



**Strategy Implementation: Exploring Roles, Perceptions, and
Expectations of Middle Managers' Practices**

**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

By

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In The Name Of Allah, The Most Gracious, The Most Merciful

‘Of knowledge it is only a little that is communicated to you.’ Al Israa (85).

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, who gave me their unconditional love and taught me to be the best that I can be. To my late father, Mohammed Q. Al Shirawi, you are my strength and role model; you paved the way to all my academic endeavours, I miss you tremendously, God bless your soul. Likewise, to my mother, words cannot explain how much you mean to me; you are my best friend, my rock and guiding light. We are so blessed to have you in our lives, and it is because of you that our lives are better. I love you more than anything and may God give you all the blessings and be with you always.

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Abstract

Strategy and its successful implementation is the responsibility of all stakeholders in an organisation; however, thus far, most empirical research in the field of strategy has mainly focused on Boards of Directors or senior management. The dearth of research, as evidenced from the review of the literature concerning the roles of middle managers in strategy implementation, coupled with the disagreement of senior management on their importance, leaves room for discovery. Acknowledging the importance of middle managers' roles and agreeing what is expected from them in strategy implementation prompts organisations to create the conditions to enable them for strategy implementation. These ideas led to this investigation by exploring what enables the roles and practices of middle managers in strategy implementation.

This research adopts the interpretive research approach in an effort to investigate middle managers' involvement in strategy implementation across three industrial manufacturing organisations in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Through the development of a conceptual framework incorporating aspects of roles, role expectations, practices and context, the thesis highlights the difference between the perception of roles and expectations and roles in practice.

The chosen respondents were senior and middle managers. The main findings of the research showed that there exists a gap between the perception of senior managers and middle managers on the roles of middle managers and on aspects enabling their strategic agency; this resulted in an 'implementation gap', which can hinder the successful execution of organisation strategy. This thesis discovers that the issues of management are the same regardless of the geographic situation or cultures within which the organisations operate, and that there are lessons to be learned from each other.

A conceptual framework emerged from the exploratory qualitative research which confirms and opens up new avenues in understanding the roles of middle managers in practice in the area of strategy implementation. The implications are a need to understand it more empirically and a need to bridge the gap in practice.

Key words: *Strategy implementation, Middle manager, Roles, Role expectations, Practices.*

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Chapter 1: Research Introduction

1.1 Background of the Research

The current changes in the local, regional and global business environment have brought challenges to organisations in the form of new business opportunities, fierce competition and complexity. Such new realities have encouraged companies to invest many resources in devising new, effective strategies in an effort to cope not only with the endless demands of markets but with those of stakeholders. In order for organisations to fulfil their mandate, the implementation of strategy has been recognised as adopting an important role; thus, strategy implementation has become a ‘buzzword’ in many organisations.

The complexity of various organisations, whether public or private, fuelled the interest and motivation of the writer to undertake this type of research on strategy. As such, this research may contribute to the understanding of how strategy is practised and implemented to achieve organisational goals. In addition, some of the issues and challenges present in managerial ‘strategising’ within organisations may be identified and analysed.

It could be said that strategy as an academic subject in business schools has led many scholars, company executives, consultants and policy makers to talk, argue, investigate and publish on the various aspects of strategy and its manifestations. Thus, many scholars have contributed to this field, leading to the collection of substantial literature that both theoretically and empirically investigates the areas of strategy formulation and implementation and the strategy process, its content, and the context within which it takes place (Schmidt *et al.*, 2010; Balogun and Johnson, 2004, 2005; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992a; 1997; Teulier and Rouleau, 2013).

What actually happens in relation to strategy is essential owing to the growing demands from various stakeholders in both private and public organisations (Bryson *et al.*, 2010). Factors such as the roles of the different

levels of management, as well as context and practices, namely the culture and activities of those involved, may affect strategy implementation. In order to gain an enhanced understanding of the strategy implementation process and what enables the people who are trusted with it, there is a need to understand the factors and conditions that make it from both a micro- and a macro-sociological perspective. These two approaches look at the aspect of strategy differently by considering the people involved as they create and perform strategy. From these perspectives, literature had shown the existence of a research gap for the reconceptualisation of strategy and understand practices from a micro-macro sociological view, as strategy is considered a dynamic concept (Favaro *et al.*, 2012; Schmidt *et al.*, 2010; Balogun and Johnson, 2005; Wooldridge *et al.*, 2008; Teulier and Rouleau, 2013; Felin and Foss, 2005).

Strategy must be owned and carried out by multiple actors in organisations. It is therefore essential for researchers and practitioners to understand how strategy is implemented, by whom, and what was employed to achieve its implementation, as a much better solution is demanded by all levels of management in the organisations. As has been witnessed in the past, the focus of strategy research has been directed towards senior management who are, traditionally, recognised as being responsible for the planning and implementation, and hence another gap in literature is that there is not enough focus on other practitioners of strategy in the organisation and the conditions that enable them to implement strategy (MacKay and Chia, 2013; Hambrick, 2007; Miller *et al.*, 2008; Hambrick and Mason, 1984). However, middle managers' roles can be crucial to the success of its implementation (Beer and Eisenstat, 2000), and hence a research gap exists from the literature to focus on other practitioners such as the middle managers.

A definition of middle managers, according to Wooldridge *et al.* (2008), is one where the distinguishing features of middle managers is their ability to juggle responsibilities for the operation of the business, and their link to senior management. This definition is supported by Ikävalko (2005), who states that “middle managers act as both subordinates and superiors” as they carry out the

strategic directives of senior management through the operational level and accordingly supervise subordinates to ensure the smooth functioning of the organisation (Rouleau, 2005; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992b, 1997).

Aside from the responsibilities afforded to them, the challenges of middle managers in the midst of the organisations also involve confronting various issues, such as numerous duties, but with a limited span of authority. These problems are compounded by the lack of autonomy when implementing strategy. Middle managers are also stuck in the middle of turf conflicts, are rarely given prime attention within their respective companies, and can be the intermediaries in their organisation (Brubakk and Wilkinson, 1996). On the one hand, they are vitally needed in order to execute the new policies and programmes of senior management; on the other hand, they also have to resolve issues within the realities of the daily operations of their organisations. Confronted with these difficulties, it is essential for middle managers to take a proactive stance and become drivers in strategy implementation (Currie and Procter, 2005; Mair and Thurner, 2008).

It is noteworthy that strategy-as-practice – a research lens that combines strategy with social science – provides the opportunity to view and understand strategy differently (Giddens, 1984; Bourdieu, 1977; De Certeau, 1984). By undertaking this method of research, a clearer view of what actually takes place in the realm of strategy may be seen via the actions and interactions of multiple actors in the wider organisational or social contexts.

Along these lines, this research aims to explore the area of middle managers as implementers of strategy. Furthermore, this research will also investigate the roles and practices of middle managers as implementers of strategy, and discover how the practices that mediate the relation between structure and agency can create the conditions that are necessary for their success (Giddens, 1984). By so doing, it is hoped that this research will complement and contribute to contemporary strategic management research (Whittington, 2003; Jarzabkowski, 2005; Jarzabkowski and Whittington, 2008).

This research will, in part, emulate Mantere's (2005) study that uses Floyd and Wooldridge's (1992a) typology of role expectations in exploring the enabling conditions of middle managers' strategic agency. However, the investigation will triangulate data from two levels of management within a different type of organisation (manufacturing) and a different context (Kingdom of Bahrain). Finally, this research explores middle management roles, role expectations, and strategy implementation practices to understand their strategic agency-enabling conditions, viewed both from the perspectives of the middle managers themselves, and their senior managers in the unique context of manufacturing companies in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

1.2 Research Problem

Humanising research is a scarce tradition in strategic management research (Johnson *et al.*, 2007). It has been observed that most of the empirical research and attention in this field is directed towards Board of Director level or senior management team level. However, it is important to note that 'strategising' within an organisation is a practice spanning beyond the practice of senior management; other individuals in the organisations are involved through their formal or informal roles and positions (Mantere and Vaara, 2008).

Middle management practitioners have instrumental roles to play in the strategy of their organisations. How they act and interact with the implementation process in their ongoing practice is enabled by a structure, which shapes their practice (Jarzabkowski *et al.* 2007). Strategy process research has focused on performance outcomes, whilst strategy-as-practice research drills down further into the internal life of the process (Brown and Duguid, 2000). The research is underpinned by strategy-as-practice and is based on the social 'theory of structuration,' as introduced by Giddens (1984), which centres on analytical attention and bridges the analysis gap between human agency and social structure in the processes of human interactions in strategy implementation.

The research explores the strategic agency enabling conditions for middle managers in strategy implementation, and accordingly relying on interpretation of Giddens' (1984) theory of structuration of the relation between agency and structure, uses structure as products of human actions, whilst at the same time reciprocating the influence. Structure is defined by Giddens as "sets of rules and resources that actors draw upon as they produce and reproduce society in their activities." This means that all social actors have a role to play in developing structures and, at the same time, are influenced by it. Agency is the purposive actions of the middle manager, meaning an agent is capable of reflection on their action and environment.

It is argued here that role expectation, organisation practices, and context factors can affect middle managers' agency and that affect can either enable or hinder their agency in strategy implementation.

1.3 Research Aim and Objectives

1.3.1 Research Aim

This research aims to respond to the calls for contribution to micro-level research that is concerned with individual social agency of middle management. With their position in organisations, middle managers have important roles to play, both implicitly and explicitly. At this point, there is a need to identify the enabling conditions for middle managers' strategic agency in strategy implementation through the structure of social rules, such as role expectations, strategy practices and context factors, in an attempt to suggest alternative ways of exploring strategy. Concomitantly, this research will elaborate with an in-depth view of the everyday practice of middle level managers and their enabled strategic agency to implement strategies to achieve organisational goals.

1.3.2 Research Objectives

1. To explore the roles of middle managers in strategy through the completion of a literature review. This exploration will shed light on the various roles of middle managers. Accordingly, two issues will be

explored in this research: first, the actual link between strategic roles as practised, the role expectations of middle managers and their agency-enabling conditions, where the literature will explore how middle managers' strategic practices are affected by various factors, and highlight the existing gaps in research that have not yet been explored; and second, consideration will be directed towards the role expectations of middle managers since it appears that this has not been universally recognised by practitioners;

2. To examine the roles of middle managers as perceived by themselves and senior management through their activities and practices in strategy implementation. This objective will identify any existing gaps between the roles of middle managers based on their own perceptions and the perception of these roles as they are held by senior level managers;
3. To explore middle managers' strategic agency-enabling conditions that allow for the fulfilment of their roles as perceived by themselves and their senior level management. This objective will identify the role expectations as constraining or enabling strategic agency of middle managers in strategy implementation;
4. To discover any other associated context factors that may affect middle managers' strategy implementation. This objective will focus on other factors, such as organisational structure and organisational culture, recognising that the environmental context may affect the strategy implementation of middle managers;
5. To identify the barriers against and challenges facing strategy implementation. This objective will open up avenues centred on how to deal with the barriers and challenges faced by middle managers within strategy implementation, and will shed light on the enabling conditions that facilitate their agency in implementation.

This will extend a framework based on previous literature and propose an adapted conceptual framework through exploratory qualitative research that will facilitate understanding of the roles of middle managers in practice and the

enabling conditions of their agency in the area of strategy implementation. In order to achieve the above-mentioned research objectives, the following research questions are posed, which have developed as a result of a critical review: (1) What are the roles of middle managers in strategy implementation? (2) How do middle managers and senior management perceive the roles of middle managers in strategy implementation? (3) What are the strategic agency-enabling conditions of middle managers in strategy implementation as perceived by themselves and their senior-level management? (4) What other related context factors may affect middle managers' strategy implementation? (5) What are the barriers and challenges to strategy implementation as perceived by senior management and middle managers? (6) What are the implications of middle managers' roles, role expectations and agency-enabling conditions that are crucial to strategy implementation?

The answering of these questions will add to existing micro-level strategy lens knowledge, and the understanding of strategy implementation through encompassing middle management perceptions of their own work, as well as senior management perceptions of middle management strategy implementation.

1.4 Research Methodology

A qualitative approach was used in this research so as to explore and explain the behaviour and experiences of the research participants (Bryman, 1984), who were middle and senior managers of three manufacturing firms. This approach was used because it considers reality as socially constructed (Berger and Luckmann, 1966), and relies primarily on the understanding and perceptions of human beings (Stake, 2010). By using qualitative inquiry, this research employed the case study approach by selecting three manufacturing organisations to provide greater insight into the roles of middle managers and their agency-enabling conditions, as well as the barriers and challenges commonly faced in strategy implementation (Yin, 1994). The interviewees were selected in collaboration with the human resources and administration departments within

the three organisations to represent a cross sample of senior level managers and middle level managers.

1.5 Thesis Outline

Chapter 1 discusses the background and the foundation of the research, the aims and objectives, and the methodology used to answer the research questions. This part also discusses the rationale and justifications behind the choice of this topic for scientific inquiry.

Chapter 2 elucidates the theoretical foundation for the conceptual approach of this research through reviewing the current theoretical studies, empirical studies and the concepts related to strategy-as-practice and middle management's perspective on strategy implementation.

Chapter 3 explores the research hypotheses and the conceptual framework of this research. The literature review and expert opinion help in the formulation of the research propositions and research framework for the research into the factors affecting strategy implementation, how middle managers adapt to their roles, and the concomitant challenges and barriers to achieving organisational goals, as they employ strategic practices within their organisations.

Chapter 4 describes the data collection process, with the data derived from primary and secondary sources. In this chapter, the methodology is discussed, which consists of the development of initial contacts, interview questions, and the research instrument. Moreover, the issues of validity and reliability were addressed through triangulation of the data collection.

Chapter 5 discusses the qualitative findings of the research with the use of qualitative analysis tools, including Nvivo 10 qualitative software. The data gathered from the three organisations is presented and analysed based on each theme emerging from the research aim, objectives and research questions.

Chapter 6 discusses and provides the consolidated results and the validation for the final conceptual framework from the cross analysis of the cases and the final findings.

Chapter 7 provides the conclusions to the research; recommendations and implications of the research are also discussed. Prescriptions are posited to ameliorate the strategic implementation of middle managers.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

2.1 Introduction

In order to examine the roles of managers in their implementation practices, there is a need to define what strategy is and is not, and the schools of thought around strategy, before looking at the role that agency plays in this. This chapter also discusses the theories and concepts in the areas of strategy, strategy-as-practice and middle management roles and perspectives on strategy implementation. This chapter also critically reviews the theoretical and empirical research concerning middle managers' strategy-as-practice in an effort to elucidate the theoretical foundation for the conceptual approach of this research.

The guided evolution model has three elements, namely sources of variation (all employees), administrative systems (formal structure and organisational routines), and individual agents of selection and retention (people working on strategic schemes and proposals). Whilst the proposed model of Lovas and Ghoshal (2000) posits a more active and important role for senior management, this research intends to examine the roles of middle managers from the perspectives of senior and middle managers. By so doing, this research may identify gaps between how the roles performed by middle managers are perceived by themselves and by the senior level managers within the strategy implementation activities in their organisations.

2.2 Definition and Schools of Strategy

Strategy is different from, and not limited to, the vision, mission, goals, priorities and plans of an organisation. Favaro *et al.* (2012) point out that strategy is the result of the choices that senior executives pursue in terms of the products or services offered and in which markets to operate. These choices are made in order to maximise shareholder value in the long term. The questions posed centre on who is responsible for carrying through the strategy. Some related questions were asked by Johnson and Scholes (1997) in relation to strategy, for instance, what policy, key actions and tasks are required to carry out the strategy?

Moreover, what skills, training requirements, systems, and designs are needed? Which individuals or groups will be responsible?

