the key task for middle managers since it influences all the other roles.

First of all middle managers are strategy implementers. Secondly they can reinforce strategy management as upward information synthesizers. This integrative role in two directions is important for organizational performance Floyd & Wooldridge, (1997). Middle managers can thirdly be facilitators of adaptability by organizing experiments without too much implication for the top. Finally, successful experiments can be championed upward. This is their fourth role. The two diverging roles, championing alternatives and facilitating adaptability, are particularly important for companies with a strategy of innovation Floyd & Wooldridge, (1997).

Researchers provide strong arguments that middle management performs a critical role in the integration of knowledge and experience to generate practical applications within a given strategic framework (Janczak, 2004; Pritchett, 2006). Middle managers are called a “fertile ground” for creative ideas about how to grow and change, they are capable of adding meaningful contributions to strategy, tactics, and employees’ development (Floyd and Wooldridge 1992, 1994; Huy, 2001; Mayer and Smith, 2007).

Middle managers, then, “perform a coordinating role where they mediate, negotiate and interpret connections between the organisations institutional (strategic) and technical (operational) level” Floyd & Wooldridge, (1997). This mediating role constitutes a significant potential for exerting social influence downwards as well as upwards March & Simon(1993). From their mediating position, middle managers also operate the external boundaries of the organization, for example through regular contacts with customers and suppliers stakeholders Mintzberg(1993) and the local civic community Busher (2006). These general properties are found in most organizational prototypes.

#### **2.4. The challenges faced by middle management Shoprite holdings limited**

Previous research as provided by Osbourne(2011)shows that middle managers faced challenges around self-identity, negative perception of the management role and human resource issues. They also experience a lack of involvement in decision making and felt challenges by hierarchical organisational structures which inhibited their authority over particular groups. Other challenges included role ambiguity and

conflict, work pressure, job insecurity, work relationships, organisational communication and conflicting government directives such as having agencies, but being under pressure to save money by hiring agencies, Vinay and Sinha (2013).

#### **2.4.1. Managers' struggle with self-identity**

Managers struggle to maintain their professional identity, especially hybrids that see themselves primarily as retail experts. They often see their retail role side-lined by managerial responsibilities Paliadelis, (2008). Dopson (1996) argues that an inherent tension exists between the professional values of retailers and their staff, and managerial demands for efficiency, cost control, and resource reallocation.

#### **2.4.2. Negative Perception of management**

The negative perception of management in retail industry presents several challenges to middle managers, especially as this stereotype is held by other industries Preston and Ioan-Clarke (2000). Llewellyn (2001) argues that retailers who take up management position risk loss of respect and managerial visibility; they have to work to dispel suspicions that choosing a managerial track is not because they lack the ability to progress in their retail careers. For hybrids, management values are seen as conflicting with their professional and personal values. The management role is also seen as one of increased pressure with no tangible rewards or recognition for the additional responsibilities.

#### **2.4.3. Challenges in human resource management**

Retail industry have problems of recruiting enough, appropriate skilled staff, and also retaining current high performing managers (Loo and Thorpe 2004: Savage and Scoot, 2004) the research suggest that managers also feel that their role lacked definition, compounded by lack of definitive job descriptions. The insufficient and ill-equipped managers, combined with the outdated systems, contributed to a system that failed to provide a satisfactory service Schwartz, Schurink and Stanz (2007)

**2.4.4. Unpreparedness for role:** many middle managers are given management roles without having had any prior management training.

#### **2.4.5. Lack of diversity management in the workplace**

There are challenges to managing a diverse work population. Managing diversity is more than simply acknowledging differences in people. It involves recognizing the value of differences, combating discrimination, and promoting inclusiveness. Managers may also be challenged with losses in personnel and work productivity due to prejudice and discrimination, as well as complaints and legal actions against the organization Devoe, (1999). Negative attitudes and behaviours can be barriers to organizational diversity because they can harm working relationships and damage morale and work productivity Esty, Griffin and Schorr-Hirsh(1995). Negative attitudes and behaviours in the workplace include prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination, which should never be used by management for hiring, retention, and termination practices (could lead to costly litigation).

#### **2.4.6. Change as a challenges to middle management**

According to Aosa, (1998), organizations being environmental dependent have to constantly adapt their activities and internal configurations to reflect the new external realities and failure to do so may put the future success of an organization in jeopardy. South African environment is not isolated from happenings on the global scene. Shoprite Middle managers are facing several challenges and how to manage their effects, including inadequate resources, rapid technological changes, growing number of supermarkets as a result of increasing demand for groceries, and the introduction of the new system and Procedures of Fast moving consumer goods (FMCG), (National University of Rwanda: Strategic Plan 2008-2012). Change has become a constant phenomenon which must be attended to and managed properly if an organization is to survive.

Middle managers are occasionally faced with challenges that force them to adjust or change Burnes, (2004).Changes in technology, the marketplace, information systems, the global economy, social values, workforce demographics and the political environment have a significant effect on the processes, products and services produced. The culmination of these forces has resulted in an external environment that is dynamic, unpredictable, demanding and often devastating to those organizations which are unprepared or unable to respond Burnes (2000). While organizational change is a constant experience, knowledge and awareness about many of the critical issues involved in the management of such change is often lacking in those responsible for its progress. Clearly if organizations are ever to



experience a greater level of success in their development efforts, middle managers and program officers need to have a better framework for thinking about change and an understanding of the key issues which accompany change management. Change management has been linked to the organization's competitiveness and response to changes in the environment Ansoff and McDonnell, (1990). This implies the readiness to change within an organization and the ability to implement the proposed changes.

After the Strategic restructuring and change, middle leaders found themselves having a 'large managerial component with a heavy workload' Dunham, (1995). Tasks needed to be organized and led, and managerial work became a necessity Glover, Miller, Gambling, Gough and Johnson (1998). As a result of these large-scale changes, middle managers were required to turn their focus to management as well as to the employees.

Research has found that any change or anticipated change has an impact on employee wellbeing since it is associated with increased uncertainty, resulting in increased perceptions of occupational stress; lower job satisfaction, high levels of absenteeism, less commitment to the organisation, a lack of trust and high mental and physical symptoms of ill-health in employees Chunda & Cooper, (2002). Several researchers (Clark & Koonce, 1995; Robbins, 1998) have supported this finding and shown that restructuring in business firms causes uncertainty and anxiety amongst employees. There are overt and covert resistances to change brought about restructuring. Overt resistance includes strikes, reduced productivity, inferior work and even sabotage. Covert resistance is expressed in increased absenteeism, requests for transfers, resignations, loss of motivation, low morale and high levels of accidents and work errors Arnolds(2005).

One of the hurdles to strategy implementation uncovered in this study was the ineffective management of change. One middle manager admitted that change is difficult: "Implementation represents change and, for some, change is very difficult." Because the purpose of developing new strategies is normally linked to an organization's future vision to gain a competitive advantage, it is likely that executing those strategies requires changes in current organizational processes, systems, structures, and culture Saunders, Mann, & Smith(2008). Therefore, when implementing planned strategies, change seems inevitable. Even though

management can evaluate risks, uncertain consequences of change are always difficult to describe or estimate. It is important, therefore, to understand the dynamics and consequences of change in the context of strategies proposed. Such understanding can be applied to suggest how a change process can be managed in principle. A participant explained how handling change at an organizational level is much more difficult than managing change at an individual level.

Managing change is a complex process because of the interconnectedness of causes and consequences. Sequences of events unfold over time and may affect both the strategy of the organization and the people who work within the organization. Sometimes, people resist proposals for change and make strategy difficult to implement; sometimes, they are enthusiastic and willing to contribute significantly towards proposed ideas for change Kotter (2007). For managers, handling the change process requires an awareness of the overall strategic direction of the organization as well as deep knowledge of its operational activities at the individual level.

There has been much research on why transformational change fails and different approaches on how to engage with middle management, but there is a lack of research on how to enable them to be effective (Huy 2001, 2002; Balogun, 2003; Mantere, 2008). There continues to be a high failure rate in change initiatives. Business can't afford to plan and resource such changes without them being successful. Kotter (1996) stated that 70% of organisational transformations fail. He established an eight stage process to underpin a successful change. However, this process is presented in an overall approach. There still remains a knowledge gap between the implementation of that strategy and day to day activities. According to (Ben Trowbridge, CEO of Alsbridge 2011), "Whether to address the problem by sourcing or implementing some other major change program, middle managers can be your strongest ally or your weakest link". Dopson & Stewart (1990) suggest that middle management can be seen as obstacles to change as they feel threatened or have some vested interest in resisting change. (Scase & Goffee 1989) argues that the old image of middle management of being slow to initiate or champion change is a lingering one.

Kotter and Schlesinger (2008) outline several reasons why stakeholders resist change and how communication efforts may counteract that resistance. People

resist because of: Misunderstanding and lack of trust – the implications of the new direction are poorly understood, leading to perceptions that the new vision is irrelevant or damaging. Parochial Self-Interest – employees may believe they will lose something of value if they follow the new direction. This often results when what is in the best interests of one group is not in the best interests of the whole organisation.

Paterson & Hartel (2002) advise that poor communication can contribute to resistance to change. If there are no adequate processes to receive communication timely and consistently, it can add to anxiety and introduce insecurity. It can decrease employee trust and support in the management. In contrast, Paterson & Hatel (2002) proposes that when communication is delivered with empathy and processes are open and trustworthy, it increases the likelihood of acceptance of the change.

Kotter (1996) is considered the leading expert on this subject and published a seminal piece of work which articulates the reasons why change fails and the size of the challenge. Kotter (1996) stated eight reasons why transformational efforts fail. The first is not creating a great enough sense of urgency. The second is not creating a powerful enough guiding coalition. The third is a lack of vision. The fourth is not communicating enough. The fifth is not removing obstacles to the new vision. The sixth is not planning and creating short term wins. The seventh is declaring victory too soon. The eighth is not anchoring the change in the corporate culture. Wilder (2014) believes that the reason change can fail, is that the culture of the organisation does not align with the change initiative. He says managers understand the importance of culture on the day to day activities, but neglect to include it in implementing a new change programme.

The approach to take to react to the pace of globalisation and changing consumer behaviours is to create a culture of constant change Worley & Lawler III (2006). The ability to benefit from 'second order' organisational capabilities, such as learning how to do new things well or understanding and adapting to the change in market conditions is the new sustainable competitive advantage Reeves & Deimler (2011).

Probst & Raisch (2005) argue that "push-back is frequently seen to be a problem rather than a source of valuable feedback that can be harnessed to fine-tune the implementation of change." This is a powerful message. Human nature will naturally

react to something with suspicion if they don't fully understand it. Forcing change on people without clear and articulate reasoning along with inadequate communication introduces resistance. Probst & Raisch (2005), state that such poorly managed change initiatives can actually create organisational instability and crises.

Middle managers are viewed by their team as being the very representation of the organisations culture, in the sense that their actions and behaviours are the barometer of the culture Hartel, Butar, Sendjaya, Pekerti, Hirst and Ashkanasy(2013). This is a very powerful message. It suggests that if the organisations culture is not well anchored throughout all the management team, it may be a cause for failure. Large scale and unexpected change can deliver a shock to the workforce. Even after the initial shock, there can be further aftershocks. If the company is not used to change, this change can feel like a build-up of Teutonic pressure, which eventually explodes Burnes (2004). The absence of small continual change may harm the success of a larger change. Although change will no discernible value or benefit can create unnecessary fatigue Victor & Stephens(1994).

#### **2.4.7. Discernments of middle management in the change process**

Discernments of middle management is examined and differently viewed by researchers. Newton (2013) believes that traditionally middle management was perceived to be a major problem in change management. They were unable or unwilling to share the vision as presented by the executives and wanted to protect their 'turf'. According to a survey organised by the Lean Management Institute (LMI) in 2007, the resistance of middle management was the number one obstacle in implementing change. "The top three obstacles to implementation were middle management resistance (36.1 percent), lack of implementation know-how (31 percent) and employee resistance (27.7 percent)". Moore (2012) concurs with this view. She states that while executives sponsor the transformational changes and workers can be open to system changes, it is most often the middle management who worries most about these changes. They can be afraid of losing power or authority, having their role reduce in size or lose their job altogether. This can cause a negative impact across the whole business. Samuel (2010) opposes middle management are seen as "Feeding territorial competition. Stifling information flow and not developing or preparing employees for change, Unwilling to take initiatives as their contribution to improvement and threatened by continuous improvement efforts". He believes these characteristics threaten the success of any change programme.

In contrast, Huy (2001) argues that middle managers can have innovative ideas and approaches to change. He also believes they have better formal and informal networks which can assist in implementing change. They have a high emotional intelligence towards their team and know how to motivate them through this time. Finally, they are able to manage between the chaos that can develop during an unstable period. Kanter (1982) proposes that middle management can provide an environment of trust in which fears can be openly discussed and through this transparency, difficult changes within an organisation may be easier to implement. Wai-Kwong (2001) argues that they have a unique place in the organisational structure, where they are able to integrate the new transformational changes alongside operational activities.

Regular organisational change has led to significant adjustment of the duties and behaviours of middle managers. Organisations are now being shaped to have flatter structures. The result is that middle managers are more than ever, having to behave like “risk-taking entrepreneurs” and to attempt to put measurement tools in place to understand the efficiency and effectiveness of the change Dopson & Stewart, (2001).

#### **2.4.8. The contradiction of middle management in the change process**

The contradiction of middle management in the change process suggested by many commentators that middle management is an obstacle to change. However, there are also as many papers which highlight the crucial role middle management play in the change process. Trowbridge, (2011) concurs with this view. He says that a “recent benchmarking study revealed that middle managers play several key roles that contribute to an organization’s success including: communicator, advocate, coach, liaison and change manager. However, the irony is that these same managers were also cited as the most resistant group to change. If middle management resists a change, their direct reports will follow, causing resistance to take on a viral quality as it spreads throughout the enterprise”. According to McKinney, McMahan & Walsh (2013), the contradiction is although the reputation of middle management has grown over the years; their own fear about the safety of their roles has grown too. They are considered the driving force behind operational functions as well as change responsibilities, but their lack of career opportunities due to company restructuring, absence of appropriate training and almost perpetual job insecurity had led to a reduction in morale, erosion of company loyalty and becoming disenfranchised from the firm. Prosci (2012) argues “Middle managers are crucial

allies in times of change. They are the closest to the employees who are impacted by the change. A manager who is equipped to be a great change leader can positively influence the speed at which employees adopt the change, the amount of employees who buy into the change, and how proficient employees are in performing in their new roles. On the other hand, if a manager has not been provided with the tools and resources needed to become a great change leader, speed of adoption, ultimate utilization and proficiency will suffer, therefore directly compromising business objectives and ROI. It is undeniable that middle managers play a valuable role in the overall success of change initiatives”.

#### **2.4.9. Challenges in training and leadership development**

Erasmus & Van Dyk(1999) also described Training and development as a systematic and planned process aimed at changing the knowledge skills and behaviour of employees in such a way that organisational objectives are achieved. According to De Cenzo and Robbins (1994), training and development is a learning experience in that it seeks a relatively permanent change in an individual that will improve ability to perform the job.

The Australian Institute of Management (2014) conducted research on the role of middle managers in a change programme. It concluded that senior managers viewed that middle managers lacked staff performance skills, leadership and the ability to influence and motivate other managers. What was striking about this research was the difference in perception. 64% of senior managers felt middle managers were below average in terms of leadership and influencing skill. However only 27% of middle managers felt they were below average in these competencies.

Stoker (2006) argues that middle managers see themselves as ‘considerate’ leaders. They focus more on the people affected rather than the company strategy. They do this through soft skills such as empathy and support. He continued by saying that this leadership style correlates to employee satisfaction and job commitment and suffer less burnout. Huy (2002), agrees by stating that the efforts made by middle management to support and empathise with the workforce does contribute to change initiative being successful.

Middle managers revealed that professional development in management development was lacking and that ‘there is no specific management development

programme' and 'no guidance on appropriate courses'. They also required 'assistance with career planning and progression' and needed opportunities for advancement to senior management level. Their role is diverse and challenging and many middle managers lack clarity in regard to expectations. Lack of management development programmes in retail will continue to detrimentally affect the way the role is performed. There is also a need for the inclusion of a framework for professional leadership in the Professional Standards (1999) which includes team development and leadership. Hence, this will address the role middle managers play in this regard so they are able to gain more clarity about their leadership role and how to develop teams.

Lack of proper training creates hindrance on middle management in carrying out activities effectively and efficiently. Ray Doyle (2015) from his research project shows that middle management received training. It stated that although 87% of middle managers did receive training to support them implementing the change, only 22% of them felt it was 'effective' training. That is a very powerful message that businesses should reflect on. It is admitted that the middle managers are critical to the success of any change initiative. However, if they feel they are not getting proper and effective training, then it should be addressed. Perhaps it may be a quick and relatively cheap win.

One of the most damaging forms of resistance is passive resistance as these results in the employee refusing to participate in the formulation of change proposals and this ultimately manifests itself in a lack of commitment to these proposals Arnolds & Boshoff(2004). Commitment has been defined as "the strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in an organisation. Highly committed workers are found to be more committed than their less committed counterparts. Zaccaro and Dobbins in Arnolds & Boshoff(2004) agree that an employee's productivity is positively affected by organisational commitment. It is important to note that not all change or restructuring is viewed as having a negative impact on employees. When change is well managed it can have a positive impact on the employee and the organisation.

In researching the development needs of middle leaders in retail industry, Glover, Miller, Gambling, Gough and Johnson (1998), revealed four underlying quandaries for middle leaders:

- Time used for administration, meant time away from teaching and learning
- An increase in bureaucratic demands meant leadership was inhibited
- Changing demands of accountability turned the middle leader into a line manager
- A need for reskilling to adapt to the new ways of understanding professionalism

Bennett, Woods, Wise and Newton(2007) found two similar themes in their research review, identifying two key tensions regarding the middle leader's role. The first was the conflict between the whole industry focus associated with their role, and the loyalty to their Store. The second was tension between 'a growing retail culture of middle management and a professional rhetoric of collegiality.

The authors go on to pinpoint the Managerial Training Association's (MTA) proposals suggest development in leadership and organizational management are more important than administration training. The authors note that there remains an awareness issue in relation to the work of the middle leader, by the MTA. , Glover, Miller, Gambling, Gough and Johnson (1998) suggest training on the job remains the expected pathway for a middle leader, and unless there is an evolution to a new expertise/role, middle managers will continue to 'be little more than the administrators who apply policies within retail industry. This is a conflicting profile in relation to what employees actually want as suggested by interview evidence collected by Glover et al (1998) proposing development needs by employees and middle leaders are linked to strategic implementation, rather than administrative needs.

Gurr and Drysdale's (2012) recent study brought together three middle leadership studies in retail industry. Their findings exposed the fact that a large number of middle leaders felt that they had few opportunities or expectations to implement leadership. Lower managers / supervisors expected middle leaders to 'exert more leadership than they believed they could. It was noted that employees felt that they were inhibited by inadequate preparation and training. Research on middle Management pointed out the work of the middle leaders being dependent on how their role is constructed. Training and professional development, along with support from senior leaders seems the logical step to ensuring the work of middle leaders is of a high standard.



Bennett, Woods, Wise and Newton(2003) identify three implications for middle leaders' professional development:

- There is a need for professional development that is focused on how middle leaders can contribute more effectively to strategic implementation
- Professional development needs to address the meaning of professionalism, and the rights of autonomy
- Imaginative ways of tackling issues should be encouraged such as whole stores and departmental debates on the above and other matters.

#### **2.4.10. Challenges in strategy implementation**

Strategy implementation is a challenge. Several studies show that communicating strategy often fails, strategic goals cannot be achieved as planned and employees do not understand the meaning of strategy in their work (e.g. Balogun & Johnson 2005, Beer & Nohria 2000, Bourgeois & Brodwin 1984, Hrebiniak 2006, Ikävalko 2005, Kaplan & Norton 1996, 2008, Mintzberg 1978, 1990, 1994, Nutt 1999). Employees play an essential role in the implementation, but they do not always have enough information, support or encouragement to have an active role in the strategy process. It is obvious that a gap between strategic planning and implementation still exists, although the problem has been discussed both in research and practice for the past 30 years. Several respected researchers (Mintzberg 1990, 1995, Senge 1990/2006, Hrebiniak 2006) argue that thinking cannot be separated from doing and strategy formulation and execution cannot thus be separated from each other. Still, this separation is a reality in many organizations and also in strategic management research.

The challenges in strategy implementation include unfeasibility of the strategy, weak management role, lack of communication, lacking commitment to the strategy, unawareness or misunderstanding of the strategy, unaligned organizational systems and resources, poor coordination and sharing of responsibilities, inadequate capabilities, unexpected obstacles, competing activities, delayed schedule, uncontrollable environmental factors, and negligence of daily business. (Alexander 1991; Giles 1991; Galpin 1998; Lares-Mankki 1994; Beer & Eisenstat 2000).

Middle managers are often expected to interpret and channel information about outside market pressures and internal sensitivities and capability upward Huy(2001).

The way in which this information is synthesised affects top management perceptions and can subsequently influence the formulation of strategy Floyd & Wooldridge, (1992). Middle managers also apply their experience to evaluate the relevance and feasibility of proposed corporate strategic initiatives and changes.

The multiplicity of these roles explains the complexity of the middle management position. Strategically active middle managers have to juggle with different hats. This is not without risks and especially top management needs to recognize and enable the full strategic potential of the different middle management roles. If not, middle managers risk labels as “spin doctors”, who always distort information, “drones” who only think execution, “politicians” who always lobby for their pet projects or “subversives” who undermine continuously strategy implementation Floyd & Wooldridge, (1996). This is unfortunate as involving middle managers in strategy formation leads to better organizational outcomes (Wooldridge & Floyd, 1990; Kuratko & Goldsby, 2004; Meyer, 2006; Sillince & Mueller, 2007; Mantere, 2008; Conway & Monks, 2011; Huy, 2011).