According to Nickols (2012), business has borrowed the concept of strategy from the military. He further expounds that strategy in business, as in the military, links high-level policy and direction to low-level actions and tactics. Both worlds consider strategy and tactics as means of bridging the gap between ends and means. From the Greek word '*strategia*', the concept of strategy comes from the army, and means 'generalship' (Nickols, 2012). From the military point of view, strategy often refers to manoeuvring troops in order to get them ready and in position before enemy engagement. In this sense, it refers to how the generals strategise and plan the movement of troops for battle. After the planning is done and the troops engage with the enemy, the general's attention shifts to the tactics that need to be used during the battle. Here, the deployment and engagement of troops is central. It is easy to see how the concept has been transferred to the business world if one substitutes 'resources' for troops.

Hart (1967, p. 184), defines strategy as the plan of the war that maps out multiple future options of actions for the war, and the way these options should be regulated in each battle to be fought. According to Nickols (2012), this definition is seriously flawed, owing to the fact that the strategy is seen only as a battle employed as a way of achieving company objectives. Nickols adds that Hart offers a short definition of strategy: as the art of using military means to fulfil the strategic ends. If one deletes the word 'military' from Hart's definition, this facilitates the use of the concept of the strategic manoeuvring of army troops in business life. Likewise, Steiner (1979) explains that strategy appeared in academia as a way of referring to battling or countering the competition. Steiner points out other definitions of strategy, which include the following: strategy is what executives do that is crucial to the survival and prosperity of the organisation; the various future-bound decisions, that is, vision, missions and goals; the tactics or actions that are essential to realise strategy. By considering these definitions, it can be concluded that strategy aims to answer the question: What should the organisation do to achieve its goals?

In the same way, Mintzberg (1994) argues that strategy is emergent and is bounded by time and space. Intended strategy will collide with the changing operational realities over time and hence should accommodate them. Mintzberg points out that people in organisations understand and use ‘strategy’ in numerous ways; one way which is widely understood is where strategy is a plan – a ‘how’ as a method or approach to fulfilling goals. He further elucidates that strategy is a form or sequence over time. Andrews (1980) shares the underlying thoughts of Mintzberg (1994), and differentiates corporate strategy from business strategy, describing the former as a sequence of decisions in an organisation that regulates and exposes its policies and produces the goals and objectives for achieving those goals. He further describes this as the range of core offerings the company has, the markets it wants to pursue, and the type of organisation it wants to be in terms of its economic and human contributions to its various stakeholders at large. The definition provided by Andrews (1980) anticipates Mintzberg’s focus on pattern and plan perspectives. Again Andrews draws another distinction between ‘corporate strategy’, and ‘business strategy’, the former being concerned with which business the organisation is in and the latter with how to achieve that business.

Porter (1996) argues that competitive strategy is ‘about being different; in short, it is about distinguishing the organisation and making it stand out as unique compared with its competitors. It is about adding value through a distinctive combination of activities and offers that are extended to the customers and are better than those of the competition. This is explained further by Tregoe and Zimmerman (1980) who claim that strategy is the framework which guides those choices that determine the nature and direction of an organisation. Ultimately, this boils down to the organisation’s choice of products or services offered, and the choice of operating markets. Tregoe and Zimmerman suggest that to win, senior executives are urged to hone decisions on a single competitive advantage—what they call the “driving force”. Although the scholars elucidate nine possible advantages, they suggest that there is only one basis for an organisational strategy. Robert (1993) adopts a similar view of strategy, arguing the difference

between the thinking of strategy and the management of strategy. Johnson and Scholes (1997) urge senior executives to hone the core competencies that lead to competitive advantage.

The review of the numerous definitions of strategy is summarised below in Table 2.1 to give an overview of the varied definitions of strategy. Some, however, do not agree on the same definitions and this leads to different interpretations of what it involves. It is therefore timely for strategy-as-practice scholars to propose a new lens by which to investigate strategy, to enable academicians and practitioners alike to view strategy differently and perhaps contribute to knowledge in an alternative dimension.

Table 2.1: Selected Definitions of Strategy.

Developed by the researcher.

Strategy definition	Authors
“The art of distributing and applying military means to fulfil the ends of policy.”	Hart (1967)
“Strategy is that which senior management does that is of great importance to the organisation.”	Steiner (1979)
“Strategy as a pattern of decisions in a company that determines and reveals its objectives, purposes, or goals, produces the principal policies and plans for achieving those goals.”	Andrews (1980)
“Strategy is the framework which guides those choices that determine the nature and direction of an organisation.”	Tregoe and Zimmerman (1980)
“Strategy is a plan, a ‘how’ a means of getting from here to there.”	Mintzberg (1994)
“It means deliberately choosing a different set of activities to deliver a unique mix of value.”	Porter (1996)
“Strategy in business, as in the military, bridges the gap between policy and tactics.”	Nickols (2012)
“Strategy is the result of choices executives make, on where to play and how to win, to maximise long-term value.”	Favaro <i>et al.</i> (2012).

There is a strong link between the actors, activities, practices and processes carried out at organisational level. As a perplexing subject, strategy connotes varied meanings to different people, so there is the need to draw

together their diverse experiences in an effort to grasp its meaning in its entirety. Likewise, the majority of the research on strategy focuses mainly on what senior management does but not on the roles of the middle managers whose roles can be crucial to the implementation success (Beer and Eisenstat, 2000). As the literature suggests, there is an overlapping in the roles of middle managers and these roles are not universally agreed upon or well understood (Rouleau, 2005; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997). It is therefore necessary to explore how middle managers' strategic practices are affected by various factors and accordingly, to highlight the existing gaps in research that have not yet been explored.

2.3 Strategy-as-Practice

There are some issues related to strategy-as-practice which are significant for both practitioners and strategy theorists. Managers at all levels desire better answers to issues relevant to their positions as practitioners. In the same manner, academics have to deal with the problem of a gap between their theories of what strategy is and its actual practice.

In their study, Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009) examined and reviewed the various concepts of practices that inform the strategy-as-practice field and outlines avenues for future research.. According to them, there appears to be little room in mainstream strategy research for living beings whose emotions, motivations and actions shape strategy. This marginalisation of the actor has been attributed to the dominant micro-economic foundations of mainstream strategy research (Johnson *et al.*, 2003). Increasingly, therefore, strategy research has been influenced by wider concerns to humanise management and organisation research (Whittington, 2002). It could be surmised that strategy-as-practice has developed from the importance of the activities of people in organisations, which has mobilised many to access important channels. Currently, strategy-as-practice turns its focus on the actual work of strategists and strategising (Jarzabkowski *et al.*, 2007). Two visible factors were identified in this practice turn: first, the increasing frustration with the normative models of science that dominate strategic management research; and second, strategy theory is generated from

large-scale studies in the micro-economics tradition which focus mainly on firm and industry levels of analysis. Thus, the outcomes of these studies have reduced actors to a few demographic variables that may be questionably linked to firm performance and have caused strategy theory to become increasingly remote and out of touch with the complexities of strategy in practice. According to Balogun *et al.* (2007) strategy is mediated by the language that strategists use which in part is evolved from academic concepts, tools and techniques that populate strategy classes, textbooks and popular media. As a new field, strategy-as-practices is still ill-defined and open in its language, concepts and terminology. This represents something of a challenge for its empirical study, not least methodologically.

The definition of practice covers many things from process to an actual activity in which, its meaning changes in a plural form to a word with a different meaning. According to Carter *et al.* (2008) the word practice connotes 'being closer to reality' and 'being more practical'. They narrowed down the view of practice to what people do in the organisation. However, Jarzabkowski (2004) argues that practice is the actual activity, events, or work of strategy, while practices are those traditions, norms, rules and routines through which strategy work is constructed. The author explains further that 'practice' should not be simply interpreted as 'reality' since it is not concerned with objective reality; rather its focus should be on the real experiences and the mutual role of actors and their world. Likewise, the changing conditions, in which an organisation may not be considered a coherent whole, pose challenges to practitioners and researchers. Meaningful relationships between theory and practice will be better assisted by dynamic, locally-contextualised theories that can reflect the complexities of practice in the modern world (Pettigrew, 1992, 1997).

On the other hand, Whittington (2004) noted two different views on strategy, which are referred to as: sociological and managerial agenda. As a practical theme, strategy can be seen as a practice in itself, which can influence society. This refers to *sociological agenda* in which people ask about strategy work details, required skills, work organisations and their implications in strategy

(Whittington, 2004). The second view refers to how people do their work in the firm, which affects the firm and can be seen as a competitive advantage for it. This refers to the *managerial agenda*. The author emphasises the need to bridge the gap between ‘individualism’ which concentrates on the individual actors and ‘societism’, which concerned itself with the ‘social forces.’ Moreover, the author underscored the inclusion of middle managers in strategic decision-making processes and how to find a better framework to develop them as strategists. The role of science and technology, according to Whittington (2004), is to introduce and adapt proper tools for transferring knowledge into applicable strategy and also to find the best and most effective way of using those tools in managerial practices (Whittington, 2004). Varyani and Khammar (2010) undertook a review of strategy-as-practice and the role of consultants and middle managers in Chalmers University of Technology, Göteborg, Sweden. The findings of their study revealed that middle managers play the role of monitoring their environment and informing the seniors about the capacities at their level and their interpretations of the organisational strategies. A common practice at middle management level is that of interpreting and making sense of organisational strategies, which the authors believe are of strategic importance by the firm and can be regarded as strategising.

Existing strategy definitions do not fully capture the human aspects that are entailed in the practice of strategy. The focus of attention now shifts from a top-down approach and from performance outcomes at the organisational level to other levels of outcome. Thus, the micro-level social activities, processes and practices are gaining attention (Golsorkhi *et al.*, 2009). It can be noted from the literature reviewed that strategy research was directed by, and usually recognised as the responsibility of senior management. However, Jarzabkowski *et al.* (2007) emphasised the need for studying micro-level activities and their influence on strategy work plus an emphasis on the practical issues and the role of different actors. From this standpoint, strategy is viewed as a situated, socially accomplished activity (Powell *et al.*, 2011), while strategising means the ‘doing of strategy’, which comprises all the actions and negotiations between different

actors as well as the practices they use in accomplishing the strategic activities (Jarzabkowski *et al.*, 2007). It is therefore necessary to undertake a micro-level research on middle managers and how they influence strategy.

It is within this context that there is a need to establish what enables the roles of middle level managers in strategy implementation from the point of view of two levels of management, the middle-level and senior-level managers. Within this perspective (strategy-as-practice), there is an identified need to explore what organisations actually do as opposed to what the leadership intended. Strategy as a complex subject has driven many scholars and advocates to look for an emergent approach to it (Archer and Otley, 1991; Roslender and Hart, 2003; Tuomela, 2005).

2.4 Practices, Praxis and Practitioners

Termed ‘the sociological eye’ as viewed by Whittington (2007), strategy at the micro level is socially embedded and denotes an area of research termed strategy-as-practice. By ‘social embeddedness’, Whittington suggests pursuing an association between organisation level and society level. Likewise, Jarzabkowski (2005) and Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009) have adopted three interrelated concepts in strategy-as-practice identified as practitioners, practices and praxis, as depicted in Figure 2.1. Figure 2.1 describes the framework, which was built on three themes proposed by Whittington (2006) to study organisations. The first circle refers to ‘practices’, which, according to Whittington (2006), are the shared routines of behaviour, including traditions, norms and procedures for thinking, acting and using things. This term pertains to the macro-level phenomena, which include the various routines, norms of behaviour, and different rules, and procedures that guide decisions and actions in strategy work (Whittington, 2006). These actions and interactions can be at the centre or periphery of the organisation. ‘Practices’, it was argued, are connected to ‘doing’ because they mediate actions where, through practices, actors act and interact by the use of different types of resources to finalise an activity. By and large, these resources

when used may help increase one's understanding of strategy implementation (Jarzabkowski *et al.*, 2007).

The next circle is 'praxis', which refers to what actions are performed by people in practice. This term, is "comprised of the social, symbolic, and material tools through which strategy work is done" (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009, p. 70). 'Praxis' is what actors do whether at the micro - and/or macro - levels of society (Jarzabkowski *et al.*, 2007). According to Whittington (2006), 'praxis' refers to all the various activities involved in the deliberate formulation and implementation of strategy. Moreover, the term involves the activities individuals are engaged in and what they contribute as a result of those actions across different institutions. The sphere of praxis, therefore, covers a wide range and can be studied similarly in board meetings or simple everyday tasks (Whittington, 2006).

The third circle refers to 'practitioners', who are the players or agents that use practice to perform their strategic activities. Adopting a practice lens offers an understanding of human agency through the engagement with their 'practice' and 'praxis'. These practitioners are the individuals – whether internal or external to the organisation– that are concerned with and are part of the crafting of strategy throughout its lifecycle (Whittington, 2006; Jarzabkowski *et al.*, 2007).



Figure 2.1: The Conceptual Framework for Strategy-as-Practice Research.

Adapted from Jarzabkowski, (2005); Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009).

Other outcomes related to strategy-as-practice research are at three levels of analysis, namely: micro-outcomes: concerned with activities and roles; meso-outcomes: concerned at the organisation-level with strategy implementation, practices, enabling conditions; macro-outcomes: concerned with institutionalisations of practice at the industry level. But despite what has been gained in process research (Chakravarthy and Doz, 1992), there still remains a gap in the body of knowledge of strategy realisation at micro-sociological levels, which transforms the wider level in organisations. Whittington (1996) refers to this as an investigation of social life, spanning from the short episodes of contact between individuals, their behaviour and perceptions, to the higher order societal processes and meanings. This micro-sociological investigation evolved in the mid-1990s with the primary aim of inspecting how practitioners behave and interact while implementing strategy. Aaltonen (2003), citing Whittington (1996), confirms that there is a research gap in strategy.

Interacting individuals create the structure, whilst structure facilitates and impedes the choices humans make with regard to their activities. Agent and structure in this research are middle managers and strategy implementation. The 'duality of structure' reposes on the idea of agents as reflexive, capable actors that use their knowledge to rationalise actions (Giddens, 1984). Structure for one displays itself in daily routines and interactions as in institutionalised practices while practices mediate the relation between agency and structure. Giddens proposes three modalities of structure embedded in society, where such structures enable and constrain agency in three ways, namely by individuals' communication of meaning (interpretive schemes), by applications of sanctions (moral rule) and through the use of power to draw on facilities (soft domination). Giddens' 'structure' also relates to a more holistic model that incorporates social systems and rules, social order and social reproduction. These 'social rules' are the map that enables us to navigate social situations and they are embedded and at times cannot consciously be accounted for; the rules of social order can either be highly explicit and formally codified or can be social rules, some of which are

felt, such as expectations that need to be adhered to. In Figure 2.2, the relation of agency to structure is depicted as explained above.

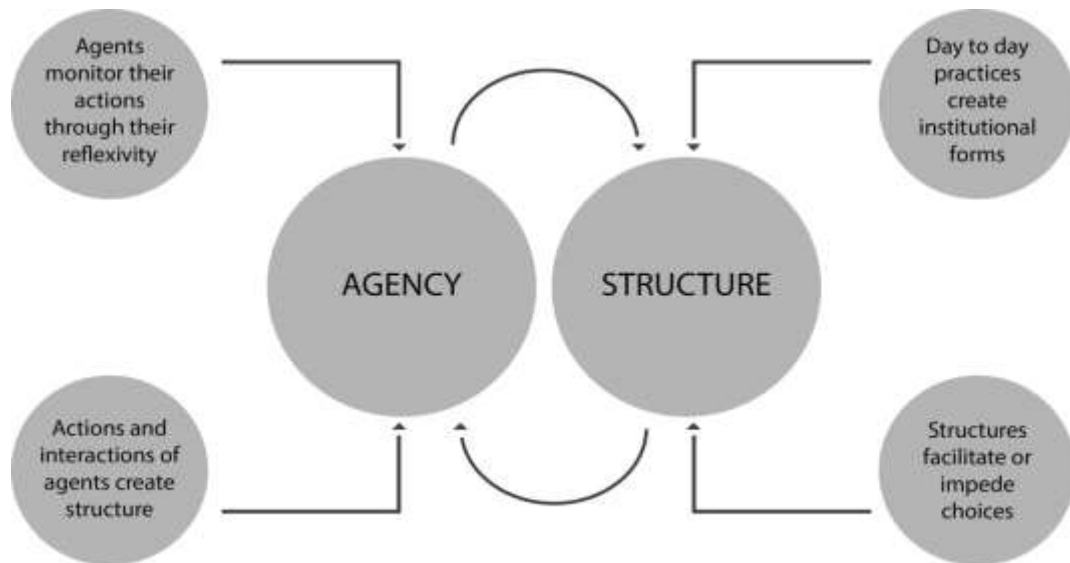


Figure 2.2: Relation between Agency and Structure.