In the past, middle management was not considered when planning or executing a company strategy. They had a limited informal input into the strategy shaping Floyd and Woodridge, (1997). Mills (2000), states that middle managers typically do not create policies, but instead interpret and implement. Balogun (2003) argues that the traditional view of a middle manager has changed. They are now expected to manage change as well as the day to day, business as usual activities but still other business not consider that fact.

Middle managers are unmotivated organisational actors that slow down decision-making and strategy implementation. Consequently, research is dealing with two sides of the same coin; a number of researchers thinking that middle manager role should be eliminated, and a greater amount of researcher suggest that today when unnecessary layers and quantities of middle management have been removed in organisation, those that remain are of great importance and should be seen as valuable resources in organisations rather than bureaucratic controllers Marichal and Segers (2012).

Middle managers experience most role conflict of all organisation actors (Bass and Bass 2008; Bass and Stogdil 1989). In addition to that, middle managers are afraid

of losing their jobs after the downsizing trend and the cutting off divisions in the middle management level which has occurred since the 1980s Munkeby (2007). In today's organisations, where cutting cost and being as efficient as possible with minimal resources is of great importance, the work of middle managers is challenging and alternatives are restricted. Employees are afraid of losing their jobs and tired of being super workers expected to excel in their performance, while the top management constantly tries to renew strategies and performance concepts. Middle managers need to balance both parties' interests and concerns, with limited resources at hand. While managers are expected to be innovative, they are given few tools in practice; the budget often restricting middle managers alternatives in the decision-making Marginson and Bui (2009).

Management strategy development and implementation is facing unprecedented change from the adoption of new technologies, new interfaces with customers and suppliers, and industry consolidation. Other globalization drivers such as competition, customer and cost Yip, (2003) are forcing the evolution of global strategies by most companies. In order to keep pace, top management needs to plan, motivate and lead these changes. However, Balogun and Haley (2008) found the failure rate of strategic change programs to be 70%. Little is known about the actual practices of middle managers Rouleau, (2005) and how their activities can be facilitated Balogun, (2007). Mayer and Smith (2007) conclude their role is often misunderstood and unsupported by top management.

The main cause in any important case involving major business failures seems to be a lack of both personal and organisational integrity. Integrity and the direction that it provides are part of the required solution to many problems experienced by organisations (Brenkert, 2006; White & Lean, 2008). According to George (2003), organisations need to promote leadership in management that speaks of high integrity, a deep sense of purpose and which stays true to their core values. Business environments have become increasingly competitive and complex. Balgobind (2002) emphasises the important role middle managers as leaders need to play towards assuring the success of an organisation in the increasingly competitive and complex business environments. The increased pressure that comes with such an environment opens the door for challenges towards integrity and testing the leadership of management (Cohen, 2008; Maak & Pless, 2006).

Middle managers become middle leaders. They understand that they have multiple roles to play in multiple groups and networks and they have developed their own vision and identity in this complexity: "I'm in charge, I'm the boss, and I have multiple stakeholders to manage." This identity allows them to be flexible without having the feeling of being torn apart. This different identity also needs different skills: overall emotional balancing and self-regulation Huy(2002), issue selling to the top or political skills (Dutton et al. 1997; Rouleau & Balogun, 2011; Ren & Guo, 2011) and transformational leadership behaviours Stoker, (2006). Effective middle managers have informal power, are versatile, volunteer early, criticize positively and are emotionally intelligent Huy (2011).

Balogun depicts that middle managers have a complex task in strategy as practice view. The sense-making roles are less visible, but they influence the more visible and recognized coordination roles. Balogun concludes that the sense making role of middle management is often not acknowledged which leads to problems in the strategy change Balogun and Hailey, (2008). Critical risks include middle manager becoming overloaded leading to a lack of time for important tasks such as communication, counselling staff, and teambuilding. In addition, the emotional impact of the work middle managers perform is not acknowledged and supported. As a result, middle managers might feel lonely and abandoned. When these risk factors emerge, middle managers become frustrated and resistant to change.

Researchers indicated that middle managers recognise themselves as learning facilitators and "coaches" in particular; there is still some serious ambiguity for coaching implementation in organisations from middle managers' perspectives Stoker, (2006). By the same token, Howe (2008) further explains that limiting beliefs and conflicting roles cause further issues for their performance as coaches. Therefore, managers are facing issues such as lack of a deep rapport, boundaries in the coaching relationship with subordinates, lack of emotional awareness, shortage of quality time and mixed motives for managing.

According to Hunt and Weintraub (2002), Middle managers who hold contrary beliefs and attitudes will perform poorly, for example, they will attempt to demonstrate their "toughness", will not search for more alternatives which in turn will then limit their subordinates' development; they will focus only on immediate results and in some cases may become cynical or hostile.

Hrebiniak (2008) talked to hundreds of managers with responsibility for strategy execution. From these discussions, he identified twelve execution challenges in the strategy execution process. He then completed two surveys of 400 managers in order to rank problems according to their importance in strategy execution:

- Inability to manage change effectively or to overcome internal resistance to change
- Trying to execute a strategy that conflicts with the existing power structure
- Poor or inadequate information sharing between individuals or business units responsible for strategy execution
- Unclear communication of responsibility and/or accountability for execution decisions and actions
- Poor or vague strategy,
- Lack of feelings of 'ownership' of a strategy or execution plans among key employees
- Not having guidelines or a model to guide strategy
- Lack of understanding of the role of the organizational structure and design in the execution process,
- Inability to generate 'buy-in' or agreement in critical execution steps or actions
- Lack of incentives or inappropriate incentives to support execution objectives
- Lack of upper-management support
- Insufficient financial resources

Lacks of upper resources' were not considered to be important hurdles in the process of strategy execution. His explanation of this outcome is that managers do think that top management support and adequate financial resources are critical, but that these were developed in the planning process and become 'givens' in the execution process Hrebiniak(2008)

## **2.5. How does the company support the middle management?**

Researchers show that development at the mid-level continues to evolve. Organizations are ever-changing their approaches to developing mid-level leaders, focused in part by the emerging challenges facing mid-level leaders and in part by the rapidly changing business landscape, among other drivers. Also driving these

changes is recognition that improvement is needed in certain areas, such as development planning.

Mabey' (2003) also draws attention to some particular capabilities which may have an especially crucial role in the link between individual capability and organisational performance. These capabilities need to be present in the HR function and the leadership team. They are:

- Effectively linking people development to business strategies
- Effectively influencing senior managers to take HR seriously
- Building learning into everyday work
- Developing managers who can manage strategically
- Effective management of people and resources

Career development training is crucial in that it helps raise the standards of service delivery. Botha, Kiley and Truman(2007) state that training is the specific way to facilitate learning in an institution. Formal learning in an institution forms the basic foundation for programmes and improves attitudes and beliefs, knowledge or skills and behaviour through experiences. Van Dyk, Nel, Van z Loed and Haasbrook (2001) perceive training as an essential element of the institution and describe it as a major management tool with which to develop the full effectiveness of the organisation's most important resource namely its employees. Benefits of the middle management learning programme (MMLP) have been noticed in the significant decreases in challenges showing it was not the lack of will that hampered service delivery, but inadequate training De Vries (2008).

Marx and Demby (1998) found that that standard development programmes still attendance at prestigious Business Schools. However, more individually tailored development such as executive coaching is more effective. They initiate a growth of consortia programmes aimed to broaden the thinking of middle managers by bringing them into contact with individuals from other organisations.

Kettley and Strebler (1997) echo this in their study of the changing role of middle managers. Formal business education and training for middlemanagers is increasingly context specific, delivered in partnership with externalexperts and focused on new business concepts and strategic learning. Many areexperimenting

with more individually focused approaches to learning including coaching, counselling and personal feedback.'

Many corporations have defined generic and/or middle management competencies although they vary in the extent to which these really underpin management development. Holbeche (1998) identifies many companies using competency approaches, personal development plans and assessment centres to help link their succession planning processes with corporate and management development strategies. Many companies have also determined a set of generic leadership competencies, but Holbeche warns against 'the limited shelf life of success profiles when business requirements change'.

360-degree feedback is primarily a diagnostic tool, and a condition of effectiveness is that relevant training and/or coaching which helps individuals increase their skills and self-efficacy in the development areas highlighted follow it. Alimo-Metcalfe (1998) cites a study by Bass and Bass (2008) that found an improvement in managers who attended a leadership training programme after receiving 360-degree feedback, but only on those dimensions that the participants had selected to work on. They conclude that effective learning transfer is highly dependent upon focused effort around personal improvement goals and plans. This finding is supported by a study by Hazucha (1993). They found that those managers receiving less favourable feedback ratings investing more effort in development activity than those receiving more favourable feedback first time round, and skill increases as a result of 360degree feedback

A further condition, leading to improved capability, is the opportunity for participants to discuss their feedback with the individuals who provided it Antonio(1996). This enables the manager to uncover reasons behind the ratings given, understand discrepancies between self-ratings and that given by others and to discuss ways of improving certain behaviours in the future. Siefert(2001) suggest that repeated feedback is a condition which facilitates individual learning; this is because it keeps the target areas salient, it allows precise tracking of progress on certain behaviours and improves the raters' understanding and appreciation of the skills they are evaluating.

Fletcher and Baldry (1999) note that it is possible for greater rater-ratee agreement (congruence) to result from raters' assessments remaining the same on separate occasions while self-ratings move from being more lenient and less congruent towards being less lenient and more congruent as a result of repeated feedback. In other words, a by-product of repeated 360-degree feedback on similar behaviours is to increase individuals' self-awareness, bringing it more into line with the views of their colleagues. Managers who have more accurate self-assessments (i.e. see themselves as others see them) are more likely to be promoted McCauley and Lombardo, (1990).

Walker and Smither (1999) studied 252 managers who received five annual iterations of an upward feedback programme. Their capability improved more in years when 65 direct reports indicated that the manager held a feedback meeting than in other years. The researchers concluded that meeting with subordinates to discussing their strengths and weaknesses enhances a manager's likelihood of enhancing performance over time.

The organisations seem positive about moving from problem-focused approach in coaching middle managers (which is considered a rather narrow-orientated practice Bartlett, (2007) to wider managing applications, such as performance improvement, personal growth, and career development as defined by Mumford and Gold (2004) and Ellinger and Bostrom (2002) suggest that coaching training programs conducted for middle managers should incorporate the topics related to surfacing managerial beliefs, which play an important role in managerial coaching practice.

Alimo-Metcalf, Ford, Harding and Lawler(2000) depict same trends in leadership development: emphasis on feedback, action learning, cross-functional teamwork and the involvement in senior people of delivering development themselves (e.g. as coaches or mentors). Mentoring and coaching have received increased attention in recent years, especially for more senior people at one extreme and new joiner at the other. Ford (1991) argues that executive coaching can transform performance by allowing executives to establish their own criteria for improvement.

Some organisations have used formal mentoring 'schemes' mainly for either graduate entrants or middle managers. Clutterbuck and Megginson (1999) identify mentoring as covering a wide range of different support to individuals. Three



common roles are defined as executive coach (a short-term help with specific skills), elder statesperson and reflective mentor.

According to Carter (2001), in a review of the use of executive coaching shows that this approach is very popular with large organisations and quite attractive to many middle managers. However, extending its use to wider populations of middle managers is limited by its cost and the restricted supply of high quality coaches.

Clutterbuck and Megginson (1999) provide narrative accounts of the impact of mentoring for middle managers. Individuals were able to point to critical incidents in the relationship, and critical aspects of their performance which they believed were affected. Robert Chia (1996) in his work argues strongly for the need for middle managers to develop what he calls the 'entrepreneurial imagination'. The middle manager today must be adaptive, able to *think the unthinkable*, and able to work in an unpredictable and volatile environment. Roffe (1999) found that key factors in the organisation which encourage creativity are: having reward structures which support creativity not conformity; support for risk taking and change; tolerating mistakes; and giving recognition for new ideas and innovations

Woodhall and Welchman (1998) on 'work based management development' in organisations concluded there was a gap between all the talk of tailored individual learning in the workplace and its implementation. 'Coaching and, increasingly, special projects are the interventions most likely to be consciously promoted, but explicit guidance on using these learning interventions is rare. A good deal of development activity in the 1990s was directed at the issue of managing or leading change. Doyle (1995) found that the impact of formalised management training activity during change was often resisted due to the residual culture and style of the managers. In seeing management development as part of culture change Holbeche (1999) discusses the problem of senior management training as appearing remedial. She argues that feedback can help managers to see the need for change, but their willingness may still be lacking. Feedback has proved to be a powerful lever for engaging managers with their own need for skill development Kettley, (1997) and at it is most useful when integrated into a development programme.

There is considerable interest in the use of e-learning, sometimes presented as programmes or modules within a 'corporate university' (Sloman, 2001; DTI, 2000;

Burgoyne, 2001). Burgoyne found that companies were seeking to use e-learning alongside face-to-face leadership skill development rather than intending to replace personal contact in management development. Evidence from the (CIPD training survey 2002) shows that, e-learning is used by many employers; it tends to be used alongside as another training methods and is more used for IT staff than for managers.

In strategic management research there are only a few views taking an interest in the employees' role, like the Learning and Cultural schools of thought (Mintzberg et al. 1998). The focus of resource-based view (RBV) (Wernerfelt 1984, Grant 1991, Barney 1991, 2001) is on people's strategic capabilities, whilst RBV expanded with a dynamic-based view is concerned with applying the capabilities in practice (Teece, Pisano & Shuen 1997, Helfat 2000, Regnér 2008). Still, the development of RBV has not been fully exploited and there is a need for research integrating strategy and organization (Floyd et al. 2011). There is also a call for an activity-based micro-perspective in strategic management research Johnson, Melin & Whittington (2003), as well as understanding the macro through studying the micro-level Vaara & Whittington (2012) and linking these together Jarzabkowski & Spee (2009). In all, there is an absence of individuals, human actors with emotions, motivations and actions in most strategy theories (Jarzabkowski & Spee 2009, Mantere 2003).

Ewenstein, Smith and Sologar (2015) promote using digital technologies to support middle management in the change programme. They suggest utilising five areas that can enable change efforts are more effective and efficient. Provide just in time feedback – it gives the middle managers the opportunity to adjust their behaviour and observe the results immediately. Personalise the experience – make information available that is unique to the user. This can assist the middle manager with understanding their contribution to the change initiative. Sidestep hierarchy – enable easier connections across the business which aligns with the earlier literature from Battilana & Casciaro (2013) who promoted non-linear structures to achieving success in change programmes. Build empathy, community and shared purpose – by providing clear information relating to tasks, it can create and sustain a team spirit within the group. Demonstrate progress – This can help the middle managers guide their team throughout the change process by providing real time view on progress.

## **2.6. What strategies can be developed to assist middle management to overcome their challenges?**

The researchers reveal that the strength of leadership capability at the mid-level is a primary determinant of an organization's ability to execute its business strategy. If organizations want to be successful, they must take stock of the current readiness of their mid-level leaders, and develop them to meet business needs. That begins with benchmarking against those organizations that are doing it right—and achieving the right results.

Hrebiniak (2008) outlines strategies based on eight important obstacles to strategy execution. Hrebiniak define eight areas of opportunity that will help deliver success of strategy execution:

- Having a model or guidelines for execution the relationships among key decisions and actions
- Understanding how strategy creation affects the execution of strategy
- Managing change effectively, including culture change
- Understanding the power structure
- Developing organizational structures that foster information sharing, coordination and clear accountability,
- Developing effective controls and feedback mechanisms
- Knowing how to create an execution
- Exercising execution-biased leadership

In Hrebiniak view, a well-defined, Logical, structure approach is crucial to the success of strategy execution. Although his view is consistent and provides interesting conclusions, consulting experience in strategy implementation projects Kuyvenhoven, (2008) leads to the conclusion that this approach may be most effective in complex strategic changes and less so for strategic initiatives on a smaller scale or when a sense of urgency is not present. This type of change often requires a more bottom-up approach that gives freedom to middle management to develop and implement their strategic ideas.

The key reasons why transformations fail have been established. Of course, organisations want them to succeed. In this section, the theme of preventing failures will be explored. Kotter(2007) proposes that long term survival for an organisation requires reinvention and change is the ultimate test of a leader. It is a battle for

hearts and minds as change is often resisted. Kotter(1996) has provided eight steps which provide a solid fundamental guideline. The most important thing is to have a sense of urgency when implementing the change. The failure of securing this urgency is responsible for 50% of all change failures. It requires the cooperation of many individuals across the business. Leaders need to be identified and promoted to manage the change. Overall it requires buy-in from at least 75% of all management.

Kotter(1996) references the importance of creating a powerful guiding coalition. He continues by stating that it requires a large core group to drive change. He identifies that this does not have to be part of the normal hierarchy and may sometimes benefit from informal relationships, where they don't have a shared history of teamwork. Finally he states there needs to be a shared sense of the company's problems and opportunities.

Kotter(1996) identifies the benefit of having a clear vision early in the change process as a vital action for success. It is common to have a blurry vision as the start of the process, but there needs to be focus on clarifying it straight away. He continues by saying many plans and programmes have objectives, but lack vision. He states that a successful vision should be able to be communicated within five minutes.

Kotter(1996) recommends communicating frequently and powerfully to embed the message. He continues by saying hearts and minds will never be captured without credible communication. He advises to talk about it every chance you get and don't just call special meetings to inform the workforce. He states if you keep it fresh in everybody's minds that will remember it and respond accordingly. He says it is vital to demonstrate the behaviours associated with the change. The workforce responds better when they see action rather than hear words. You must be in a position to address people's concerns or worries in an open and honest manner.

Kotter(1996) recommends putting a structure in place to manage the change and regularly monitor for signs of obstacles. He recommends identifying leaders within the organisation and changing them or hiring new ones if necessary. He also believes in recognising and rewarding for making change happen. He says big obstacles should be removed early in the process, and that includes people. Review performance and compensation systems to ensure they are in line with the vision.

Kotter(1996) recommends securing some early wins to prevent critics or resisters from gaining influence amongst the rest of the team. Targeted projects that may not need help from these critics. He also recommends being active rather than passive in your pursuit of these goals. He believes all of this will boost credibility of the change initiative.

Kotter (1996) warns against declaring victory too soon. He says premature celebration may kill momentum. He suggests that an analysis should be performed to see what went right and what needs improving. He believes it is difficult to motivate the troops if they believe they've already won.

Kotter(1996) recommends that these changes should become anchored in the company culture. He suggests that until these beliefs and values become part of the core of the company, they are likely to degrade. He recommends regular informal discussions with the team to reinforce the new change in culture and highlight the benefits to the business. He believes that these new values should be part of any new recruitment or training initiatives. Also, he states that there should be a robust succession planning strategy to ensure that when existing leaders move on, their legacy is not lost or forgotten.

Gabarro(1987) has a very similar perspective to Kotter. He refers to five key steps that typify successful turnarounds in change situations. He suggests moving quickly to diagnose underlying causes of performance problems. He also believes that one must take initial corrective actions that deal with obvious problems before their diagnosis or strategy is complete. Create a sense of urgency which highlights an organisation's problems and communicate this sense of urgency throughout the organisation. Articulate a mission and shared purpose that mobilizes the sense of urgency they have created. Create measurable and visible successes as early in the turn-around as possible.

Kotter has continued to perform research in this subject and has published an updated version in 2012, in which he now calls accelerators to change. He has now added that "there are three main differences between those eight steps and the eight "accelerators" on which the strategy system runs: (1) The steps are often used in rigid, finite, and sequential ways, in effecting or responding to episodic change, whereas the accelerators are concurrent and always at work. (2) The steps are

usually driven by a small, powerful core group, whereas the accelerators pull in as many people as possible from throughout the organization to form a “volunteer army.” (3) The steps are designed to function within a traditional hierarchy, whereas the accelerators require the flexibility and agility of a network” Kotter(2012).

According to McMahon and Bolam (1990), management development is part of staff development and more particularly, is the development of groups of managers as well as individuals. It aims to promote improved managerial performance, not just individual learning or career development, and the ultimate aim is to improve the quality of management and leadership. Management development embraces three broad components:

- *Management training*: short conference courses and workshops that emphasise practical information and skills and does not necessarily lead to awards and qualifications.
- *Management education*: secondments, fellowships and long external courses leading to higher educational and professional qualifications.
- *Management support*: where managers are supported on-the-job to grow professionally and move forward in their careers. This is achieved through career development, appraisal, and job rotation.

Middle managers play a critical role in company development and effectiveness and are “crucial to the success of the organisation” Piggot-Irvine & Locke, (1999). It is therefore important that the skills of these middle managers in the management development area are enhanced. This will ensure that these managers are equipped with a range of knowledge, abilities and skills that are required to manage them and others Gunter & Rutherford, (2000). Cardno (1995) advocates that “when it comes to the management development of staff, the most influential person in the company is the Top management” as his/her attitude and commitment to developing managers at all levels of the organization “determines the priority that is accorded to this issue”

Preventative stress management is about the middle managers together with the organisation taking joint responsibility in managing stress. It is a three tier stress prevention model change the cause of stress, manage the middle manager’s response to stress and obtain professional care to heal symptoms of stress Nelson & Simmons(2003) and they further indicate that these approaches have added value to understanding stress at work; however they are more focused on the negative side

of stress with little focus on the positive side of stress. Below are some descriptions of common causes of workplace stress MacDonald (2005). These are good examples of what can and should be taken into account when going through a workplace stress management:

- Heavy workloads: having unrealistic targets and tight deadlines that are perceived by employees as unreasonable or unachievable
- The nature of the job or type of work: problems include, poor task design, repetitive or boring work, lack of clarity, lack of control and the opportunity for the employee to use his skills
- Long or unsocial working hours
- Lack of training particularly when an employee is moved into a new job
- Lack of management support
- Job insecurity: takeovers, mergers and business reorganisations often lead to restructuring, redundancies and flatter hierarchies
- Change often makes people feel uncomfortable and anxious at the very least, and seriously stressed to the point of illness at worst
- Lack of or too much communication: the uncertainty of fear and sense of isolation caused by lack of or too much information
- Management style: a manager's leadership style can mean the difference between success and failure

The provided evident from above there are various sources of stress that can affect employee wellness, e.g. pressure for production, deadlines, competitive work environment, role conflict and changes in the workplace. However, the focus of employee health and wellness should not only be on the factors in the workplace that affect employees negatively, e.g. stress and strain, but also on how to promote the positive aspects of employee health and wellness, e.g. good relationships, mutually respectful support, growth opportunities and adequate job resources Sieberhagen, Rothmann and Pienaar (2009). Middle managers require support in induction into the middle management role and ongoing mentoring and appraisal.