Adapted from Giddens (1984).

Balogun *et al.* (2007) explained that a number of problems have to be addressed by strategy-as-practice research in order to be taken seriously considering that it is an emerging field, pointing out a number of common potential pay-offs from conducting strategy-as-practice research, such as gaining a better understanding of how, why and where innovations and creativity in the practice of strategy arise and how practitioners might unleash the capacity for such forms of practice. However, Balogun *et al.* (2007) noted that the strategy-as-practice agenda needs to develop theoretical frameworks through which different studies may be identified, positioned and connected. By undertaking such studies, researchers maybe able to devise an integrative framework that may break down some of the barriers in existing strategy research.

A selection of publications in the strategy-as-practice lens is presented in Table 2.2. This selected presentation is provided to contextualise this research

within the field providing the distinct features of this type of research and its adopted methodologies.

Table 2.2: Selected Research on Strategy-as-Practice.

Developed by the researcher.

Key Themes and Findings	Authors/s	Methodology
The distinctive feature of strategy-as-practice is “the sociological eye”.	Whittington (2007)	Qualitative
The major feature is an agency-sensitive perspective that requires a practical understanding of strategy.	Whittington (2010)	Qualitative
The major feature is using expectations as a structural artifact and investigating the agency-enabling conditions.	Mantere (2005)	Qualitative
There are two broad alternative approaches on strategy-as-practice: first, quantification, and second, better process data for its benefits.	Venkateswaran and Prabhu (2010)	Qualitative
The authors describe this activity by answering questions related to how they shape strategy.	Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009); Johnson <i>et al.</i> (2003, 2007)	Qualitative
The main point looks at strategy as “something people do”.	Jarzabkowski <i>et al.</i> (2007); Johnson <i>et al.</i> (2007); Whittington (2007)	Qualitative

2.5 The Definition and Roles of Middle Managers

As early as the 1970s, some attention was being given to the roles of middle managers as contributors to change in organisations. Being agents of change requires middle managers to interact with all members in an organisation. By virtue of their position they are placed at the intersection of the organisation. Middle managers’ position in the middle of the hierarchy in an organisation places them at the juncture of interaction with superiors and subordinates alike. Being at the centre of the organisation, middle managers’ interaction offers a broad coverage that encompasses the traditional levels of management or the

operating management levels (Floyd and Lane, 2000; Huy, 2002). The roles of middle managers include various functions such as managing change, motivating and inspiring people, and acting as a bridge between strategic and operational levels (Currie and Procter, 2005). Thus, middle level managers have to be both efficient and effective. On the other hand, their roles consist of the activity in which they are involved and act exclusively, and in terms of the requirements placed upon someone in their position, meaning what they ought to be doing (Goffman, 1961, cited in Ruddock, 1969, p. 16).

Traditionally, the middle manager's role has not been encompassed in strategy and has been limited to the implementation of deliberate strategy. Nevertheless, Burgelman (1991) suggests that middle managers more often than not stimulate new energy within the organisation through their input and initiatives. In addition to the four strategic role expectations typology suggested by Floyd and Wooldridge (1992b), namely, championing alternatives, synthesising information, facilitating adaptability and implementing deliberate strategy – there also is a pressing need to clarify the concept of the role and how it affects middle managers as they implement strategies. First, a role can be defined from three different standpoints: job or task related; interpersonal; and how these relate to each other (The Canadian Center of Science and Education, 2012). However, McKenna (2006, p.318) defines a role “as a set of expected patterns of behaviour attributable to a person occupying a particular position”. A role comprises the demands of a position in an organisation. Again, job and position are distinct from one another. Whilst a job is a generic role, a position is the specific occurrence of a job fixed within an organisation. A manager's role in any position they occupy has its own demands, expectations and opportunities, which bring out the dynamics of that position (Yuk, 2012). It is important to reiterate that the ‘emergent’ vision of management has been rising as an alternative and contributing viewpoint to study the strategy formation process. Although senior management are those given the authority to make strategic decisions, they should be open and receptive in how they respond to other actors in the organisation, specifically middle managers.

The relationships between members in a group help to clarify the roles relative to the position. Fulfilling roles as part of everyday strategy and its practice requires certain conditions to be present in order to help middle managers to fulfil their role. It is therefore necessary for senior managers to understand the enabling strategic agency of middle managers who operate under specific internal and external conditions. The first dimension that can affect role fulfilment is the misunderstanding of the roles of middle managers, which is defined as role ambiguity that can lead to role conflict. Floyd and Lane (2000) highlight the possibility of experiencing role conflict within the organisation. Carney (2003) found that the number of hierarchical layers in an organisation influences the perception of their role; consequently, managers draw their understanding from their own perceptions and from those who are above and below them. This is created due to the mismatch that arises between demands and/or expectations of the role and the perceptions of the role and its demands, as confirmed by McKenna (2006). Here, the suggestion of Mantere and Vaara (2008) is noteworthy: that an organisation must have reciprocal expectations between different levels of management in order to resolve role conflict.

Another important dimension affecting the roles of middle managers is role ambiguity, which often leads to uncertainty and confusion at the executive level (Dance, 2011). Role ambiguity causes confusion among middle managers in terms of what is required of them as they perform the role. This confusion leads to executives blaming middle managers for restricting the organisation in attaining its objectives. Guth and Macmillan (1986) argue that when middle managers' self-interest is being compromised, they can redirect a strategy, delay its implementation or reduce the quality of its implementation. In the same vein, Floyd and Wooldridge (1994) propose a model of role expectations placed on middle managers that combines vertical influences (upward and downward) and horizontal influences (integrative and divergent), which are expressed with regard to the four main role expectations of middle managers, known as championing alternatives, synthesising information, facilitating adaptability and implementing deliberate strategy. Notwithstanding the recognition that, in some part, middle

managers do influence the formation of strategy, there remain two issues to be explored: first, the actual link between roles, role expectations, and strategic agency-enabling conditions which affect middle managers and second, the necessity to acknowledge the influence of middle managers in strategy implementation and hence propose the conditions necessary for the support of that influence.

Arya and Green (2013) clarify the roles of middle managers and provide essential insights into the contrasting ideas of the roles of middle managers, saying that it is often the case that leaders are seen differently from managers, where the former are seen to be involved in high level and important roles in their organisations while the latter are seen only to act on what they are asked to do. This is a misrepresentation of middle managers' roles as, in the complex setting of today's organisations, they are increasingly responsible for more complex roles and more complex relations. In their handbook for middle managers, the authors point out that middle managers have to act as a link between management levels and operational staff in order for information to be communicated across the organisation, as well as initiating ideas and facilitating support for their superiors, which is similar to the sense-making and sense-giving practices in strategies as highlighted by Rouleau and Balogun (2011). Moreover, these middle-level managers have to do things right whilst constantly improving and innovating to be efficient as well as effective. Likewise, these managers must manage complexity as they do the common responsibilities, such as being involved in planning and budgeting as part of the strategy cycle in their organisations, organising and resourcing their departments, leading their employees and other various functions required by their organisations. With their hands full with these activities, middle managers have to manage change through motivating and inspiring employees. Ikävalko and Aaltonen (2001) undertook a significant study whose findings are in line with the earlier research on the roles of middle management in strategy. The results of their study revealed that middle managers perceive their roles mainly as influencing their subordinates, often as communicators of the directions from their superiors by translating them across

to the rest of the organisation. Their main role was considered as implementing deliberate strategies. This was followed by the role of carrying out the necessary actions and interactions to facilitate change when needed.

Middle managers also have roles to play in strategy implementation; however, such roles must adapt to the varying circumstances of the organisation. Ikävalko and Aaltonen (2001) suggest that middle managers within self-directed work groups are inclined to see their roles more as facilitators. In their discussion, the authors pointed out that the communicational role of middle managers was important in strategy implementation. Included in their definitions of these roles are managing the processes, sharing the strategy, and motivating employees for the strategy. Interestingly, planning was absent in middle managers' views on strategy implementation. The findings also identified various problems with strategy implementation, including a lack of communication, commitment and link of performance to rewards in strategy (Ikävalko and Aaltonen 2001; Peng and Littlejohn, 2001). Other issues, such as the problems associated with strategies that are not flexible enough to take into account environmental changes, were not mentioned. Their findings also revealed that considerable problems in strategy implementation seemed to be living the strategies and embedding them in the everyday life of the organisation. On the other hand the perceptions of middle managers associated with strategy implementation are more tangible to the everyday activity in the organisation.

Whittington (1996) points out that there still exists a gap in the body of knowledge of strategy realisation on micro-sociological levels that transform the wider level in organisations. Based on the literature reviewed with respect to the roles of middle managers, the strategy-as-practice lens encompasses questions concerning what people do within such organisations in relation to strategy and how these are linked to outcome. As such there is a need to study the strategy process from a wider perspective, to further understand the variations of how strategies are implemented. This was evidenced by the ideas of Golsorkhi *et al.* (2009), who point out that the strategy-as-practice lens shifts the attention from a top-down approach to other levels of outcomes. This is supported by Whittington

(2007), whose ‘sociological eye’ looks into the study of strategy to find connections between organisation and society-level outcomes; hence, strategy needs to be socially embedded in the everyday life at the organisation. A summary of the roles of middle managers is shown below in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3: Roles of Middle Managers

Developed by the researcher.

Roles of Middle Managers	Authors
They are called “managers of managers” which causes role ambiguity.	Dance (2011)
Their role as members of the organisation who are responsible for strategy has not been recognised, due to the prevailing top-down view of strategy.	Whittington (2006); Jarzabkowski <i>et al.</i> (2007)
Act as synthesisers and facilitators, encouraging participation and communication within the organisation.	Mantere (2008)
They have to manage complexity in their role within the organisation through all the functions required by their job such as problem-solving, budgeting and organising.	Rouleau and Balogun (2011)
Their roles are influencing downwards, as a kind of messenger or interpreter, which is considered as implementing deliberate strategies.	Ikävalko and Aaltonen (2001)
Their roles are more as facilitators for their subordinates and colleagues.	Ikävalko and Aaltonen (2001)
They must have sense-making capability and sense-giving capacity in order to fulfil their role.	Rouleau and Balogun (2011).
They tend to make decisions, which are not necessarily of their own making.	Osterman (2009)
The strategic activities of middle managers include: “implementing deliberate strategy; facilitating adaptability; synthesising information and championing alternatives”.	Mantere (2008); Floyd and Wooldridge (1992b)

2.6 Role Expectations of Middle Managers

Many have developed models of strategic roles at different managerial levels when investigating strategic change (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992b; Nonaka, 1988; Floyd and Lane, 2000; Wooldridge *et al.*, 2008). These models label different behaviours that middle managers are to display; the roles are not

agreed upon, presenting a challenge when investigating middle managers as some of these roles overlap, which will be discussed in this section.

In her study, Yuk (2012) points out that when investigating roles in organisations, the role and position view should be augmented with a view of the expectations placed on the individual and the perception of the incumbent of that position, in this case the middle manager. Role expectations include both actions and qualities. Yuk (2012), in her study of role and position, job expectations and practices, reveals that the roles performed by the incumbent of that position are achievable if their job responsibilities are clear, and the guidelines provided by the organisation are made explicit. Nevertheless, how the incumbents interpret their job specifications and how they make choices and decisions depends on their own perceptions of expectations in the work environment. The findings of the study suggest that the professional qualities and skills the incumbent has, and which are required for the role, may not be in line with the official definition of the position. It is concluded from these studies that there is a difference between perceived roles and enacted roles in a certain position in the organisation, and that they are in any case affected and are a reflection of the culture in a specific work context.

The model of Floyd and Wooldridge (1992b) places the typology of expectation on the position holder and encompasses two opposing types of activities: ascending versus descending activity, and integrative versus divergent activity. According to the model, middle managers can take actions that could either have an upward or downward influence. Likewise, strategic ideas can be divergent or integrative. Four types of middle management strategic agency, according to Floyd and Wooldridge, are championing alternatives, synthesising information facilitating adaptability and implementing deliberate strategy. These four types are discussed below.

Championing alternatives: This activity is both ascending and integrative and it concerns the expectation for middle managers to promote ideas and their ability to participate through bottom-up initiatives that can be valuable to renew

strategy processes in their organisations. This means the expectation to champion and sell new ideas that can be achieved through the notion of participatory strategic practices initiated by middle managers (Nordqvist and Melin, 2008). The inclusion of the middle managers in planning will enable them to increase control over their future in the organisation and become an integral part of it (Westley, 1990). It is important for middle managers to participate in planning, which can reduce the risk of them feeling isolated or having to deal with targets that are imposed on them that they did not take part in drawing up or agree to.

Synthesising information: This activity is both ascending and integrative and it concerns middle managers gathering information and making sense of it in line with any issues relevant to organisational strategy. It is then up to the middle manager's competency to filter important information and share it with their senior managers. At this point, the information provided by middle managers to senior management becomes the basis for strategic decision-making. Thus, the continuous loop of communication ensures that top-down strategic plans are shared with, and are anchored in, middle managers' previous experience. A key element here is that middle managers may be able build on past experience to know whether their efforts are successful or not.

Facilitating adaptability: This role expectation is descending and divergent in nature. Middle managers are expected as part of their role in the organisation to work on developing their autonomous behaviour which should be adapted to the changing environment. This expectation will facilitate adaptability, which will also enable middle managers in strategic agency, thus legitimising their efforts to develop work practices.

Implementing deliberate strategy: This role expectation is top-down in nature. This involves taking actions within the role and disseminating strategy horizontally with colleagues and downward to subordinates. The narration of achievement may build a sense of confidence, trust and respect among middle managers. Floyd and Wooldridge's (1994) typology can be regarded as enveloping the expectations of superiors towards the middle managers and many

of the roles described by other scholars in the field also overlap with this model. Floyd and Wooldridge (1994) point out that middle managers do have an influence in the strategy process and that a positive relationship exists between middle manager involvement and the organisation performance, which is likely to depend on the level of knowledge held by middle managers (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997). Table 2.4 presents the four types of middle management role expectations.

Table 2.4: Four Types of Middle Management Strategic Role Expectations.

Adapted from Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992b.

Role Expectations	Strategic Actions
Championing Alternatives	Persistent and persuasive strategic options are provided by the middle managers to senior management. The presented ideas are divergent and the direction of influence is upward.
Synthesising Information	Interpretation and evaluation of information affect the senior management. From the cognitive perspective, the direction of the influence is upward and integrative.
Facilitating Adaptability	There are flexible organisational arrangements, even aside from the planned deliberate strategy. From the cognitive perspective the influence and the promoted ideas are divergent. There is a downward influence towards lower levels of the organisation.
Implementing Deliberate Strategy	There is an alignment between organisational action and the strategic goals of senior management, initiated by the middle managers. There is a downward and integrative influence from the cognitive perspective.