There is a strong consensus amongst writers on coaching that coaching is an important activity that most managers need to develop and perform as an integral part of their everyday management practice (Zeus and Skiffington, 2000; Hunt and Weintraub, 2002; 2006; Clutterbuck and Megginson, 2005; Pemberton, 2006, Hamlin *et al.*, 2006, CIPD report, 2007; Clutterbuck, 2008). Middle managers emphasises their importance as human potential developers Floyd and Wooldridge(1992) and highlights the challenges for their role (Howe, 2008, Stoker, 2006). More specifically, Hunt and Weintraub(2006) and Clutterbuck and Megginson, (2005) state that managers at all levels of the organisational hierarchy, including middle managers, are responsible for the implementation of the coaching culture in organisations: for instance, starting with individual managerial initiatives and ending with involvement in the entire organisational coaching setting.

Pascale, Milleman, and Linda (1997) suggest that commitment, a more active role and greater interest of more employees is needed to successfully implement change. This type and degree of fundamental change, is commonly called revitalization or transformation and further suggested the factors that produce sustainable revitalization have to be identified, in order to transform troubled or maintain the vitality of healthy organizations.

They identify three concrete interventions that will restore companies to vital agility and then keep them in good health:

- *Incorporating employees* fully into the process of dealing with business challenges;
- *Leading from a different place* so as to sharpen and maintain employee involvement;
- Leading from a different place means resisting the temptation to provide the answers. Solution must come from the lower echelons.
- *Instilling mental disciplines* that will make people behave differently and then help them sustain new behaviour into the future.

A study by Kessels and Harrison (1998) found two main factors in the development of successful programmes for middle managers at the strategic level. Firstly, the involvement of key stakeholders is needed in the design, delivery and evaluation of programmes, so that there is shared understanding about goals and methods.



Secondly, without an organisational context in which transfer of learning from the programme to the workplace is facilitated, impact may be negligible.

Pemberton (2006) provide an extensive list of requirements for middle managers who want to become effective managers, namely: a helpful attitude, less need for control, enthusiasm for coaching, empathic dealing with others, openness to personal learning and receiving feedback, high personal standards, a desire to help others to develop and an understanding that most people do want to learn.

Ladyshevsky(2010) particularly notes that middle managers need to learn to build trust by understanding its crucial components and putting into place practices that support manager-employee relationship. In a similar vein, Mumford and Gold (2004) also highlight trust as a catalyst for sharing of knowledge within organisational contexts. Social gatherings and business meetings, where every member must listen and have the chance to speak, are good ways to create dialogues. Managers should implement policies such as mentoring programs to provide associates access to information and opportunities. Also, associates should never be denied necessary, constructive, critical feedback for learning about mistakes and successes Flagg(2002).

Effective managers are aware that certain skills are necessary for creating a successful, diverse workforce. First, managers must understand discrimination and its consequences. Second, managers must recognize their own cultural biases and prejudices Koonce(2001). Diversity is not about differences among groups, but rather about differences among individuals. Each individual is unique and does not represent or speak for a particular group. Finally, managers must be willing to change the organization if necessary Koonce(2001). Organizations need to learn how to manage diversity in the workplace to be successful in the future Flagg (2002). Unfortunately, there is no single recipe for success. It mainly depends on the manager's ability to understand what is best for the organization based on teamwork and the dynamics of the workplace. According to Roosevelt (2001), managing diversity is a comprehensive process for creating a work environment that includes everyone. When creating a successful diverse workforce, an effective manager should focus on personal awareness. Both managers and associates need to be aware of their personal biases. Therefore, organizations need to develop, implement, and maintain ongoing training because a one-day session of training will not change

people's behaviours Koonce (2001). Managers must also understand that fairness is not necessarily equality. There are always exceptions to the rule. Managing diversity is about more than equal employment opportunity and affirmative action Losyk, (1996). Vital requirement when dealing with diversity is promoting a safe place for associates to communicate Koonce (2001).

According to (Daresh, 2002), (Green et al. 2002) and (Hanson, 2003), conflict situations offer individuals an opportunity to choose a style they believe is more appropriate to responding to the prevailing conflict. The following are conflict management styles that can be adopted by middle managers in dealing with conflict in their roles.

- Cooperative Problem-Solving Strategy- when using this style, middle manager should try to find a solution that will help them meet their interests and help everyone maintain good relationships. Dolphins are an example of this style. They whistle and click to communicate with each other to catch food cooperatively and summon help. But, they may choose other styles depending on the situation (Green, Glenford, & Plow, 2002; Hanson, 2003).
- Competing- choosing this style means that a middle managers are putting their interest before anyone else's interests. Some people who use this style try so hard to get what they want irrespective of whether or not they ruin the friendship. A lion is a symbol of this style. For example, when the lion's family is hungry, the lion may use its strength and loud roar to get the food, because it is important for the family (Daresh, 2002; Green et al., 2002).
- Compromising- middle managers choose this style when it is important to satisfy some of their interests, but not all of them. They might say that let us split the difference for something better than nothing. A zebra is a symbol of this style. Zebras's unique look seems to indicate that it does not care if it is a black or white horse, so it "splits the difference" and chooses black and white stripes, but it may choose other styles depending on the situation (Green et al., 2002; Hanson, 2003).
- Avoiding-middle managers choosing this style do not get in a conflict, they might say "You decide and leave me out of it". A turtle is a symbol of this

style, because it can avoid everything by pulling its legs and head into its shell to get away from everyone. It also chooses other styles, because it does not always have to stay in its shell (Green et al., 2002; Hanson, 2003).

- Accommodating- middle managers choosing this style put their interests last and let others have what they want. They believe that keeping a relationship is more important than anything else. A chameleon is a symbol of this style because it changes its colour to match that of its environment. It also uses other styles depending on the situation (Daresh, 2002; Green et al., 2002).

## **2.7. Conclusion**

The reviewed literature suggest that middle managers have the potential and ability to perform their task effectively and efficiently with the support of top management, the vicious cycle of challenges against their duty often constrain their success. Apart from internal factors among themselves, external factors such as social and cultural stereotypes, the problem of balancing reproductive and workplace functions, and lack of senior management support and effective training have contributed significantly on constraining their management success. Middle management group are expected to bring their teams through the change, but for some of them, they may not have the experience of skills to manage this effectively. Even some of the training they do receive is suggested to be ineffectual.

The contribution of middle managers to strategy implementation could provide insights to organisational front-runners on ways to engage middle managers in strategic practices. Due to their structural positions, middle managers play a key role in managing resources, providing information to decision makers, giving emotional support to their subordinates, and communicating the strategic intent of senior management throughout the organisation. Organisational front-runners need to develop mechanisms to engage middle managers in the strategy implementation efforts and ensure their commitment.

The managers need also to be involved in the formulation and planning of the overall organizational strategy. This will ensure they understand the strategies and own the process hence are not isolated from the process which will making them have a feeling which may produce negative concerted effort in the organisation leading to a conflict situation of staff segregating themselves into groupings of them versus senior management.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents an outline of the research methodology used to investigate the research topic at hand. More specifically, this chapter describes and explains the research design, population and sample selection, the data collection method and the thematic analysis adopted to analyse the data collected and ethical consideration that were used for this study.

#### **3.2 Research design**

A research design is a procedure used to gather data, analyse data, interpret results and disseminate the findings Myers (2008). Research design can be qualitative, mixed method (qualitative and quantitative) and the quantitative design. Qualitative design is a research design that is subjective and involves a naturalistic and interpretive approach where data is normally gathered using interviews to generate qualitative data Rubin and Babbie (2010). Quantitative design is objective and normally involves gathering quantitative data in the form of numbers Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh (2002). According to Cooper and Schindler(2003), the differences between qualitative and quantitative research are as follows:

- Qualitative research seeks out the 'why', not the 'how', through the analysis of unstructured information
- Quantitative research is a method used to determine the extent of a phenomenon in the form of numbers in order to explain the causes of objectively observable and measurable behaviour.

In this study qualitative research was used to conduct the study to outline the challenges that are faced by middle managers at Shoprite Holdings LTD as Welman, Kruger & Mitchell(2007) sees qualitative research as flexible with an explorative nature, and hence the researcher believed that would get first-hand experience and valid information by having these individual interviews with the selected managers.

### **3.3 Population and sample**

Struwig and Stead(2001) point out that a population has certain characteristics that are homogeneous (the same), and a sample of one would be adequate to measure those particular attributes.

#### **3.3.1 Population**

In the social sciences, research is administered to obtain information from the population of the study. Welman, Kruger, and Mitchell (2005) describe population as the total collection of all units of analysis about which the researcher wishes to make specific conclusion. Huysamen(1994) confirmed that population encompassing 'the total collection of all members, cases of elements about which the researcher wishes to draw conclusions'. The population of this research includes ten middle managers in the Shoprite holdings Ltd in Limpopo Province at Polokwane. Conversely, it is almost certainly not possible to study all members of a population; hence, the need to obtain a sample.

#### **3.3.2 Sample**

In research terms a sample is a group of people, objects or items that are taken from a larger population for measurement. A sample therefore constitutes a subset of this population. Conclusions are, thus, drawn from the sample and are generalized to the population as a whole Sekaran(2010). Non- Probability purposive sampling was used to select the participants for this study. Purposive sampling is also known as judgemental, selective or subjective sampling, and focus on sampling techniques where the units are investigated based on the judgement of the researcher. Bryman (2012) defines purposive sampling as a non-probability form of sampling whereby the researcher samples participants in a strategic way so that those samples are relevant to the research questions that will be posed. In this study, ten middle managers based at Shoprite Limpopo headquarters will be selected as participants, which are based in Polokwane at corner Grobler Street and Schoeman Street.

Non-probability sampling is a sampling approach which is less likely than probability sampling to produce accurate and representative samples, despite that, it is mostly used in middle management research. The researcher used the purposive sampling method as discussed because of the following advantages;

- The researcher was able to judge the subjects that were typical or representative of the phenomenon being studied.
- The researcher was able to choose subjects that were knowledgeable about the research at issue because of their own personal experience.
- The data collected could be very informative for this research Brink (1996).
- It was convenient and economical as the researcher was the only one involved in the selection (Polit et al 2001).