2.7 Middle Managers' Agency

In order to understand what enables middle managers' agency, one needs to understand what is meant by agency and how this agency is exercised. Mantere (2008), citing Giddens (1984), defines 'strategic agency' as an individual's capacity to have a perceived effect upon the individual's own work on an issue

the individual regards as beneficial to the interests of his or her organisation. This definition again indicates that middle managers' strategic agency is concerned only with the organisation's interest at the heart of what motivates middle managers' involvement and interest to take action.

2.7.1 Dimension of Agency

Jarzabkowski (2005) points out the three dimensions of agency. The dimensions are the basis for an informed view by the strategist– and in this case the middle manager– to be an active participant in the socially embedded activity of strategy. The three dimensions are: 'iterative', 'projective' and 'practical-evaluative' (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). These three dimensions provide an understanding of the issues involved in giving momentum to both the stability and change in activity of a strategic nature. The first dimension is known as 'iterative', with actors being able to reproduce, based on previous experience and learnt skills, subconscious actions that do not necessarily require a level of conscious thought. The next dimension is 'projective' which involves the strategists, as purposive agents, commanding their own will into the future ahead. The last dimension is the 'practical-evaluative' dimension. This perspective on agency depends on both the iterative and projective forms. Agents in this dimension draw on both dimensions and the build structure and invest their actions with power. Actors, such as senior managers, have power because of their hierarchical positions (Whittington, 1992; Hardy, 1996). Agency refers to and embodies power, indicating that "to be an agent is to be able to deploy a range of causal powers, including that of influencing those deployed by others" (Giddens, 1984, p.14).

2.7.2 Agency and Power

Power structures in the organisation can change due to the combined exercise of power by different actors. Each actor's use of power may lead to challenging the existing dominant frameworks of meaning. The shifting of reference of meaning that the agents rely on leads to changing the existing power

structure and to reinforcing new power structures. Power therefore may be summarised in three points: first, the exercise of agency is the exercise of power; second, power is dependent on the access to resources within the social system and hence power will lie in the hands of individuals or groups that have access to these resources, and that means that some have more power than others; and third, in a social system, power can be contested as it is open to other actors within that system which again leads to shifting the power structure which feeds into the social system in parallel through change and reinforcement. It was noted that agency is practical-evaluative, hence power in this case means drawing on existing resources of power and employing them to serve the agents through the understanding of their situated activities as reflective agents.

It is significant at this point to analyse middle managers' enabling and constraining conditions of strategic agency. Mantere (2008) illustrates the role expectations highlighted by Floyd and Wooldridge (1992b) as structural artefacts capable of constraining and enabling strategic agency in investigating middle managers in professional organisations. The resultant enablers are: senior managers presenting the narrative of the expectations, contextualisation of the objectives to be implemented, the shift and allocation of resources, and the display of respect, which indicates another representation of such senior management commitment to implementation and to their employees. The four enabling conditions are discussed below.

Narration of expectation: Senior managers create this enabling condition by opening up the thought process and logic that led to the selection of a particular strategic direction. Sharing of information and presenting the narrative of the entire process and what is expected of middle managers as a result will give them, among others, the ability to sense the implemented objectives as part of a bigger picture relating them to previous thoughts and activities.

Contextualisation: This enabling condition means that senior managers make an effort to explain strategy as part of the relevant work contexts. The expectation to implement strategy is top-down in nature in the context of

organisational strategy. Thus, it could be deduced that the key enabling condition to build continuity is to narrate the thought processes involved in the formulation of goals to be implemented. Problems occur when the middle manager does not have access to the senior management thought processes. When the senior managers discuss how past experiences are related to new strategies, the middle managers may be able to use the information in solving problems in situated activities.

Resource allocation: Senior managers authorise middle managers to make changes to everyday work, meaning that senior managers are committed and are practising what they preach when it comes to providing resources to facilitate implementation efforts for the middle managers. This makes everyday activity both valuable and meaningful, which means that there must be coherence between resource allocation and top-down objectives.

Respect: This enabling condition is manifested when the value of middle managers' efforts in strategy implementation activities is being acknowledged by the senior managers. Respect in implementation means that the senior managers demonstrate that they value the competences of middle managers and their departments. In the same way, mutual respect is given by middle managers by valuing the strategy and the effort and support of the senior management. At this point, middle managers must own and demonstrate an aptitude for creativity in the development of work activities, and senior managers must reciprocate by encouraging a sense of creativity and autonomous behaviour from the middle managers. Table 2.5 presents a summary of the four enabling conditions for agency with respect to role expectations.

Table 2.5: The Four Enabling Strategic Agency Conditions in Implementation.

Adapted from Mantere (2008).

Enabling Conditions	Aspects of Enabled Agency
Narration. In this part, “senior managers open up the internal logic of thought processes leading to the selection of strategic direction”.	The middle manager has the ability to link previous action and accomplishments to the objectives at hand.
Contextualisation. This means the senior managers actively draw links between strategy and its context.	The middle manager has the ability to materialise strategy in practice through using it as a tool for problem solving.
Resource Allocation. Senior management authorise the middle managers to make changes to everyday work.	The middle manager has the capacity to see everyday work as part of an overall picture that is useful to strategy. This makes everyday activity valuable and meaningful.
Respect. The value of middle managers’ implementation activity is acknowledged by the senior managers.	The middle manager has the capacity to be creative and behave autonomously to develop work activities. This behaviour and outlook is encouraged by the senior managers.

2.8 Middle Managers’ Role in Strategy Implementation

Middle management is part of a complex web of people that are responsible for strategy implementation in their organisations as well as for deployment of the available resources and required organisational change in general. The competency and skills of the individuals involved in the process of strategy implementation is a prerequisite to the effectiveness of strategy implementation (Govindarajan, 1989). This idea was highlighted by Viseras *et al.* (2005), who state that strategy implementation is a humanised activity and it ultimately depends on the people involved. Harrington (2006) reiterates that the overall organisation’s success depends on a higher level of organisational involvement and hence commitment during strategy.

As stated earlier, there is a need to explore the roles of middle managers in strategy, what is expected from them and what do they actually do in everyday

practice. Middle managers are an integral part of the overall success of an organisation (Metheny, 2013; Sayles, 2003). Their importance is cited in the literature as “where the action will be” (Sayles, 1993, as cited by Brandt, 1994, p. 30), as initiators have “taken it upon themselves to have the knowledge of how their company fits in the industry and the market they operate in” (Brandt, 1994, p. 32). They are also seen as the middle layer that cushions and binds senior management and subordinate employees (Rayn *et al.*, 2008). Similarly, Osterman (2009) puts forward that middle managers play the role of mediators, they make the connections between all the players in the organisation whether superior or subordinate and they do not necessarily tend to make decisions in the process. However they are the interpreters and the negotiators within this network of players in the organisation (Floyd and Wooldridge, as cited by Balogun and Johnson, 2004). Often, it is middle managers that have direct connection to customers as one group among many other stakeholders in the organisation. Since they actually have closer ties with the customer and the other stakeholders, it provides them with a better view of what is going on in the business, and these closer relationships with the customers give them a position of added experience and knowledge of issues of immediate concern or that require immediate and longer term attention (Huy, 2001).

Middle managers also act to fill the gap between senior management and employees, serving as a cushion and bouncing platform for suggestions and ideas. At the same time, they receive whatever complaints and criticisms ensue. Other definitions of middle managers include that they are sometimes referred to as a binder that grips the company together; mediators that bridge the space between senior management teams and that of lower level employees. Likewise, middle managers decide the direction of the organisation and its strategy but it is the senior managers who determine the plan, which puts trajectory to the direction of the organisation (Huy, 2001). In addition, Anderson and Billings-Harris (2010) describe middle management as a group representing a critical organisational part, whilst at the same time still remaining invisible in many organisations. When something goes wrong within the organisation, middle managers are seen

as a target for assigning blame. Even if they are not considered as the decision makers foreseeing the future of the organisation, they are responsible for implementing the decisions made from the levels above them. Difficult as it may seem, middle managers have to make significant decisions regarding resource allocation, and also need to mediate deals between teams and divisions, meet the demands of multiple stakeholders, and negotiate critical decisions about compromises.

Middle managers are important at all levels; sometimes, however, their roles seem to be overlooked. In addition, these middle level managers exercise the role of defender, where such roles are defined by championing alternatives, promoting, defending, and coming up with alternatives. They take information from the bottom back to the senior management. They also act as synthesisers by consolidating ideas, selling these ideas to senior management, interpreting the information and synthesising it accordingly. Moreover, they also act as facilitators by reworking and promoting and guiding adaptation activities, sharing information, and facilitating learning. They communicate and transmit throughout the organisation horizontally to colleagues and vertically to management and employees. Finally, their roles include that of an implementer by working with the deliberate strategy and looking at ways of improving or adjusting it, and also by being the catalyst of actions that inspire employees, coaching them along the way.

Lavarda *et al.* (2010) point out that there is a rise of the ‘emergent’ view as an alternative perspective that needs to be considered in studying the strategy formation process. This emergent view upholds the notion that senior management are the ones who continue making strategic decisions, but that they should also be sympathetic to new information and ideas that may arise from other actors across the organisation. The Canadian Center of Science and Education (2012) emphasises that a role can be viewed from a number of perspectives. This could be job-related or task-related, interpersonal, or how all these relate to one another. McKenna (2006) on role theory points out that a role can be defined as a set of behaviour patterns that are expected from the holder of

a particular position. According to him, a role has three distinct aspects: “expected role, perceived role and enacted role.” The role comprises the demands (which may include expectations, responsibilities, norms, and taboos) of a position within an organisation. A job is a generic role within the enterprise, which is independent of any single organisation. Position is a specific occurrence of a job fixed within an organisation. In addition, there are two more distinct aspects of “role in a position: the perceived role, which is developed by the position holder from the expected role, and the enacted role, which refers to the way in which the position holder performs his/her perceived role” (McKenna, 2006, pp. 318–319). Concomitantly, the actions and interactions of the members in an organisation happen as part of a performing a role, and they usually interact with each other in accordance with the rules set by the organisation and the channels of communication that are the practice in the organisation. The relationships and communication between the organisation members help clarify the roles relative to the position. At this point, the one acting the ‘role’ may face the risk of ‘role ambiguity’ and ‘role conflict’. Thus, the demands of the job in practice might vary and be unclear where ambiguity arises when it is not clear to the role holder what is expected of them, and where conflict happens when there is a contradiction of directives or expectation, both can conflict with the perception of the job holder (Biddle, 1986).

As stated earlier, middle managers are expected to act as synthesisers and facilitators, disseminating a continuous flow of information and interpretations across the organisation and allocating solutions to problems and promoting participation. These actions allow them to facilitate the link between the diverse and essential mechanisms developed within the organisation. As developers, middle managers facilitate, motivate and adjust the process of strategic plan implementation.

2.9 The Nature of Role and Position of Middle Managers

Role ambiguity and role conflict can lead to ineffectiveness of individuals and the organisation (Rizzo *et al.*, 1970). Yuk (2012) discusses and distinguishes

the concepts of 'role' and 'position' in organisational structure. Her study examines the nature of both concepts and discusses the distinct features of roles and positions to help enrich the understanding of organisational roles in an academic context. As such, it examines the concepts of 'role' and 'position', as well as the reasons that create a tension between them. By doing this, the study proposes "the importance of an individual's endogenous functioning disposition in the workplace situation and the varied expectations amongst individuals in an organisation"; this variation can lead to role ambiguity and role conflict. According to Yuk (2012), employees' locations in an organisational hierarchy are implicit in their corporate designations. These titles by default carry with them certain attributes and expectations in the organisation. A job is a collection of tasks that can be performed by a number of employees, whilst a position is a specific occurrence of a job fixed within an organisation. In organisations, a position occupied by an individual has its own demands, role expectations and opportunities; however, each role brings out the dynamics of that position (Yuk, 2012). According to McKenna (2006, p.318), a role may be defined as "a set of expected patterns of behaviour attributable to a person occupying a particular position" and there are three distinct aspects of roles, namely "expected role, perceived role and enacted role".

Each organisational position is defined in the organisation and is described in an official document, which gives the description of where the role lies in the hierarchy of the organisation and a description of what is expected from the role holder. The organisational chart draws up the status of the roles that make up this hierarchy or system with regard to that position; in other words, the 'role' is made up of the demands that are anticipated from the role including all the responsibilities as part of the organisation norm for each of its positions. In addition to the expected role, the second facet of the role is the position: the perceived role that is derived by the position holder, their interpretation of the expected role and their perception of what it involves in their own context. The last refers to the enacted role, when the position holder is involved in the practices they draw upon to develop their perceived role (McKenna, 2006, pp.

318–319). At the same time, members achieve their respective roles in the organisation and this involves interaction between these members within the rules and practices of the organisation. The organisation, within these rules and practices, provides channels of communications where members engage, interact and build relationships; it is within the relationships and the boundaries of these that roles are clarified relative to the position. The one acting the ‘role’ may face the risk of ‘role ambiguity’ if they do not fully integrate the role expectation and role perception, and the risk of ‘role conflict’ if the interactions are outside the boundaries, or if their job perception and demands contradict the directives and orders. Thus, this conflict happens as a result of the incompatibility of demands and expectations in the interaction of role holders (McKenna, 2006).

2.9.1 Job Roles and Job Expectations of Middle Managers

It has been argued that there is a need to explore the middle managers’ strategic agency-enabling conditions that allow for the fulfilment of those roles. At this point, it is significant to discuss the template of role expectations typology adopted by Mantere (2008), who undertook a study on role expectations and middle manager strategic agency in a professional services organisation in Scandinavia. According to Mantere (2008), in the practice of strategy, roles are enacted in the strategy discourse. Practitioners enact their role as reflexive agents who have the role as a reference point to their thinking and interaction. The author concludes that it is vital to continue the academic pursuit of understanding middle managers’ roles and their impact on organisation strategy implementation efforts, more so to understand what enables them to succeed in accomplishing what the organisation requires. By examining agency-enabling conditions as a result of the structural artefact of expectations, one can determine what the conditions are that enable their strategic agency, in this study focusing on strategy implementation, Mantere proposes a template for role expectations by adopting Floyd and Wooldridge’s (1992b, p. 154) fourfold categorisation. The model is based on two contrasting activities: vertical dichotomy of activity and horizontally encompassing dichotomy of activity. “The four activity types are (1) implementing deliberate strategy (downward, integrative), (2) facilitating

adaptability (downward, divergent), (3) synthesising information (upward, integrative) and (4) championing alternatives (upward, divergent).” This model can be considered to encompass most middle managers’ role expectations from their superiors.

Dance (2011) discusses the role ambiguity of middle management in an organisation, where such ambiguity leads to uncertainty and confusion at executive levels concerning the effectiveness of middle managers. Likewise, many middle managers are unsure of their job’s strategic tasks owing to such ambiguity. Thus, middle managers are unsure of what is required of them within the role. Dance (2011) further elaborates that senior executives might put the blame on middle managers who are ‘scapegoats’ when the organisation does not meet its full potential. These executives are sometimes dissatisfied with their middle managers, thinking that they hold back the organisation, or even question the value of their position within the organisation. Role ambiguity, therefore, can cause a great deal of concern and cost within organisations.

2.9.2 Middle Manager versus Line Manager Roles

Dance (2011) spells out the differences between middle managers’ and line managers’ roles. According to him, the middle manager role is within the senior management level as attested by the job salary and benefits package extended to them. Middle managers are also expected to behave as part of the senior management of the organisation. Being in such a position, middle managers need to be aligned to and support the establishment and its strategy, even assuming that they do not like the direction in which the establishment is moving. Regardless of any disagreements on the development of the strategy, once committed they have to stick to supporting the strategy. Middle managers do not necessarily directly manage the front line employees but rather manage line managers or supervisors, so much so that they are called ‘managers of managers’. Such line managers are the ones responsible for managing the ‘people’ and are accountable for their performance. Middle managers however are accountable for the performance of all the people in their divisions or

department indirectly. Middle managers cannot possibly manage the individual performance of all team members, but can manage the performance of their line managers. If they do this effectively, line managers will automatically manage the performance of their people effectively (Dance, 2011). Furthermore, the author also indicates that many middle managers, as a result, do not directly achieve results; rather they do that through other people. In terms of performance, almost all their results are achieved through their line managers. This suggests that middle managers are dependent on the results of others rather than their own direct contribution.

2.9.3 The Role of Middle Managers as Strategists

Varyani and Khammar (2010) explain the significance of understanding the way in which middle managers interpret and understand the formulated strategies. Middle managers' roles as strategists involve informal and formal routines of communication, and their importance has not been acknowledged due to the dominant economic view on strategy (Whittington, 2006; Jarzabkowski *et al.*, 2007). Included in the duty of middle managers is to accomplish top-down objectives through the processes of the organisation, but also interpret, negotiate and mediate to connect the strategic level to the operational level within the organisation (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997). This means, as strategists, middle managers' duties go beyond the implementation of deliberated strategy but they have to engage and contribute to the process when they implement strategy (Balogun and Johnson, 2004).

Research published within the strategy-as-practice field has shown the instrumental role of middle managers to strategy. This in turn is valuable in modern organisations that face increased competition and dynamics in the market and the environment in which they function, leading to an increased need for flexibility in organisations' hierarchal structures and processes. This results in the need for flexibility and autonomy for middle managers to be able to address the changing environment of organisations (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997; Regner, 2003, 2008; Balogun and Johnson, 2004). As companies decentralise and

disperse their geographic locations, organisations rely on middle managers to glue the organisation together and hence their importance rises (Balogun and Johnson, 2004). However, due to these factors, the connection between senior managers and middle managers becomes thinner, leading to fewer interactions. Although studies demonstrate the relevance and importance of various strategic activities of middle managers, this level of the organisation hierarchy practising strategy is still not fully incorporated in the actions or efforts of the formation of strategy by their seniors (Whittington, 2006).

Floyd and Wooldridge's (1997) typology of middle management activities is a widely approved categorisation. The typology adopts the direction of the activities of middle managers in order to group and categorise these activities. The four activity types include (1) "Implementing deliberate strategy (downward, integrative)" (2) "facilitating adaptability (downward, divergent)" (3) "synthesising information (upward, integrative)" and (4) "championing alternatives (upward, divergent)." These expectations need to be in line with the goals at different organisational levels in order for middle managers to accomplish their goals, fulfil their roles and be effective (Mantere, 2008). It was noted that the separation of the two levels of management, namely, middle and senior level management, leads to poor alignment of goals. In order for organisations to make best use of managerial resources, communications between the levels and the active pursuit of senior managers to provide the necessary enabling conditions for these resources is an important factor for the effectiveness of the organisation (Balogun and Johnson, 2004).

2.9.4 Middle Managers as Strategic Champions

Another role of a middle manager is that of strategic champion. The concept of strategic champions refers to the activity of influencing senior management by 'issue selling' (Dutton *et al.*, 1997). Middle managers actively direct ideas that can influence the strategy formation and outcomes of strategy to senior management. These champions are seeking to influence organisational strategy. Their activities include trying to influence other colleagues in the

organisation with their view, and those senior to them. In addition, they also initiate possible changes to the organisational systems, policy and procedures, and further seek to gain the advantage over resources. This idea is centred on the belief that middle managers are drivers of organisational strategy and act as intermediaries between senior management and operational levels of the organisation. This mediating role is structured by role expectations and the way they deal with more complex issues. This translates into a more inductive and emergent mode of strategy and therefore, as the organisation becomes more decentralised, there is an increase in the importance of the strategic activities and roles of middle managers in them (Balogun and Johnson, 2004).

2.10 Organisational Practices

The strategy process consists of decisions and the actions that are driven by these decisions. Many actions are not a result of the strategic decisions and thus a mere study of the decision-making process does not cover the entirety of the strategy process and those issues that may be significant but are not decision-making actions (Lechner and Müller-Stewens, 2000; Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006). Organisational practices, according to Mantere (2005), can be categorised into two subcategories: organisational and control. The first refers to organisational strategy, which serves as a reference point with regard to the legitimacy of actions within its boundaries, whereas control practices serve as a reference point for the deal with the sharing and dispersing of resources in the organisation.

Organisational practices can take the form of recursive practices or adaptive practices (Jarzabkowski, 2004). A recursive practice in strategy is one that is routine and calls for steadiness and control. On the other hand, an adaptive practice underscores sense-making and sense-giving which in turn means agents providing their input outside the routines of strategy discourse (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991). In terms of the recursive practice of control, middle managers in performing their roles in the organisation provide the opportunity to leverage resources needed for strategy implementation and hence continue to support the

strategic plans (Mantere, 2005; Kaplan, 2008). Mantere (2005) states that recursive organisation practices include a clear set of rules and plans, some of which are found to be enabling of middle managers' agency such as career development programmes, performance enhancement programmes and a clear career path. Middle managers in the participation of strategy favour adaptive organising practices. The adaptive practices render autonomous behaviour and flexibility that enable their agency as they favour being part of strategic issues. The higher level of participation and influence makes them feel an integral part of the strategy process in their organisation.

As pointed out by Rizzo *et al.* (1970), role ambiguity and role conflict can lead to ineffectiveness of individuals and the organisation. By applying the current trends in strategy-as-practice research, as argued earlier, there is a need to ask the same relevant questions: what do people do in relation to strategy in organisations; how do such expectations enable their actions in organisations; what other factors or artefacts enable or constrain them? Importantly, however, emphasis needs to be directed towards how strategies are lived out and are implemented by middle managers. As mediators, middle managers are responsible for bringing together the organisation's strategic and operational levels (Metheny, 2013). It is, therefore, important to explore middle managers' strategic agency-enabling conditions, allowing for the fulfilment of their roles as perceived by themselves and senior management.

2.11 Context Factors that May Affect Middle Managers' Strategy Implementation

There is a need to understand what factors may affect strategy implementation. In this section, factors that are less frequently mentioned, or not given importance in the literature reviewed, will be discussed, and these include organisational structure, culture, the external environment or the general market conditions. However, whilst this plays a role, the focus of the research undertaken in the study described in this dissertation focuses more on organisational structure, organisational culture, national culture and environmental context,

which may affect the strategy implementation of middle managers (Burgelman,1983).

The first identified context factor is organisational structure, which might affect middle managers' strategy implementation. The structure determines the various organisational activities and how such efforts are coordinated within the organisation. If the organisation has a clear and effective structure, working relationships between individuals and departments across the organisation will in turn more be effective. Likewise, the structure underpins the balance of power and accountability within the organisation. Power and accountability distributed and operating within an organisation define the rules of engagement. According to Caves (1980, p. 64), "structures are the manifestation of strategic orientations and regulate information flows, decision-making and patterns of behaviour". Both organisational structure and organisational behaviour are intertwined (Schein, 1995). Hierarchy provides organisational information about who is in charge, and a structure, which can filter down throughout the entire organisation. Moreover, it builds the frame of reference for running organisational operations and provides orientation for organisational members, and a reference point to comply with, where action is directed towards the organisational strategy. Likewise, organisational behaviour constitutes the observable manifestation of organisational strategies (Schein, 1995). Behaviour unfolds as the observable phenomena that are relevant to strategies and regulated by organisational structures. As mentioned earlier, Schein (1995) proposes that organisational structure and organisational behaviour are both directly linked to one another as they both refer to artefacts that may guide the behaviour of an organisation.

The next identified context factor that may affect strategy implementation is organisational culture. A strategy must be fully aligned with the organisational culture to be able to operate more efficiently in the global marketplace (Alder 1983; Rose, 2014). The findings of Ahmadi *et al.* (2012) suggest that there exists a positive link between organisation culture and strategy implementation. As the organisations have developed and are more receptive to their environments, they tend to be open to respond to unpredictable conditions more spontaneously. Thus

flexible cultures in organisations will be more geared toward responsiveness and have more relevance to strategy implementation. Lund (2003) suggests that the extensiveness of an organisation's culture requires that management recognise the fundamental dimensions of their corporate culture (Schein, 1995; Mintzberg, 1990; Mehta and Krishnan, 2004). The beliefs, values and norms shared by the members in the organisation are vital in unifying and encouraging the members in the organisations towards its goals, hence there is the need to establish the effects of the components of culture on strategy implementation. Likewise, the study by Ahmadi *et al.* (2012) unveils and confirms the relationship between all dimensions of culture and strategy implementation. The results emphasise the role of flexible cultures and their significance in strategic discourse and successful strategy implementation.

These ideas are reinforced by Cameron and Quinn (1999), who categorise and describe four types of culture: 'hierarchy, clan, market and adhocracy'. The model describes the first dimension, which focuses on internal efficiency, collaboration, and the support that glues central characteristics in the organisation, which is referred to as 'hierarchy culture'. The second dimension focuses on internal issues, although its focus is on flexibility rather than stability, and is known as a 'clan culture'. The third dimension is control-oriented, and emphasises the external organisation concerns, which are called the 'market culture'. Finally, the last dimension is termed 'adhocracy culture', which refers to external organisation matters, and emphasises flexibility and change as opposed to conflict and resistance.

Another context factor that may affect middle managers' strategy implementation is the national culture (Stephens and Greer, 1995). Hofstede (1980) established five dimensions of culture in his 50-country survey that included the Arab World. According to Hofstede, cultural differences matter; therefore, by using his model, managers of a cross-cultural set-up in an organisation are provided with a tool for understanding and dealing with differences in culture. Likewise, the model stresses that no one set of principles fits all, and the notion of a universally applicable rule is not possible. The

findings of Hofstede revealed a high Power Distance Index (PDI) (80) and Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI) (68) for the Arab World. These value sets are debatable; however, a culturally sensitive perspective is useful in doing business and forging relations in organisations that are multicultural or span different geographic locations. The study of Savolainen (2007) applies the approach of Hofstede's dimensions of national cultural differences. The study reveals that national culture has an impact on various organisations' activities, procedures, management set-up and relations. Moreover, the values and social structures emerging from national culture are factors which influence organisations' activities and procedures. It was also found that local people who create their philosophy of life represent national culture; thus, the reason why some activities are carried out differently is due to the country and national culture. This leads to consideration of whether a culturally sensitive investigation is necessary in examining organisations and those members who are part of it.

2.12 Organisation Structure

The role of managers in achieving this configurational congruence is due to the fact that managers are the first to notice salient differences in organisational performance. They can also anticipate changes, strategise and plan structural changes and finally implement these changes. Since one of the objectives of this research is to discuss other context factors that may affect middle managers' strategy implementation, there is a need to understand how structure is related as a context factor. In this section, this factor is explicitly discussed. Research on the strategy–structure relation which started with Chandler's (1990) work viewing structure as a policy shift and diversification excluded looking at other structural configurations, with changes in strategies over the years. This led to structure being viewed more conservatively than the way in which Chandler had defined it (Goold and Luchs, 2005), resulting in structure being viewed as a proxy for implementation. With waning interest, due to increasingly diverse topics holding researchers' interests, structure was treated as a peripheral construct as part of studies on change, culture or control. Research on structure then graduated to finding out how structures are created and adapted

(Chandler, 1990). Thus structure was treated as an instrument in practice (Whittington, 2002). However, the organisational behaviour literature started to look at environment-structure adaptation, losing its link to performance (Ginsberg and Venkatraman, 1985).

2.12.1 Structure

Structure in an organisation is how the organisation defines, arranges and divides positions, roles and responsibilities under which various activities are carried out by its members. The appropriateness of the organisational structure and its alignment to its purpose is important in dealing with the conditions it operates in. Structure has to be aligned to strategy to ensure effective performance, which is an essential part of strategy implementation (Whittington, 2002). According to Caves (1980, p. 64), structures are the “manifestations of strategic orientations, and regulate information flows, decision-making and patterns of behaviour.” Three important factors are underscored in the discussion of structure: the level of hierarchy, authority and control in an organisation. When this is done, structure then provides an orientation for the members to comply with organisational strategy and culture and deploy the set of actions and the accepted patterns of behaviour.

Effective structure is vital to the effective working relations between the members and the departments of the organisation. Likewise, structure helps people in the organisation to work together effectively. It is the basis for the power and accountability that operate within the organisation; it determines how responsibilities are allocated and to whom, and it makes effective participation possible in accordance with these arrangements. In the same vein, behaviour is also reversely linked to structures. The five common business organisations are discussed below:

Matrix Structure: This structure provides for reporting lines that work vertically as well as horizontally at the same time. It lends itself to various reporting combinations and has members of different groups or units working

together to develop a new product line, marketing product or service campaign, or working on special projects. In this type of structure, employees report not only to their department heads but also to other unit heads as part of special organisational projects or arrangements.

Functional Structure: This is where a group of individuals perform by specific functions. This type of structure has specific departments that are mirrored in companies, such as human resources, finance and administration, marketing. These departments are organised and managed separately and have their own cost and revenue centres. All managers from a certain unit or department report to one functional area head or director. In this type of organisational structure, functions are separated by expertise where challenges sometimes arise because functional areas work separately from each other and turn into silos.

Product Structure: In some companies the focus is on the research and development of the product line or service group. In this type of structure, the group of products or services are part of the same business unit and have the same reporting structure to the executive at the top of that hierarchy who is hence responsible for all the core and supporting units related to that product line or service group. The structure is organised by a specific product type.

Geographic Structure: In this structure, organisations cover a span of geographic regions and are responsible for them. This gives the organisation better control of logistics and support in these regions and closer receptiveness to customer needs. A central supervisor is designated for those who cover a certain geographic region. Operating within this structure, and facilitating good communication channels and workflow processes, ensures the efficiency and effectiveness of various resources at the disposal of the regional head. This is important as members of this structure are clear about how the organisation functions and also about the reporting lines.

2.12.2 Hierarchy of Managers

Middle managers have specific roles to fulfil as part of their function in the hierarchy of the organisation. Moreover, they have varying levels of power and responsibility dependent on their position. Based on this idea, Lewis (2014) discusses the three levels of hierarchy of managers who play an integral role in the organisation which are seen in most contemporary organisations. According to Lewis (2014), there is an initial level of managers who occupy the first line of management overseeing employees in the managerial hierarchy. These managers deal with all levels of employees including other managers and line managers. A part of their function is also managing their subordinates, and these can be front line staff or supervisors. They are also in charge of and delegate the activities of employees.

The level of managers a step above the front line managers in the hierarchy are middle managers, who act as a connection between lower-level and higher-level managers. They are more involved than their superiors in the daily operations of their organisation, however, they depend on their subordinates for implementation actions and operational feedback that can be dealt with immediately or linked back to upper management for decisions. Middle-level managers are generally managers of departments or units within a business unit such as operations, product or regional managers.

The third level up refers to the top of the managerial hierarchy, who are known as senior-level managers, and who represent the senior executives in the organisation. These managers rely on input from the middle-level managers in order to establish the long-term plans and future direction in which the company is heading. Senior-level managers are chief executives, chief operating officers, chief financial officers or other titles pertinent to these types of positions. They are at the top of the hierarchy and hence are expected to develop the organisation's vision and mission and take the executive decisions necessary for the success of the organisation.