#### Disadvantages of the purposive sampling method

- The researcher knew that the sample selected may not represent the total middle management population and that it would limit the generalisation of the findings. There was also the potential for sampling bias. The researcher however decided that it would be the most suitable method to use and that the criteria set for a respondent to be selected for inclusion in the sample would be followed closely Brink(1999).

#### **3.3.3 Sample size**

According to Onwuegbuzie and Leech(2005), sample size considerations involve making a series of decisions not only about how many individuals to include in a study and how to select those individuals, but also about the conditions under which this selection will take place. The researcher samples participants in a strategic way so that those samples are relevant to the research questions that will be posed. In this study, ten middle managers based at Shoprite Limpopo headquarters were available to participate in the interview, which was based at Polokwane at corner Grobler Street and Schoeman Street. According to Barbour (2008), interviews generally consist of small sample size.

#### **3.4 Data collection**

The data was collected using a comprehensive interview. The interview dealt with challenges of middle management, how the company support them and strategies that can be developed at Shoprite Holdings Limited to assist middle management to overcome the challenges. The interview guide used had open ended questions (structured) to elicit detailed information from the interviewees. Through the technique the researcher was also able to collect views and opinions and even feelings of the interviewees about challenges faced by middle management at

Shoprite Holdings Limited. Interview questions were revised where appropriate, following feedback from interviews and insights from recent additions to the middle management challenges literature. The investigation of particular ideas or themes in interviews is consistent with guidelines for conducting qualitative research Rubin and Rubin, (1995). Analysis occurred during the process of data collection as well as after it Saunders *et al.*, (2007) allowing the researcher to shape the direction of data collection. Interviews were taped and transcribed to ensure accuracy of the information collection procedure Rubin and Rubin(1995). In addition, transcripts were given back to middle managers so they could verify their responses.

Targeted interviewees were middle level managers who are directly involved in strategic management and operations of the shoprite holdings Limited .The divisions were Human resources, technical & IT, marketing, customer care, Financial Services, risk management, strategy and innovation.

### **3.5 Data analysis**

Data analysis is defined as the process that a researcher uses to reduce data to a story and its interpretation, according to LeCompte and Schensul, (1999). The researcher used thematic criteria for further analysis of the data. Braun and Clarke, (2006)described thematic analysis as a qualitative analytic method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes the data in (rich) detail by identifying repeated patterns and meaning and assists the researcher with the interpretation of various aspects of the research topic. While Fereday & Muir-Cochrane(2006) sees thematic analysis as a form of pattern recognition within the data, with emerging themes becoming the categories for analysis and Bryman and Bell(2007) depicts thematic analysis as a process of analysing qualitative data which involves identifying patterns mostly reflecting on how often the phenomenon is observed in the study. The process involves a careful, more focused re-reading and review of the data. The reviewer takes a closer look at the selected data and performs coding and category construction, based on the data's characteristics, to uncover themes pertinent to a phenomenon. The researcher demonstrates objectivity (seeking to represent the research material fairly) and sensitivity (responding to even subtle cues to meaning) in the selection and analysis of data from documents. The approach adopted was consistent with recommendations of Braun and Clarke (2006). All the interviews were recorded.

### 3.6 Ethical considerations

Ethics is a very important issue in research and it must be carefully considered before a study is conducted. Ethical issues arise from our interaction with other people and the environment, especially at the point where there is potential or actual conflict of interests Mouton(2001). Ethics is concerned with what is wrong and right in the conduct of research. Often, ethical choices involve a trade off or compromise between the interests and rights of different parties Mouton(2001). Looking at the above it is evident that ethics was definitely an issue that needed to be considered by the researcher.

The researcher requested a permission to gain access to the research area and refer to Appendix A. The interviewees were informed about the aims, purposes and likely publication of the findings involved in the research and the potential consequences for themselves. Participation was voluntary and they could withdraw at any time. Participants were assured that the data and the identity of the Shoprite Holdings LTD would be kept confidential.

Mouton(2001) describes some of the most common ethical issues and these are discussed below as they are applicable to this study included:

- Objectivity and integrity of the research: The experiences of restructuring and wellness can be very subjective and it becomes easy for the researchers to be subjective in their judgment. The researcher tried at all times to maintain objectivity and integrity in the conduct of this research.
- Ethical publishing practices: The researcher made sure that the referencing was correct and appropriate; this means that the contributions of individuals and any person who participated in the research in a substantial way were included in the references.
- Free and open dissemination of research results: The results of the research findings will be reported in full, openly and in a timely manner.
- Relationship to the subjects of science: This research dealt primarily with studying other individuals in the form of a questionnaire and interviews. Participants have rights and this study could not continue until participants were made aware of these: the *right to privacy* (including the right to refuse to participate in the research), the *right to anonymity and confidentiality*, the right to full disclosure about the research (*informed consent*) and finally the right not



be harmed in any manner (physically, psychologically or emotionally) (Mouton, 2001).

- Right to privacy: In the invitation letters the researcher indicated that general trends will be included in the research report and no individual results will be reported. The researcher also mentioned to the potential participants that they are not forced to partake in the study. This was a completely voluntary exercise. In the initial phase and halfway in the research study some of the participants decided they did not want to be part of the study. The researcher respected this and did not force them to carry on.
- Right to anonymity: When emailing the questionnaire to the participants, it is difficult to assure the participants that they will remain anonymous, as often their email addresses and names are visible. The researcher was aware of this and therefore explained this to them and that all implicit and explicit links between their names and the data they provided will be removed. Anonymity and confidentiality was ensured as the only person with access to the questionnaires and tape recordings was the researcher.
- Informed consent: The researcher interacted verbally and via email with the participants in order to get their assistance in this research study. Informed consent was obtained from the participants before participation in the study. This was done verbally (over the telephone) and also, the participants were told by email that by completing the questionnaire they were consenting to be participants in the study. The researcher made sure that the participants got all the information regarding the research. Communication was achieved through contacting and emailing the participants from time to time as the need arose

### **3.7 Conclusion**

The research methodology utilised in the present study was addressed in this chapter. The selection of the sample, data collection methods, research design as well as the thematic analysis to analyse research postulates were discussed.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 Introduction

The research study focuses on investigating the challenges faced by middle management at Shoprite holding LTD in Limpopo province Polokwane. The researcher collected the experiences, opinions, and thoughts of ten middle managers through semi-structure interviews. The qualitative data obtained based on three study objectives described in chapter one and analysed using thematic analysis. The researcher considered to use thematic analysis because is simple to use which lends itself to use for novice researchers who are unfamiliar with more complex types of qualitative analysis. It allows for flexibility in the researchers choice of theoretical framework. Some other methods of analysis are closely tied to specific theories, but thematic analysis can be used with any theory the researcher chooses. Through this flexibility, thematic analysis allows for rich, detailed and complex description of your data Braun and Clarke(2006).

#### 4.2 Procedure followed

##### 4.2.1. Biographical information of middle managers

The participants are all permanent employees in the middle management category. These participants were selected from the various departments at the company's head office at Polokwane in Limpopo Province. Below are some biographical characteristics of the sample gained during the interviews.

**Table 4.1: Biographical data**

	<b>Race</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Job Tittle</b>	<b>Highest Qualification</b>	<b>Years of experience</b>
1	White	Female	35	Regional Branch Manager	Bcom Business Management	4
2	Black	Female	36	Regional Personnel Manager	Diploma in Human Resource	3
3	Black	Male	40	Regional Personnel Manager	Bcom Human Resource	4
4	Black	Male	30	Regional	Diploma in Business	4

				Admin manager	Administration	
5	Coloured	Male	33	Regional Personnel Manager	Diploma in Human Resource	3
6	Black	Male	37	Regional Branch Manager	Matric	3
7	Black	Female	29	Regional Branch Manager	Bcom Human Resource	4
8	Black	Male	28	Regional Admin Manager	Matric	5
9	Black	Female	30	Regional Branch Manager	Honours in Business Management	4
10	Black	Male	31	Regional Admin Manager	Matric	5

#### 4.2.2. Sorting and structuring data

This section discusses the findings from the analysis based on the themes. The themes and interviews are derived from the interview data. The data was sorted accordingly and questions were asked aligned with research objectives indicated in chapter 1 .The 7 themes emanated from the process of sorting and structuring data are listed in Table 4.2 as follows:

**Table 4.2: Themes**

No	Themes
1	Management support (Positive and negatives)
2	Workload and Pressure ( positive and negatives)
3	HR Management
4	Lack of effective training and development
5	Communication (positive and negatives)
6	Change implementation and management
7	Strategic execution

#### **4.2.2 Challenges faced by Middle Management**

The Researcher developed open ended questions to obtain the facts during the interviews about challenges faced by middle management at Shoprite holdings LTD as indicated and the questions were as follows:

- What are the main barriers that you face on daily basis when performing your work?
- How do you go about resolving such challenges?
- How are you being supported by top management and the company?
- How do you go about refining your skills?
- Are the strategies developed by Shoprite effective in helping you overcome your challenges?
- What form of strategy should be developed to assist middle manager in overcoming the challenges associated with strategy implementation?

The following themes emanated from the questions above which aid the researcher to gain the insight and develop the following themes based on gathered data.

##### **4.2.2.1. Theme 1: Management support**

During interview three middle managers talking amongst themselves about one of their top managers and their conversation indicated that there is too much challenges but top managers not concern and unwilling to support them. It was clear from the interviews that middle managers are willing to resolve the challenges and burdens arise within their roles. They are playing value-adding roles with regards to the corporate strategy. They are not involved from initial stage of the strategy formulation, where they can provide input and contribute to the “fine tuning” as indicated below by some of them:

*“I told my senior that his strategies will not work in that way. His strategies delay operations and is time consuming”.*

*“I also told him to adapt to deming cycle strategy to check whether the method he apply will work or not. Or there will be a need slightly of improvement but he still not listen to me. He wanted me to accomplish the task in his way and is delaying and time consuming”.*

*"I don't talk to him anymore because he cannot even listen to you and willing to help when you face challenges with other tasks".*

The four middle managers depicted facts that they lack support from top managers in playing a leadership role with regards to actively driving tasks to aid implementation of strategy as can be noted from the next comments:

*"Sometimes top managers fail to empower us and on some activities we ended-up failing them and that challenge arises from lack of clarity in strategy implementation due to ineffective communication and guides"*

While three of Middle management indicated that they gained support from their management as proof stated below:

*"Wherever I meet challenge I revert back to top managers to assist and guide me in implementing or executing the corporate strategies".*

*"During initial execution of strategies I involve one of top management to avoid vague and ambiguity in my project entrusted".*

*"My supervisor always coach and mentor me to avoid pitfalls in project and delays which consume times and incurred extra costs".*

#### **4.2.2.2. Theme 2: Workload and Pressure**

This interview really indicated that middle managers contribute enormously but ten middle managers highlighted that workload and pressure is major challenge they faced.

*"Workdays become longer while lunch breaks become shorter. Weeks become longer while vacations become shorter. I do not have time to go out for lunch. Sometimes, I eat at the desk because I cannot complete the daily tasks if I take time off for a lunch break. Workload grows as company become expanding, and with few management layers".*

They also emphasize their input by saying that:

*"Their laptops, smartphones and mobile applications extend the working days to late nights and endless weekends. Colleagues send messages at 9pm and expect immediate response because everybody is connected. If you don't respond quickly, you become irrelevant. So*

*the solution is to hold your smartphone on the dinner table and start typing maniacally every few minutes. As a result, you stop listening to your partner or your kids who are sharing their exciting stories of their day”.*

While two of them indicated their strategies below on how they manage workload and pressure even though still exist but is better compared to before:

*“We manage our team’s workload and hit deadlines, with 6 steps to prioritizing projects that have a lot of moving parts”.*

- 1. Collect a list of all your tasks*
- 2. Identify urgent vs. important*
- 3. Assess value of the tasks*
- 4. Order tasks by estimated effort*
- 5. Be flexible and adaptable to situation or any change*
- 6. Know when to cut. After you prioritize your tasks and look at your estimates, cut the remaining tasks from your list, and focus on the priorities that you know you must and can complete for the day. Then take a deep breathe, dive in and be ready for anything.*

#### **4.2.2.3. Theme 3: Human resource management**

Five Middle managers shows that they value their contribution and they also experience major challenges of staff indicated below:

*“Employees come and go, which it gave us a challenge. Recruiting and hiring is process, costly, time consuming and we find it difficult to build long term relationship with internal and external customers. This is caused by long working hours, dissatisfaction in with salary, dissatisfaction with management, dissatisfaction with long-term career development opportunity and is not easy to take leave because no one fills your gap and it increase the workload from day of absent from work. If you do mistakes as middle management, you’ll be demoted to store manager and these also demotivate the employees”.*

The remaining middle management stipulated below that they don’t blame the employees to come n go within shoprite and they depicted supporting facts as follows:

*“There is job burnout within shoprite and the internal recruitment to management level is very poor and normally we promote employees that obey your command as managers, not because they are competent to be absorbed to supervisory and middle management level.*

*These manners demotivate the qualified employees who are necessary to be absorbed and manage the activities efficiently and effectively. So they ended-up resigning and leave the serious gaps”.*

#### **4.2.2.4. Theme 4: Lack of effective training and development**

Middle managers show a willingness to improve their skills, knowledge and abilities because of global trends and competition within the market and even to implement the corporate strategy effectively and efficiently. They are thirsty for training developments but shoprite is unwilling as indicated below:

*”Mm..... On the other hand some activities are difficult for to carry out because I lack proper training, experience and knowledge. I found it difficult for myself to make tough decisions, executing or implementing the management strategy and even changing the management plan. Sometimes I'm unable to carry out operational plan accordingly. In some instant to other things we lack power or authority to handle other matters within the company. We must first seek authority from immediate supervisor / management before handling the matter”.*

#### **4.2.2.5. Theme 5: Communication**

This theme is one of the critical success factors for the strategy of the organisation to be executed effectively. It looked at how the organisational strategy was communicated throughout the business units of the organisation and whether everyone in the organisation is aware of the strategy. The majority of the respondents indicated positively that the organisational strategy is communicated to all levels of the organisation, while a smaller group indicated that more needs to be done in this area. This respondent was of the opinion that the Shoprite is well enabled through many interventions, and commented as follows:

*“Yes because we have variety communication methods like newsletter, internet which I include emails and I think they helped everyone to be aware of what is happening within the organisation”*

Six middle managers commented on the aspect of communication filtering down to all layers of the organisation by stating the following:

*“...I mean the strategy is been discussed and distributed to all the employees using emails and sometimes we manage to team in clusters and guide each other on how to implement the strategies”.*

*“I think that communication and that sort of background empowers them as well...”.*

*“It is there it is in black and white, it has been launched, it was communicated through that and now getting dust in most of the offices”.*

Another middle manager felt that more still needs to be done in order to drive the message down to reach more employees, and commented as follows:

*"I believe employee will be committed to achieve those goals if they have clear directions".*

*"I think it is best you just seat with and really just go through strategy point by point and just deliberate on those things".*

*"if everything is in peoples face even popup screen savers of strategies and you will get to know it, it will stuck in your mind".*

*"...send things through email or put them on intranet, people do not read those things".*

According to the next two middle managers, the organisational strategy has yet to reach all levels and is not effective.

*"No, not all levels, maybe some people heard about it but they are not really at that opportunity to be taught and understand what it means".*

*"Strategy is just communicated to top management and everyone from lower to upwards management".*

#### **4.2.2.6 Theme 6: Change implementation and management**

Eight Middle managers indicated that change affects every business at some point. Changes may be necessary for the future of the company, but they face certain barriers and challenges stated below:

*"Sometimes, employees and management resist proposals for change and make strategy difficult to implement"*

*"I think poor communication from top management contribute to resistance to change and I think they should communicate their change strategy and implementation clearly from bottom to upward"*

*"I think handling the change process requires an awareness of the overall strategic direction of the organization as well as deep knowledge of its operational activities at the individual level. That is where things will go well in implementing and managing change".*

*"I think some of managers afraid to lose power or authority having their role reduces in size or loses their job altogether which lead them to resist or remain adamant and others in passive mood"*

*"I think employees and management resist because of: Misunderstanding and lack of trust – the implications of the new direction are poorly understood, leading to perceptions that the new vision is irrelevant or damaging".*

*"I may say barriers arises when there is poor communication during change and this affect employee wellbeing since it is associated with increased uncertainty, resulting in increased perceptions of*



*occupational stress, lower job satisfaction, high levels of absenteeism, less commitment to the organisation, a lack of trust and high mental and physical symptoms of ill-health in employees”*

*“I already experienced low or lack of budgetary allocations, time allocated for the change, lack of needed resources during change for example specialized labour which is either non-existent or expensive were amongst the challenges mentioned”*

*“Mostly changes are anchored on corporate strategy and which when not communicated properly sometimes becomes a major challenge, others are lack of support and needed capabilities to carry change through, lack of commitment due to existence of commitment gap, change agents lacking a compelling figure of what change is desired. In some cases there was a degree of fear and anxiety during change due to mistrust and this delayed buy in of the proposed change”.*

Some of the two middle managers believed that anticipating roadblocks helps to avoid them before they become major issues in the change implementation indicated below by their stated facts:

*“A manager who is equipped to be a great change leader can positively influence the speed at which employees adopt the change, the amount of employees who buy into the change, and how proficient employees are in performing in their new roles. I keep employees updated regularly about the plans and progress toward the change implementation. Involve all employees as much as possible through meetings or brainstorming sessions to help during the planning phase”.*

*“From individual change to organizational change, it’s important to change behaviour and the way people think about their work, which for some people it may take time to adopt. What I want to mention here is that people who working in your company, first should want to change and they should be ready to change. That’s the way you can make it happen and supporting your employees and providing training for any new responsibilities can help ease the transition”.*

#### **4.2.2.7 Theme 7: Strategic execution challenges**

This theme observed at the barriers to strategy implementation and what the middle managers could prepare to overcome any challenge they faced. The middle managers had varying responses on the matter as reflect below.

*“I think due to my experience communicating strategy often fails, strategic goals cannot be achieved as planned and employees do not understand the meaning of strategy in their work”*

*“I think employees play an essential role in the implementation, but they do not always have enough information, support or encouragement to have an active role in the strategy process”.*

*“I believe that the challenges in strategy implementation include unfeasibility of the strategy, weak management role, lack of communication, lacking commitment to the strategy, unawareness or*

*misunderstanding of the strategy, unaligned organizational systems and resources, poor coordination and sharing of responsibilities, inadequate capabilities, unexpected obstacles, competing activities, delayed schedule, uncontrollable environmental factors, and negligence of daily business and these factors need observed”*

*“I think we had a limited informal input into the strategy shaping”.*

*“Critical risks include middle manager becoming overloaded leading to a lack of time for important tasks such as communication, counselling staff, and teambuilding which also contribute to be unsuccessful to achieve corporate strategy”.*

*“I also think lack of understanding of the role of the organizational structure and designs in the execution process create hindrance to achieve strategic objectives”.*

*“Inability to manage strategic implementation effectively also leads to fail in achieving corporate strategy”*

*“Sometimes we try to execute a strategy that conflicts with the existing power structure”.*

*“I think poor or inadequate information sharing between individuals or business units responsible for strategy execution create burdens”.*

*“I think unclear communication of responsibility and/or accountability for execution decisions and actions also give us challenge”*

#### **4.3 Conclusion**

The findings suggest that the middle management group faced lot of challenges which create hindrance on corporate strategy and they are willing and capable to get rid of these challenges through by acquiring appropriate tools in order to accomplish strategic goals and objectives effectively and efficiently. They are passionate about the company and loyal to the workforce. They are generally seeking positive support from top management and they try hard to make corporate strategy be successful. They need proper education and training to carry out organisational activities effectively and efficiently. They need to be regularly involved in strategic planning, communication and strategic implementation in the organisation, but appear isolated from the senior executives and Human resource (HR) in terms of receiving support. They appear to be an asset in a company that has a culture of inclusion. Otherwise they struggle to implement change and achieve other organisational goals and objectives successfully.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The chapter presents the summary, conclusion and recommendation of this study. The purpose of this study is to investigate the challenges faced by the middle management at Shoprite Holdings Limited in Limpopo Province. This study had three research objectives: to identify challenges faced by middle management at Shoprite Holding Ltd in Limpopo Province, to determine the support that middle management receive from the company, and to develop strategies that will assist middle management overcome their challenges.

#### **5.2 Summary of the findings**

##### **5.2.1. Management support**

The researcher found that middle managers need support from top managers or executives but there is no support from their supervisors. There appears to be a strong view about a lack of overall support to the middle manager from the executives. They feel the executives don't take the time and effort to engage with them. This perceived insufficient support introduces a lack of authority given to the middle managers. The executives are also accused of not handling poor performers and actually accepting these poor performers. There appears to be the view that the business doesn't always have a responsible change owner and an absence of HR and development during the change period.

##### **5.2.2. Workload and Pressure**

In qualitative terms, excessive workload would mean that the requirements of work exceed the skills, abilities and knowledge of a worker. The researcher found that middle managers work overload and hours spent at work may not be considered to be stressful if work is associated with sufficient rewards, such as meaningful outcomes and recognition of control. Beside with the marked increase in the number of hours worked per day, there has been unprecedented growth in the amount of overtime worked. They also added that workload and pressure creates a job burnout. Therefore, Middle Managers perceive their roles as having higher stress and experience lower levels of job satisfaction.