The importance of organisational hierarchy is that it provides structure to the organisation, across and throughout the organisation as a whole. By creating a specific distribution and culture, the hierarchy also allows the entire organisation to establish who is in charge. Some significant advantages of delaying hierarchies, or the elimination of some management positions, may be cost savings, streamlining information flow and communications and reducing the barriers to progress and growth. An organisation needs to be appropriately structured in response to its core business and environment. Furthermore, it is important for an organisation to have a solid structure in which various organisational activities are clearly organised in order for efforts to be coordinated effectively. Structure helps people to work together: this means, the more effective the structure, the more effective the working relations between people and departments. Likewise, the structure underpins the responsibility and accountability within the organisation and makes it transparent for all stakeholders. The structure of an organisation also defines responsibilities, communication channels, and agreed procedures; therefore, the strategy should be determined first, and the organisational structure follows (Hall and Saias, 2006).

2.13 Organisational Culture and Strategy Implementation

The next identified context factor that may affect strategy implementation is organisational culture. A strategy must be fully aligned with the organisational culture to be able to more efficiently operate in the global marketplace (Rose, 2014). It is important to understand how culture affects the organisation and its members, and how culture can involve variations and change in strategy (Potter, 2010). Strategy can stem from culture and can be an indicator of it; hence strategy formation and implementation may require some cultural awareness and change. According to Potter, organisations cannot simply discard culture since it is embedded. Therefore, organisations that are aware of their culture and the need to align it to their strategy and future direction have a hard task to adapt their culture to fit their strategy. Moreover, an organisation which is faced with challenging market conditions that require a total change and reorganisation

project or some form of adaptation of strategy to the new realities or market conditions, will find it challenging to change culture as spontaneously as it might change strategy, and that can create a strategy and culture strategic mismatch. Thus the findings of Potter (2010) suggest that there exists a positive link between organisational culture and strategy implementation.

In a similar way, Ahmadi *et al.* (2012) point out that managers fail adequately to anticipate the necessary training and development for their employees and as such fail to train them with the necessary skills required for strategy implementation. Moreover, as far as the overall reward and performance schemes of employees are concerned, organisations do not take into account the employees' performance in the organisation. In the same way, Ahmadi *et al.* (2012) discovered that there was a disconnect between formulating the plans and their implementation, such as building in the time frame required for implementation activities. Thus, in all likelihood, there was a lack of thorough analysis, linked to tools such as SWOT analysis. It is worth mentioning that the study revealed that senior executives and managers have a tendency to focus their efforts and time on formulation rather than implementation.

Organisational culture is referred to as the beliefs, assumptions and values that members of a group share, the rules of conduct, the leadership and administrative procedures, the rituals and style and customs (Schein 1995; Mintzberg, 1990; Mehta and Krishnan 2004). It is also considered as the human social structure that consolidates meaning and inspires commitment and productivity. Potter (2010) suggests that the cultural web is used as a metaphor that can be compared with a spider's web. This metaphor invokes the analogy of culture as a system of interconnected themes that entrap organisational employees (Geertz, 1973) in which the middle of the web is the organisational paradigm. The central idea brings the strands around it and contributes to the cultural view, where the organisation paradigm functions as a pulling force for all the strands of cultural areas that constitute the web. According to Johnson (2000), the cultural web acts as a cultural diagnostic device that is mostly used in times of change in organisations. The use of cultural themes can help in understanding the

worldview of the current state the organisation culture is in and systematically and analytically working to design the themes for the future. Cultural themes, according to Spradley (1980), refer to any principle recurrent in a number of domains, tacit or explicit, and serving as a relationship amongst subsystems of cultural meaning. When combined together, the cultural web and the cultural theme analysis offer powerful and effective tools to diagnose the elements of a corporate culture that require intervention. The use of these diagnostic tools offers an aid that enables organisations and their managers to be familiar with and understand the interrelatedness of their organisation culture and organisation strategy, offering them a tool to work on the areas where they can improve the fit between the two.

There are six interrelated elements that help to make up the ‘paradigm’ and by which each factor is analysed; the bigger picture of culture can then be seen. These elements offer areas or themes on which managers can focus their analyses, and help them to understand the present culture of the organisation and where they want to take it in the future, hence enabling them to focus their efforts on improving the fit and alignment for the benefit of their organisation. These elements are discussed in Table 2.6 below and depict the link between cultural themes and the analytical questions that feature when investigating culture in organisations, to show the underlying effects of culture.

Table 2.6: The Link between Cultural Themes and the Analytical Questions.

Adapted from Johnson *et al.*, (2008).

Cultural Manifestation	Description	Analytical Question
Organisational Structures	This element describes the hierarchical structures that explain the management levels and distribution of power within an organisation.	The question to be asked is "How formal or informal are the structures?"
Control Systems	This element describes the administrative systems, which look into quality, and emphasises what is important to the organisation.	The question to be asked is "What is most closely monitored/controlled and why?"
Rituals and Routines	This element establishes the protocol of how things are done within the organisation.	The question to be asked is "What core beliefs do these reflect in management?"
Stories	This element represents those stories which are shared with new members by existing members of the organisation.	The question to be asked is "What are the stories told and what core beliefs do these stories reflect?"
Symbols	This element signifies the meaning behind the immediate functionality of the symbol.	The question to be asked is "What symbols act to censor and control behaviour?"
Power Structures	The element represents actors in the organisation and their power distribution by which they control the expressive capacity of organisational members including but not limited to senior management.	The question to be asked is "What are the core assumptions and beliefs of senior leadership?"
Paradigm	This element represents the assumptions shared by the management of their experience in the organisation.	The question to be asked is "How would you characterise the dominant cultural assumptions that underpin the paradigm?"

The cultural study was undertaken by Hofstede (1980), who based his extensive study on IBM; the survey resulted in the famous five dimensions of culture. In his study, Hofstede was able to categorise cultural variations between countries across the world, including the Arab world. The cultural model can be

used as a tool to help managers understand differences in value sets and behaviour in organisations that operate within this geographic context. In a similar vein, the model substantiates the claim to view organisations in the context where they operate and a culturally sensitive perspective must be present in the investigation of organisations. Similarly, Laurent (1983) indicates that strong national culture differences exist among individuals from different cultures. These cultural dimensions show that cultural differences matter, and need to be taken into account in any research, as here in the research described in this dissertation, in order to understand how managers (or anyone else) think and behave in any organisation.

However, Hofstede's (1980) findings are broadly discussed and criticised by many scholars. Some have attempted to complement, update and even challenge his original study (Gooderham and Nordhaug, 2003). The main criticism is that Hofstede's study is outdated and old-fashioned and it is argued that there is a need to complement his study with a contemporary approach. Recently, culture has been used to understand the different behaviours of people in different countries within an organisational context. According to Hofstede (1980; 1993; 2001), culture stays stable over time and merely changes slowly, however other researchers claim otherwise. Savolainen (2007) carried out a study of national culture, which centred on the challenge of intercultural management to change implementation. Three important findings were noted from Salvoinen's study. First, reciprocal communication enables interaction between superiors and subordinates; second, personnel can be motivated by allowing them to establish whether the change is heading in the intended direction and whether the goals are achieved; and third, national culture impacts organisations' activities, procedures and management.

The reviewed literature points out that an obvious influence of a powerful culture could be attributed to the study of strategy implementation; however, only a few have implicitly studied the effects of this cultural factor in this area (Torbion, 1982, Hofstede, 1980; Laurent, 1983; and Van Der Maas, 2008). There are some other factors that need an in-depth analysis although an important study

was undertaken by Ahmadi *et al.* (2012) whose findings suggest that there exists a positive link between an organisation's culture and strategy implementation. Similar views are given by Rose (2014), who states that strategy must be fully aligned with the organisation in order to be able to operate more efficiently in the global marketplace. Likewise, the findings of Ahmadi *et al.* (2012) have clarified the need for culture to be flexible since it plays a significant role in strategy, and accordingly reveal a significant correlation between strategic emphasis on culture and the implementation of strategy. The next section will discuss the barriers and challenges related to strategy implementation.

2.14 Barriers and Challenges to Strategy Implementation

It should be noted that barriers are those factors that obstruct, prevent, block or hinder the process of strategy implementation. Such impediments or stumbling blocks make it difficult for organisations to achieve or realise their goals. By analysing research in this field, the newly discovered path may open up new opportunities on how barriers and challenges may be dealt with when met by middle managers during strategy implementation. Lihalo (2013) examines the barriers to strategy implementation as adopted by medium-sized companies in Kenya. According to the author, barriers to strategy implementation can be either internal or external within an organisation. These barriers are dependent on the type of strategy, type of organisation and the prevailing circumstances that can be avoided if strategy development is coupled with implementation. Lihalo identifies these barriers to strategy implementation as internal, systemic, behavioural and cultural.

The first barrier refers to internal sources. This is the greatest barrier to strategy, where there is resistance to strategic change demonstrated by some personnel who are complacent and who would rather maintain the status quo than embrace the unknown changes introduced into the organisation.

Systemic barriers. These refer to those barriers when the organisation indirectly does not support a strategy. Other systemic barriers are issues such as

unanticipated problems arising at the time of strategy implementation, when strategy implementation goes beyond the planned time, rigid and bureaucratic organisational structure and insufficient financial resources.

Behavioural barriers. These behavioural barriers refer to group or individual behaviours, such as mistrust, narrow-mindedness, individuals' self-interest, misunderstanding, intolerance and entrenched opinions.

Cultural barriers. During strategy implementation, inappropriate systems utilised during the process of operationalisation, institutionalisation and control of strategy are often sources of challenges. A lack of leadership from senior executives arises when the senior managers and leaders do not commit themselves to the process of strategy implementation in an organisation.

Another study is that of De Hildebrandt (2009), who identifies five challenges to or barriers facing strategy implementation. The most common reasons he found include the following:

The first identified barrier is insufficient partner buy-in or commitment. A lack of commitment could interfere with the strategic implementation process. The management of the organisation and its various associates involved in the entire process need to have an understanding of, and be aligned to, the business imperative behind the chosen strategy while they are in the process of conducting strategic planning. However, those who are removed from the process may not see a need for change. Since they were deprived of an opportunity to air their points of view, they may lack the understanding of the context and logic for the chosen strategy. Thus, the resulting effect is not manifesting their commitment to the strategic plan. The next identified challenge is that of insufficient leadership attention. The lack of leadership attention to detail may result in loss of interest in the implementation process. This usually happens when the organisation's board and management team members find themselves drawn into other organisational matters after undergoing an intensive strategy formation process. Since other matters seem to get the attention of management, strategies that were developed

and created starts to lose their focus and turn into documents that gather dust, thus implementation is forgotten.

The third identified challenge is ineffective leadership. Weak leadership manifests this since some leaders are resistant or unwilling to take the tough actions and decisions agreed upon in the plan. Adding to this problem is the failure of partners to hold leaders accountable for driving implementation. This problem could lead to a loss of the organisation's effort in the strategy development process. The fourth identified challenge is weak or inappropriate strategy. This usually arises from the failure to make a realistic and honest assessment of the organisation, leading to overly ambitious goals that are unfounded by unrealistic organisation leaders who adopt a strategy which does not match the organisation's current position or market realities and competitive situations. Without a viable strategy, organisations are stuck with a strategy that is not implementable and hence they struggle to take effective action to execute the plans. The fifth identified challenge is resistance to change. When change is introduced, employees tend to reject or avoid it. The reason behind this is fear of the unknown. It is therefore necessary for managers to learn how to adapt to this situation. There is a need to develop tools to assist them, and be aware of the hurdles and traps related to failure in implementation.

Likewise, another study on barriers to strategy implementation is that of Canhada and Rese (2011), whose study aggregates empirical evidence of the main barriers to and facilitators of the implementation of different strategies in organisations in Brazil. Their study concludes that certain factors facilitating the effective implementation of strategies may actually constitute barriers. The findings reveal seven barriers to strategy implementation, regardless of the strategy to be implemented. The first identified barrier is a lack of consensus. This particular barrier refers to a lack of understanding and transparency regarding the enterprise's mission and vision. This barrier is a result of the group's or individuals' own interpretations of the organisation's mission, vision and objectives. The second barrier is the lack of relationship between strategic content and strategic process. This barrier keeps the target strategic position from

being converted into targets and objectives for the different sectors, departments and teams. Consequently, process and strategic content remain unrelated (Silva, *et al.*, 2000). The third barrier is the lack of coherence between strategic planning and resource allocation. In this case, the organisation's strategic planning is not aligned with the availability of funds. The fourth is a lack of strategic feedback. This barrier means there is a lack of process indicators for obtaining feedback on strategy. When this does not occur, one generally encounters a barrier from the lack of strategic feedback. The fifth is a relatively inflexible formal structure. This barrier refers to those protocols that are inflexible. In one of the studies, it was observed that the formal structure of an organisation was relatively inflexible concerning innovation and change processes. This was evidenced by information technology's inability to quickly keep up with the changes in the organisational processes (Jacques, 2006). The sixth identified barrier is the lack of involvement of the organisation's management. Galas and Forte (2004) identifies weakness in organisational processes as the main factor in implementation failure and hence the need for a visible and shared strategic management culture among the company's managers. The seventh and last identified barrier is the application of models that are ill-suited to organisational reality. This was evidenced by a study by Macedo-Soares and Dos Santos (2001), who verified the methodologies employed by 21 large hospitals in Brazil to implement strategies to put in place client-oriented improvements. The output of the study revealed that the main reason behind each hospital having its own methodology was the incompatibility of the available methodologies and the hospital's culture. They concluded, "the methodology ought not to be generic, but specific to the hospital's context" (Macedo-Soares and Dos Santos, 2001, p.14).

On the other hand, the three most common problems related to strategy implementation have been identified by Alexander (1985) as insufficient capabilities of employees to perform their jobs, incompetently trained employees, and the inadequate leadership and direction of employees. The author points out that these three most frequent strategy implementation problems are related to human resources. Communication barriers are more frequently cited, as

confirmed by Forman and Argenti (2005), who note that there is a growing interest in the field of communication and a company's ability to disseminate its strategy in order to get the buy-in from those employees concerned with the implementation. Rapert *et al.* (2002) state that both communication of strategy and reaching a stage of shared understanding are a strong basis for a successful strategy implementation effort and process.

The identified barriers herewith, can be viewed as external or internal to the organisation. As such they are a part of the practice of strategy within the organisation as well as its structural artefacts. Table 2.7 below presents a summary of identified barriers to strategy implementation.

Table 2.7: Summary of Identified Barriers to Strategy Implementation.

Developed by the researcher.

Identified Barriers to Strategy Implementation	Author/s
Internal, systemic, behavioural, and cultural barriers	Lihalo (2013)
Insufficient partners and leaders' commitment coupled with low and ineffective attention from the leadership and a strategy that is not relevant or valuable to the organisation and employees resistant to change	De Hildebrandt (2009)
Lack of consensus, the lack of relation between strategic content and process; lack of coherence between strategic planning and resource allocation; lack of feedback; inflexible formal structure; lack of involvement of the organisation's management and the application of models that are ill-suited to organisational reality	Canhada and Rese (2011); Silva <i>et al.</i> (2000); Jacques (2006); Galas and Forte (2004); Macedo-Soares and Dos Santos (2001).
Communication and shared understandings	Argenti (2005); Rapert <i>et al.</i> (2002)
Implementation tactics, consensus, commitment	Nutt (1987); Akan <i>et al.</i> (2006); Noble and Mokwa (1999).
The appropriate structure of authority and management layers (decentralisation), the appropriate control systems that support the process (budget evaluative style), and the appropriate selection and mandate for the management teams (locus of control)	Govindarajan (1988)
Formalisation, integrating mechanisms, and centralisation.	Roth <i>et al.</i> (1991)

2.15 Research Gaps in the Literature

Six identified gaps emerged and are the basis for the conceptualisation of this research:

First, strategy is a relatively perplexing subject and connotes varied meanings to different people, so there is the need to draw together their diverse experiences in an effort to grasp its meaning in its entirety. Moreover, a majority of the research on strategy focuses on what senior management does, consisting of the important actions necessary to realise its direction. In strategy implementation, middle managers' roles can be crucial to the implementation success, however, these roles not universally agreed upon or well understood, as the literature suggests overlapping roles (Rouleau, 2005; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997). It is therefore necessary to explore how middle managers' strategic practices are affected by various factors and accordingly, to highlight the existing gaps in research that have not yet been explored, and to look at this in a particular sector of business and in a particular country/culture, as it is argued that this varies from one sector of business and country/culture to another.