### **5.2.3. Human resource management**

The research found that middle managers experience the continuous cycle of hiring, training and replacing associates, coupled with exposure to lost sales and sub-par customer service from inexperience, consumes HR attention. Although attributable mainly to part-time employee departures, turnover hinders a store's ability to grow talent and recruit management from within. Considering the economic uncertainty, staffing issues and regulatory compliance requirements facing the retail industry, HR professionals in this sector need to find pragmatic solutions to HR problems that frequently also qualify as strategic business challenges. Part-time workers in particular are affected. The slow economic recovery forced many retailers to cut part-time workers' hours as a way to reduce costs in response to tepid revenue growth, which "placed greater pressure on employees and their families. Middle manager further stated that significant training and one-on-one coaching can help retail employees meet customer expectations and alleviate some frustrations. Shoprite holdings LTD must adapt training, workforce management, and recruitment and retention practices to a sustained customer-pleasing, loyalty-instilling team. Training must address an employee's role in the store's relationship with its customers. The trend of empowering associates to handle issues on the sales floor, rather than seek manager approval, requires a change in employee mindset.

### **5.2.4. Training and development**

Meyer et al. (2004) point out in literature reviewed that skilled manager's play a crucial role in an organisation's ability to produce services and in a country's ability to improve productivity and economic growth. Lack of effective and efficient training and development of middle managers contribute enormously on the unsuccessful implementation of corporate strategy. Shoprite holdings LTD offer six months training which is not sufficient enough to carry out the organisation activities effectively and efficiently. Erasmus & Van Dyk(1999) in literature review paragraph 2.4.9 described Training and development as a systematic and planned process aimed at changing the knowledge skills and behaviour of employees in such a way that organisational objectives are achieved. According to De Cenzo and Robbins (1994), training and development is a learning experience in that it seeks a relatively permanent change in an individual that will improve ability to perform the job.

### **5.2.5. Communication**

The lack of effective communications is prevalent in the findings. The researcher found that middle managers are communication receivers as well as givers, if they receive poor quality or insufficient information themselves, it can introduce problems such as cynicism and mistrust. The decision by many executives not to encourage feedback is both myopic and damaging to the overall success of the change project. Trowbridge, (2011) on literature review concurs with this view endorsing the need to include and value the middle managers input. It is therefore perplexing as to why this strategy is employed by the executives. It appears that Shoprite holdings LTD will have a better fortuitous to achieve strategic objectives, with well informed and engaged middle managers.

### **5.2.6. Change implementation and management**

Worley & Lawler III (2006) in literature reviewed contend that in this era of globalisation, change is absolutely vital for the sustainability of any business. The firm needs to be flexible, scalable, agile and adaptable to changes in the industry and needs of the customer. The study findings indicate that Middle Managers at Shoprite Holding LTD experiencing a huge challenge in change implementation and management. The responds from middle management shows that there is lack of communication, involvement of top executives to provide guide and to provide strategic direction towards achieving the objectives of the organisation. They also mention that change raised fear from employees and management because others afraid to lose power or authority having their role reduces in size or loses their job altogether which lead them to resist or remain adamant and others in passive mood. In addition employees and management resist because of: Misunderstanding and lack of trust – the implications of the new direction are poorly understood, leading to perceptions that the new vision is irrelevant or damaging. Kotter, (1996) stated eight reasons why transformational efforts fail. The first is not creating a great enough sense of urgency. The second is not creating a powerful enough guiding coalition. The third is a lack of vision. The fourth is not communication enough. The fifth is not removing obstacle to the new vision. The sixth is not planning and creating short term wins. The seventh is declaring victory too soon. The eighth is not anchoring the change in the corporate culture. Paterson & Hartel (2002) on literature review, paragraph 2.4.6 also indicated that poor communication can contribute to resistance

to change. If there are no adequate processes to receive communication timely and consistently, it can add to anxiety and introduce insecurity. It can decrease employee trust and support in the management. In contrast, he further proposed that when communication is delivered with empathy and processes are open and trustworthy, it increases the likelihood of acceptance of the change.

### **5.2.7. Strategic execution challenges**

Middle managers specified that strategy execution affected by improper communication, lack of role clarity, overload of work, lack of enough information, and limited informal input into the strategy shaping which contribute to the hindrance of strategic implementation. (Alexander 1991; Giles 1991; Galpin 1998; Lares-Mankki 1994; Beer & Eisenstat 2000), stated in paragraph 2.4.10 of literature review agrees with the above inputs that the challenges in strategy implementation include unfeasibility of the strategy, weak management role, lack of communication, lacking commitment to the strategy, unawareness or misunderstanding of the strategy, unaligned organizational systems and resources, poor coordination and sharing of responsibilities, inadequate capabilities, unexpected obstacles, competing activities, delayed schedule, uncontrollable environmental factors, and negligence of daily business.

### **5.3 Conclusion of the study**

In conclusion middle managers have the potential and ability to perform their task effectively and efficiently with the support of top management, the vicious cycle of challenges against their duty often constrain their success. The middle management of the Shoprite holdings LTD is only partly involved in the interpretation and translation of the strategic goals and plans into operational activities. This is due to them not appreciating the responsibility of strategy implementation at that level.

- There is a lack of role clarity, whereby the middle managers expect top management to provide direction while they remain inert and not taking initiative in areas within their responsibility due to lack of power and authority.
- Communication is a good enabler facilitating the relationship of strategy communication between upper, middle management and lower management

but at Shoprite holding LTD there is a need to improve communication in order to unleash strategic goals and objectives clearly.

- Capacity building, training and development within the middle management is inadequately provided by the Shoprite. However, guiding the process to ensure effective application of it, remains a challenge due to the role not played by the top executives or supervisors of middle management. Top management need to support middle management to avoid vague in strategic implementation.
- The ineffective and inefficient of a working performance management system and reward systems within the Shoprite holding LTD is causing it to lose staff, due to employee morale that is indicated to be low.
- Resource allocation is not supported by strategic goals, because of the fact that there is no clear alignment of operational activities with the organisational strategy, and hence wastage is possible.
- In many situations, middle management remain in their comfort zones by doing routine activities and having a low regard for achieving strategic goals.

This study has explored the challenges faced by middle management in the implementation of strategy by looking at the Shoprite holdings LTD case study. The findings listed in Chapter 4 have helped the researcher to obtain some insight into the research questions as listed in chapter 1. The findings also provide the Shoprite holdings LTD with relevant information that it can use to address shortcomings and weaknesses identified from the perspectives of middle managers and from critical analysis in this study.

#### **5.4 Recommendations**

Based on the main findings, the following recommendations are made for consideration by the Shoprite Holdings LDT and to assist with effective implementation of its strategy.

- The Shoprite must involve middle management indirectly during the strategic planning phase in order to enable them to have clarity of thought when executing

the strategy, and to appreciate clear alignment of objectives with lower level functions.

- The top executives should play a directorial role during the execution phase to ensure that middle management and lower management keep busy with the “right” activities and to ensure that the disconnect between these two levels is addressed.
- The Shoprite should provide a refresher course on strategic execution for its top and middle management to refocus the common purpose view.
- Shoprite holding LTD should improve communication which will enable them to achieve corporate strategy effectively and efficiently.
- To meet or exceed all of these human resource management challenges, Shoprite should need proven tools and strategies. Implement strategic organizational change for increased quality, productivity and employee satisfaction. Construct an effective training program. Design a compensation system that motivates employees.
- The full implementation of the performance management system coupled with introduction of an effective reward or incentive system is needed in order to attract and retain employees with good skills and competences so that they can be an advantage for strategy execution at middle management level.
- The processes of review, measure and providing feedback are essential to map out that the Shoprite holding is on the right track with strategic goals; hence such practice should be fast tracked and maintained.
- Allocation of resources in terms of structure and systems as enablers needs attention and improvement to assist the middle managers in strategy execution.
- There is a concern that the core functions of the Shoprite holding LTD do not come through clearly at the operational level and additional efforts are needed to enforce proper alignment.



### **5.5 Limitation of the study**

The study is limited to the research sample with the aim to open up a discussion and point out directions for future research. Due to the small/ unique sample available for the study, results may not be generalisable beyond the specific population from which the sample was drawn.

### **5.6 Suggestion for further research**

This study pursued to identify challenges faced by middle management at Shoprite Holding Ltd in Limpopo Province, to determine the support that middle management receive from the company, and to develop strategies that will assist middle management overcome their challenges. Further research is recommended based on the challenge faced by middle management and strategies to be developed in order to overcome the challenges in other companies in retail industry. This will allow for generalisation of the results.

The study recommends further research on other observed factors that influence challenges faced by middle management and strategies to be developed to overcome those challenges in retail industry.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Letter to request permission to conduct study**

Enquire: Prof M. M Kanjere  
Contact: 015 268 4181

P o Box 643  
Polokwane  
0700  
2017-07-02

The Manager  
Shoprite Holdings LTD  
P O Box 215  
Brackenfell 7561  
Western Cape  
South Africa

Dear Sir/Madam,

#### **PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH ON THE CHALLENGES FACED BY MIDDLE MANAGEMENT IN LIMPOPO PROVINCE**

I would wish to request for permission to carry out a research at your esteemed company on the topic: challenges faced by middle management in Limpopo Province

I am a student at the University of Limpopo, Turfloop Graduate School leadership and the research is aimed at fulfilling requirements for the award of the degree of masters of Business Administration.

This study is purely for academic purposes and its findings, which will be made available to you, will not be in any way used in ways detrimental to your organization.

I am looking forward to a favorable response.

Yours sincerely

Malemela LT  
TGSL MBA Student (200726575)  
Lesabe73@gmail.com  
0820904036

# **Appendix B**

## **Structured interview guidelines**

### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

**In-depth interview on**

**Challenges faced by middle management at Shoprite Holdings Limited in Limpopo Province**

#### **A. INTRODUCTION AND WARM UP**

Thank you for availing yourself to this interview; this interview will last for approximately 30 minutes. You are requested to answer all the questions to the best of your ability. All the information provided will be treated with the highest confidentiality. You are free to withdraw from this interview at any point in time.

#### **B. BIOGRAPHICAL QUESTIONS**

1. State your age\_\_\_\_\_
2. State your gender\_\_\_\_\_
3. State your race\_\_\_\_\_
4. State your highest qualification\_\_\_\_\_
5. State your managerial experience in years\_\_\_\_\_
6. State how long you have been in middle management\_\_\_\_\_

#### **C. CHALLENGES FACED BY MIDDLE MANAGERS AT SHOPRITE HOLDING LTD.**

- What are the main barriers that you face on daily basis when performing your work?
- How do you go about resolving such challenges?

**D. THE LEVEL OF SUPPORT THAT THE MANAGERS RECEIVE AT SHOPRITE HOLDINGS LTD.**

- How are you being supported by the top management?
- How do you go about refining your skills?

**E. STRATEGIES TO BE DEVELOPED TO ASSIST MIDDLE MANAGEMENT TO OVERCOME THEIR CHALLENGES**

- From a management perspective, are there any specific issues to identify regarding the middle managers needs on overcoming the challenges?
- What form of strategy should be developed to assist middle manager in overcoming the challenges associated with strategy implementation?