Second, it was observed that strategy research was directed by, and usually recognised as the responsibility of senior management. The dearth of research on middle managers needs to be addressed, specifically in countries/cultures where there has been little research undertaken. It is within this context that the current research aims to establish the roles of middle level managers in strategy-as-practice from the point of view of two levels of management, the middle-level and senior-level managers. Within this perspective, there is an identified need to explore what organisations actually do as opposed to what the leadership intended. Strategy is a complex subject which has driven many scholars and advocates to look for an emergent approach to it (Archer and Otley, 1991; Roslender and Hart, 2003; Tuomela, 2005).

Third, research attempts were directed in order to address the identified gaps through what is known as micro-investigation of strategy as a social phenomenon, meaning a sociological approach to strategy as well as humanising strategy through the investigation of how the middle managers really act and interact in the process of strategy implementation. For instance, Whittington (1996) points out that there still exists a gap in the body of knowledge of strategy realisation on micro-sociological levels that transform the wider level in organisations. However, in certain countries/cultures, such as those within the Middle East, research has been scarce, specifically in the minds of those whose aim is to uncover the link between the roles of middle managers, role expectations and agency-enabling conditions and other contextual factors related to strategy implementation in manufacturing organisations.

Fourth, the strategy-as-practice lens encompasses questions concerning what people do within such organisations in relation to strategy and how these are linked to outcome. As such there is a need to research the strategy process from a wider perspective, to further understand the variations of how strategies are implemented (Lechner and Müller-Stewens 2000). This was evidenced by the ideas of Golsorkhi *et al.*, (2009), who said that the “strategy-as-practice lens shifts the attention from a top-down approach to other levels of outcomes”. This is supported by Whittington (2007), who imparted that “the sociological eye” looks into the study of strategy to find connections between organisation and society-level outcomes; hence, strategy needs to be socially embedded. By discovering the link between the roles of middle managers, role expectations and agency-enabling conditions in strategy implementation, this research aims to contribute to a wider perspective of strategy-as-practice research – not only locally but also internationally.

Fifth, strategy in organisations is usually considered in terms of what leaders ‘plan’ to do in the future, hence, strategy formation has been treated as an analytical process. Along this line, by applying the current trends in strategy-as-practice research, this research will ask the same relevant questions: what do people do in relation to strategy in organisations; how do such expectations

enable their actions in organisations; what other factors or artefacts enable or constrain them? Importantly, however, emphasis will be directed towards how strategies are lived out and are implemented by middle managers in three manufacturing organisations within a particular sector of business and within a particular country/culture. Selected for analysis for the study described in this dissertation is the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Sixth, it was identified that an obvious influence of a powerful culture could be attributed to the research of strategy implementation; however, only a few have implicitly studied the effects of this cultural factor in this area (Van Der Maas, 2008). There are some other factors that need an in-depth analysis, although an important study was undertaken by Ahmadi *et al.* (2012), whose findings suggest that there exists a positive link between an organisation's culture and strategy implementation. Similar views are given by Rose (2014), who states that strategy must be fully aligned with the organisation in order to be able to operate more efficiently in the global marketplace. Likewise, the findings of Ahmadi *et al.* (2012) have clarified the need for culture to be flexible since it plays a significant role in strategy. The related literature is presented and the conceptual framework developed for this research is depicted in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework Development

The theoretical studies and concepts in the areas of strategy, strategy implementation, and perspectives on strategy-as-practice in strategy implementation about middle managers in strategy-as-practice research, underpin the theoretical basis of the conceptual approach in this research. A conceptual framework depicts the link between the roles of middle managers, role expectations and agency-enabling conditions in strategy implementation (Ravitch and Riggan, 2012).

This part will therefore narrate the pieces of the puzzle that will give a better view of what really transpires inside manufacturing organisations when the middle managers spell out their duties and responsibilities, viewed both from their own perspective and from the perspective of their senior managers. This section will therefore include the themes related to strategy implementation, and how they are connected to each other. Moreover, it will also discuss the other theories that either support or contradict the ideas of others in the field. A conceptual framework is a visual or written output that explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the key aspects to be studied in the research (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Robson, 2011). The next section discusses the middle manager as an implementer of strategy.

3.1 Middle Managers as Implementers of Strategy

As depicted in the first conceptual framework, Figure 3.1, it can be seen that the first box shows middle managers as the implementers of strategy within an organisation. This is linked to the roles according to position versus roles as practised. Based on the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, it was discussed that strategy implementation is a complex process encompassing the involvement of managers and employees alike. The process is affected by both internal and external factors so as to achieve the strategic objectives of the organisation. In order to link this to the first objective of this research, the aim is to explore the roles of middle managers in strategy implementation through the literature

review. Figure 3.1 presents middle managers as implementers of strategy. Commitment and action are the two variables pointed out by Johnson *et al.* (2007) that may affect strategy implementation. Going back to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, it could be discerned that the individuals, their tasks, activities, practices and the processes are linked together and they are carried out at the organisational level. The links between these activities, and how they reinforce organisational strategies, will be identified in this research endeavour. The numerous definitions of strategy in Chapter 2 shed light on how middle managers get used to their roles and identify the concomitant challenges and barriers to achieving organisational goals. Thus, this research adopts the strategy-as-practice approach, which may appropriately be utilised to examine the middle managers' roles (Jarzabkowski, 2005). This type of research must focus on what middle managers do in relation to strategy and how it is linked to outcomes.

There are also various related problems with strategy implementation, for instance, the mismatch between strategy and reward systems, the unfeasibility of strategy or uncontrollable environmental factors (Aaltonen, 2003; Jarzabkowski, 2005; Johnson *et al.*, 2007). Since middle managers are the individuals who deal with these problems, they are the same people who truly understand strategies and their adaptation to their daily actions (Aaltonen and Ikävalko, 2002). As one of the actors in strategy implementation, it is the middle manager who communicates more with customers and other stakeholders. Huy (2001) asserts that since middle managers actually see what is going on in the business, they are familiar with what strategic issues need attention (Govindarajan, 1989).

The middle manager is the coordinator between the daily activities of the units and the strategic activities of the hierarchy. This view of Floyd and Wooldridge (1994; p. 48) implies that middle managers serve as a link between senior managers and operational workers. It could be said that middle managers are both recipients and implementers of change, so it is embedded in their roles to become 'change intermediaries'. Since their role is crucial in the organisation, the way middle managers interpret the strategies and carry the strategic effort may directly influence the outcomes of the strategy. It is how the middle manager

interprets the strategy that may spell the difference between the real intentions of top management and how strategy is being enacted (Balogun, 2003). Thus, it can be seen that three types of views about the role of middle management emerge with regard to strategy and its development and implementation; as pinpointed by the literature, these roles can be overlapping and emerge in the formation of strategy whether in development or implementation.

The first view was that of Hrebiniak (2006) who describes the middle manager as a 'linking pin'. This traditional view sees the middle manager as the one who ties the knots of strategic objectives and the daily activities of personnel working at various organisational levels. The second view was that of Floyd and Lane (2000), who consider the role of middle managers as participants in the strategic process, which means they are co-actors, and at the same time contributors in the effective strategic changes. Again, this is relevant to Hrebiniak's (2006) view of 'linking pins' between the senior and lower level management. The third view considers the manager who is 'making sense' of the actions required in the organisations to instigate strategic changes within the team (Balogun and Rouleau, 2007). Simply defined, sense-making means that the middle manager tries to understand what is happening in the organisation that affects the proper implementation of strategy (Rouleau, 2005). This includes the interpretation of the events that transpire and how they affect the behaviour of those who are present or involved in the process. To summarise, the three views describe the middle manager as a 'linking pin', as an actor and contributor of strategic change, and a "sense maker" whose role cannot just be eliminated from the hierarchy. In conclusion, the various authors view strategy formulation and implementation as one whole process in which they are not separate but rather emerge as two outcomes. In short, viewing strategy as a bottom-up approach allows middle managers' involvement and input and gives them the liberty to bring their own initiatives to the development and implementation of strategy.

3.2 Roles of Middle Managers

First, a role can be defined from three different standpoints: job- or task-related, interpersonal, or how all these relate to one another (The Canadian Center of Science and Education, 2012). The relationships between members in a group help to clarify the roles relative to the position. Thus, it is necessary to understand that roles are a part of the context and the daily activities and practice in organisations. Being in a situation where the middle managers are caught between the demands of their roles and the expectations of them, the senior managers have to understand and lend support to the middle managers and present conditions that enable their strategic agencies. If the senior managers are unable to understand the roles of middle managers, then role conflict may arise, where there is mismatch between demands and/or expectations or inconsistent demands and perceptions of the job (McKenna, 2006). It has been noted that there is role ambiguity in the middle management in an organisation, which often leads to uncertainty and confusion at an executive level (Dance, 2011). This confusion leads to executives blaming middle managers for holding back the organisation from attaining its objectives. The box in the conceptual framework Figure 3.1, which is linked to managers as implementers of strategy, as explained, is concerned with the roles relative to the position and the roles as practised and is presented as the first element of the research conceptual framework.

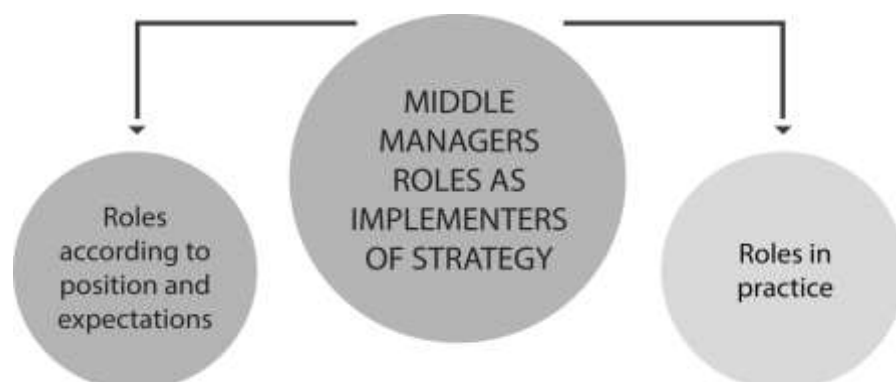


Figure 3.1: Middle Managers as Implementers of Strategy.

Developed by the researcher.

3.3 Role Expectations of Middle Managers

It was evident from the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 that there were models of strategic roles related to various managerial levels (Floyd and Lane, 2000). In the study of Yuk (2012), it was implied that the official positions that the holders have might not be in line with the organisation's required skills, qualifications or professional qualities for that position and that there are some relevant factors such as role expectations and culture that may affect the incumbent who holds the position. Role expectations include both actions and qualities. These roles are acted out based on clear job guidelines and responsibilities, which are spelt out by the work unit. Nevertheless, the interpretation of job specifications depends largely on the holder's perception and expectations related to the job. The research described within this dissertation adopts the Floyd and Wooldridge (1992b) model described as upward versus downward activity, which is also an integrative versus divergent activity model. This dichotomous model explains that middle managers can take actions that could either be upward or downward, that include their expectations from their superiors. Likewise, this model also applies the concept of strategic agency to analyse the enablers and constraints of strategy implementation. This includes other enabling conditions that may affect individuals' work in the organisation, which are summed up as four types of middle management strategic agency discussed below.

The first type of agency is championing alternatives, described as the continuous and influential strategic options provided by the middle managers to their senior management as part of their role. The presented ideas are divergent and the direction of influence is upward. Floyd and Wooldridge (1992b) explain that championing alternatives is tantamount to the expectation of middle managers to champion ideas. With their innate ability and creativity, the middle managers may be able to promote new ideas that can possibly give credibility to the content of the current strategy being employed. The participation of middle managers as strategic partners may lead to the expectation to champion new ideas. By doing this, middle managers may be able to expand their managerial

expertise in the organisation. It is important to participate in planning that can reduce the risk of middle managers being unaware of the company's objectives and targets. By adopting the Floyd and Wooldridge (1992b) model, the first proposition is:

Proposition 1: *There is no significant difference between the perception of middle managers and the perception of senior managers with regard to the role expectation of championing alternatives.*

This proposition will look into the different perceptions of senior and middle managers with regard to championing alternatives, which refers to the persistent and persuasive strategic options provided by the middle managers to senior management. The middle managers present ideas that are considered divergent and upward.

The second strategic agency is synthesising information whereby the middle managers collect substantive information, which is relevant to organisational strategy. The relevant information is forwarded to the senior managers and becomes their basis for strategic decision-making. This activity is considered as both bottom-up and integrative. The significant element here is that middle managers may be able to know whether their efforts are successful or not based on the acceptance of senior managers. Based on these ideas and by adopting the Floyd and Wooldridge (1992b) model, the next is proposition is:

Proposition 2: *There is no significant difference between the perception of middle managers and the perception of senior managers with regard to the role expectation of synthesising information.*

This proposition will analyse the perspectives of both sets of respondents with regard to synthesising information, in which the direction of the influence is upward and integrative.

The third strategic agency refers to facilitating adaptability. This dimension of agency describes the middle managers' ability to adapt to the

changing business environment. This means, middle managers must be able to show their creative problem-solving skills and ability when confronted with surprises in their business activities. Senior managers expect their middle managers to be creative when confronted with problems, thus this role expectation is top-down in nature. This expectation will facilitate adaptability that will also enable middle managers to legitimise their efforts to develop work practices. Again by adopting the Floyd and Wooldridge (1992b) model, the next proposition is:

Proposition 3: *There is no significant difference between the perception of middle managers and the perception of senior managers with regard to the role expectation of facilitating adaptability.*

This proposition will look into the different perceptions of senior and middle managers with regard to facilitating adaptability. In this role, middle managers can easily adapt to flexible organisational arrangement, even if it is not clearly spelt out in their duties and responsibilities. From the cognitive perspective, the influence and promoted ideas are divergent. There is a downward influence towards lower levels of the organisation.

The fourth strategic agency refers to implementing deliberate strategy. Middle managers are expected to disseminate strategy to their subordinates. Likewise, the senior management has the expectation that middle managers implement strategy that may impact the organisation positively. This role expectation is top-down in nature, thus, adopting the Floyd and Wooldridge (1992b) model, the next proposition is:

Proposition 4: *There is no significant difference between the perception of middle managers and the perception of senior managers with regard to the role expectation of implementing deliberate strategy.*

This proposition will consider the different perceptions of the senior and middle managers with regard to implementing deliberate strategy where the strategic intentions of the senior management are aligned with organisational

action as initiated by the middle managers. There is a downward and integrative influence from the cognitive perspective. This research advances the first four propositions stated above which are anchored in Floyd and Wooldridge's (1994) model. Figure 3.2 presents the expectations of the role of middle managers as the second conceptual framework of the research.

Figure 3.2 depicts the four types of middle management role expectations in the four propositions as summarised and these are presented as follows: There is no significant difference between the perceptions of middle level managers and senior managers with regard to role expectations of middle managers in strategy implementation in terms of championing alternatives, P1, represented by the first box; synthesizing information, P2, represented by the second box; facilitating adaptability, P3, represented by the third box; and implementing deliberate strategy, P4, represented by the fourth box. These four propositions are the second element of the conceptual framework and are linked to the role expectations of middle managers.

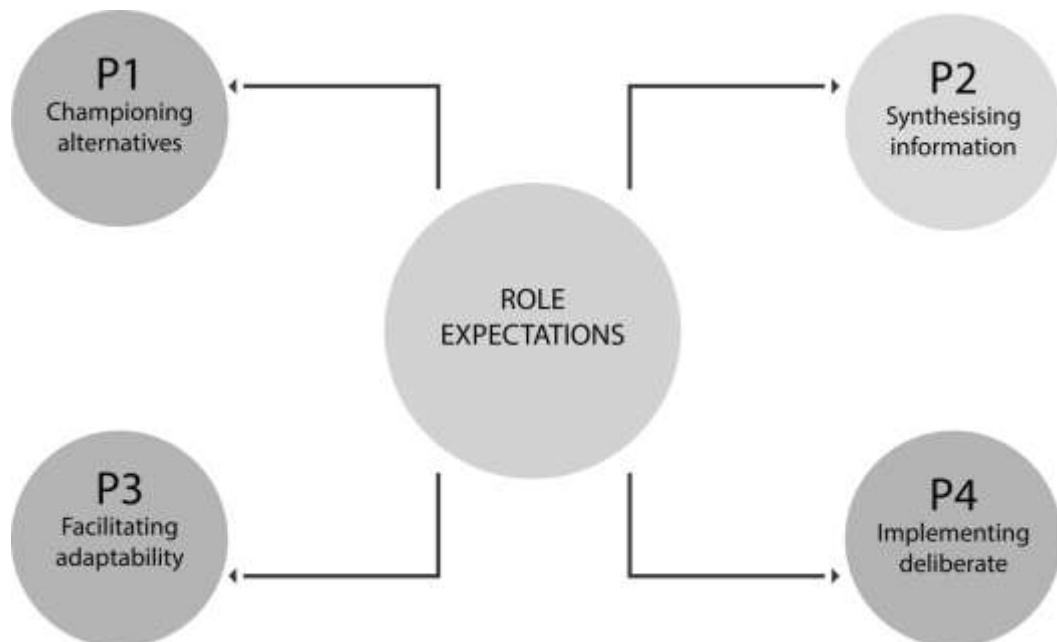


Figure 3.2: Expectations propositions of the role of middle managers.

Adapted from Floyd and Wooldridge (1992b).

3.4 Middle Managers' Enabled Agency

As indicated earlier, this research employs the strategy-as-practice lens and bases the conceptual framework on the relation between agency and structure based on Giddens (1984); the conceptual framework expands on Mantere's (2008) agency-enabling conditions concept to include practices that might enable or restrain strategic agency. This section deals with the conditions that enable middle managers' agency in strategy implementation. The first four propositions described earlier in Figure 3.2 depict the four types of middle management role expectations. The next section will discuss another four propositions with regard to middle managers' agency-enabling conditions. Additional concepts which are relevant to the development of the conceptual framework will also be discussed in this section. Thus, this section commences with the concepts of middle managers' enabled agency, followed by agency and power and other enabling conditions.

3.4.1 Dimensions of Agency

Mantere (2008), citing Giddens (1984), describes strategic agency as a situation where the middle manager acts for the benefit of the organisation, which is the primary motivation for their action. There are three dimensions of agency related to strategic action. These dimensions of agency are significant in the creation of situated activity. According to Emirbayer and Mische (1998), the three dimensions of agency help managers to deal with issues related to strategy, which are identified as, iterative, projective and practical evaluation. Iterative dimension refers to the action of a strategist who acts on strategy without conscious thought because the actions were based on the skilled reproduction of what happened in the past or what they have experienced (Jarzabkowski, 2005). The next dimension is projective, wherein the strategist acts as an agent who looks forward to a projected future. At this point, the strategist may act on the basis of their will and hence affect what may happen in the future. The last dimension is the practical-evaluative dimension wherein the strategist combines both the iterative and projective forms. The existing structures become the basis

for the agents investing their actions with power. Actors, such as senior managers, have power owing to their hierarchical positions (Whittington, 1992; Hardy, 1996). Agency is then understood as the deployment of power to exercise and employ a range of causal powers to those that they have their influence (Giddens, 1984).

3.4.2 Enabling Conditions

The research described in this dissertation adopts the four enabling conditions used by Mantere (2008) as a result of the implementation of role expectations as a structural element; narration, contextualisation, sufficient shift in resource allocation, and respect – otherwise known as the senior management commitment to implementation. It is important to analyse the middle managers' enabling and constraining conditions of strategic agency. According to Mantere (2008) citing Floyd and Wooldridge (1992b), role expectations of middle managers have four relevant enablers. The next section discusses the four enabling conditions which form the bases for the next four propositions of the research and which are all adapted from the Floyd and Wooldridge (1992b) model.

The first enabling condition is the narration of expectation. This is described as the situation wherein senior managers select a strategic direction by opening up the logic behind the strategy in the organisation. At this point, the middle manager has the aptitude to identify implemented objectives taking into account earlier activities. Thus the fifth proposition is:

Proposition 5: There is no significant difference between the perceptions of middle managers and the perceptions of senior managers with regard to the narration of expectation.

This proposition will look into the different perceptions of the senior and middle managers with regard to the narration of expectation.

The second enabling condition is contextualisation of top objectives. This means the senior manager initiates a move to link strategy to a significant work situation. The expectation to implement strategy is top-down in nature in the context of organisational strategy. Thus, it could be deduced that the key enabling condition to build continuity is to recount the ideas involved in goal formulations for future implementation. A problem occurs when the middle manager does not have access to senior management thought processes. At this point, it is important for senior management to discuss in detail how past experiences are related to the current strategy. The situated problem-solving ability of the middle manager is being put to the test. Thus, the sixth proposition is:

***Proposition 6:** There is no significant difference between the perceptions of middle managers and the perceptions of senior managers with regard to top objectives contextualisation.*

This proposition seeks to know the differences in perception between senior and middle managers with respect to the contextualisation of top objectives.

The third enabling condition is resource allocation. This refers to the activity whereby senior management authorises the middle manager to formulate necessary changes in his day-to-day activities, which means that senior management is “walking the talk” with sufficient resources. At this point, the middle manager sees an opportunity in his daily activities to implement useful strategy so as to make each day valuable and meaningful. There must be coherence between resource allocation and top-down objectives. Thus, the seventh proposition is:

***Proposition 7:** There is no significant difference between the perception of middle managers and the perception of senior managers with regard to implementing strategy.*

This proposition will look into the differences in perception between senior and middle managers with regard to sufficient shift of resource allocation.

In this part, senior management authorises middle managers to make changes to everyday work and see it as a useful strategy. This considers everyday activity as valuable and meaningful.

The fourth enabling condition is respect. This concept refers to the value of implementation activity, which is acknowledged by the senior managers. This enabling condition can be described as a situation where a senior manager acknowledges the capability of their entire team. Likewise, a reciprocal action must be shown by the middle managers to the senior management because of their strategy initiatives. At this point, the middle manager must have the ability to show their creativity in solving the day-to-day problems related to work activities. The sense of creativity and freedom is encouraged and supported by the senior manager. Thus, the eighth and last proposition is:

Proposition 8: *There is no significant difference between the perception of middle managers and the perception of senior managers with respect to implementing strategy.*

This proposition will look into the differences in perception between the sets of respondents with regard to the last enabling condition, which is respect. At this stage, the value of the implementation activity of the middle managers is acknowledged by their senior managers.

Based on these ideas, the propositions are summarised as follows. There is no significant difference between the perceptions of middle-level managers and senior managers with regard to middle managers' enabling agency conditions in terms of: narration of the expectation to implement strategy (P5), contextualisation of the top-down objectives to be implemented (P6), sufficient shifts in resource allocation (P7) and respect (P8), which makes middle managers believe the commitment of senior management to implementation. Figure 3.3 is the third element of the conceptual framework and depicts the propositions with regard to middle managers' agency-enabling conditions.

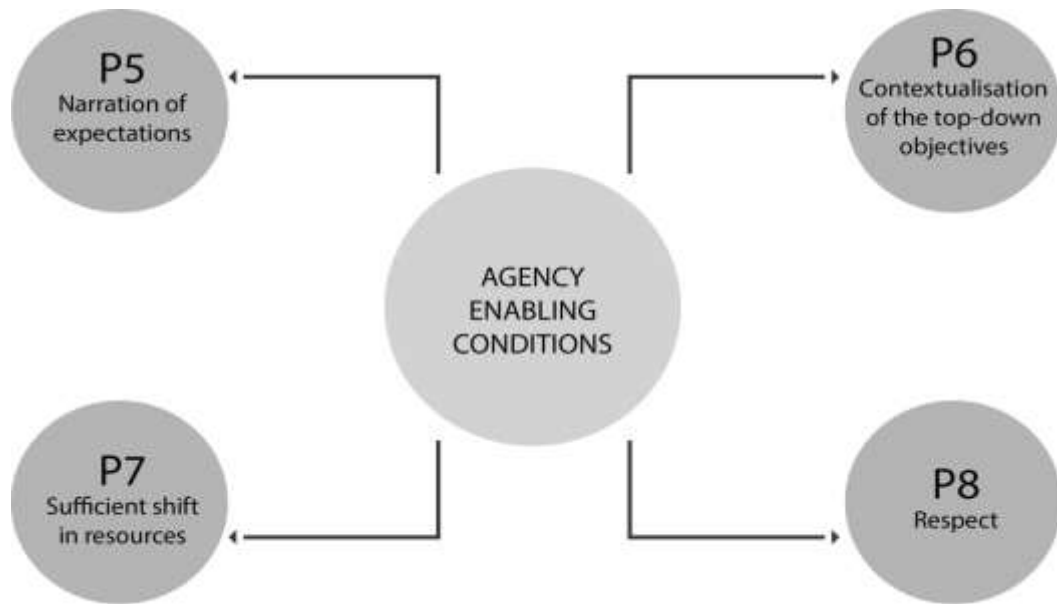


Figure 3.3: Agency Enabling Conditions.

Adapted from Mantere (2008).

The summary of the eight propositions is presented in Table 3.1:

Table 3.1: Summary of the Eight Propositions

Propositions	Details	Author/s
P1	There is no significant difference between the perceptions of senior managers and middle managers on championing alternatives.	Nonaka (1988); Floyd and Wooldridge (1992b); Floyd and Lane (2000); Yuk (2012)
P 2	There is no significant difference between the perceptions of senior managers and middle managers on synthesising information	Nonaka (1988); Floyd and Wooldridge (1992b); Floyd and Lane (2000); Yuk (2012)
P3	There is no significant difference between the perceptions of senior managers and middle managers on facilitating adaptability	Nonaka (1988); Floyd and Wooldridge (1992b); Floyd and Lane (2000); Yuk (2012)
P 4	There is no significant difference between the perceptions of senior managers and middle managers on implementing deliberate strategy	Nonaka (1988); Floyd and Wooldridge (1992b); Floyd and Lane (2000); Yuk (2012)
P 5	There is no significant difference between the perceptions of senior managers and middle managers on narration of the expectation to implement strategy	Mantere (2008); Giddens (1984); Whittington (1992); Hardy, (1996).
P 6	There is no significant difference between the perceptions of senior managers and middle managers on contextualisation of the senior managers' objectives to be implemented	Mantere (2008); Giddens (1984); Whittington (1992); Hardy (1996).
P 7	There is no significant difference between the perceptions of senior managers and middle managers on sufficient shifts in resource allocation	Mantere (2008); Giddens (1984); Whittington (1992); Hardy (1996).
P 8	There is no significant difference between the perceptions of senior managers and middle managers on respect	Mantere (2008); Giddens (1984); Whittington (1992); Hardy (1996).

3.5 Other Context Factors That May Affect Middle Managers' Strategy Implementation

These important factors include organisational structure, culture, organisation size, the external environment or the general market environment. Based on the literature reviewed, this research will focus more on organisational structure, organisational culture, national culture and the environment context, all of which may affect the strategy implementation of the middle managers. Amongst the other context factors discussed in Chapter 2 are the following.

The first identified context factor is organisational structure, which may affect middle managers' strategy implementation. The structure affects the various organisational activities and how efforts are coordinated within the organisation. If the organisation has an effective structure, the working relations between people and departments will be more effective. Likewise, the structure underpins how power and accountability operate within the organisation. According to Schein (1995), organisational structure and organisational behaviour are directly linked. The author further observes that the hierarchy provides the organisational information of who is in charge. Moreover, the hierarchy provides the structure, which can filter down throughout the organisation as a whole. Organisational operations are built on these structures, which serve as a frame of reference for members who set their actions and comply with organisational strategy. The next identified context factor that may affect strategy implementation is organisational culture. According to Rose (2014), there must be an alignment between strategy and organisational culture so as to operate efficiently in the global marketplace. Likewise, Ahmadi *et al.* (2012) indicate that a positive link exists between organisational culture and strategy implementation, and believe that, currently, some business organisations react to unpredictable phenomena based on raw knowledge in which flexibility plays a key role to achieve better results. Likewise, Lund (2003) emphasises that management must recognise the underlying dimensions of their corporate culture

and there is a need to establish the effects of the components of culture on strategy implementation. In the same way, the study of Ahmadi *et al.* (2012) supports these ideas by unveiling the relationship between cultural dimensions and strategy implementation. The authors point out the significant relationship between the strategic importance of culture and the implementation of the strategy.

As illustrated by Cameron and Quinn (1999), four types of culture may affect strategy implementation, which are identified as hierarchy, clan, market and adhocracy, they describe the first dimension as internal efficiency, which they referred to as hierarchy culture. The second dimension puts the emphasis on flexibility rather than stability in which it focuses on those internal issues of the organisation known as clan culture. The third dimension is known as the market culture, which is described as control-oriented and focuses on external organisation affairs. Finally, the last dimension is termed the adhocracy culture, which puts the emphasis on flexibility and change.

Another context factor that may affect middle managers' strategy implementation is national culture. Hofstede's study is supported by the study of Savolainen (2007) who applied the approaches on the cultural differences of nations. In his findings, Savolainen concluded that national culture impacts organisations in relation to how activities and procedures are undertaken by both managers and employees. Likewise, values and social structure, which emanate from national culture, are influencing factors on organisations' activities and procedures. By and large, the study revealed that the local people who create their philosophy of life represent national culture; thus, the reasons why some activities are carried out differently are culturally dependent and specific to the country concerned.

The next section will discuss the barriers and challenges to strategy implementation that can lead to facilitating or impeding middle managers' implementation efforts.

3.6 Barriers and Challenges to Strategy Implementation

The barriers and challenges to strategy implementation discussed in this section are drawn from the literature review in Chapter 2. It should be noted that barriers are those factors that obstruct the process of strategy implementation. These stumbling blocks make it difficult for the organisation to achieve or realise its goals. The next section will discuss other barriers identified from previous studies, namely shared knowledge, communication, consensus, commitment and administrative systems. In this section, the initial and first conceptual framework is introduced in Figure 3.4.

3.6.1 *Shared Knowledge*

This section will discuss shared knowledge as a barrier to strategy implementation. In his study, Alexander (1985) points out the three most common problems related to strategy implementation. These problems are inadequate capabilities of employees, incompetently trained and skilled employees, and insufficient leadership offered to employees. The author points out that these three strategy implementation problems are related to human resources. This means that if there is no shared understanding between the management and employees, failure of strategy will prevail (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992a). Moreover, there will be an implementation gap if strategies conceived by the senior management are not shared properly with the middle managers. The lack of awareness of the middle managers might lead to a gap in implementation. This means that the strategy must be shared top-down and bottom-up.

3.6.2 *Communication*

Another barrier related to strategy implementation is communication. Managers cannot implement strategy on their own even if employees understand their organisation's strategy. It is important for employees to know, understand and embrace the strategy for it to become successful. Strategy must be communicated from the boardroom to the backrooms, and then shared to the

frontline of daily operations. Successful strategy implementation emanates from clear communication between the management and all levels of the organisation. In every aspect of strategy delineation and execution, both management and employees must review, give comment, provide feedback, and be updated on the progress of what is being implemented. Besides, the management must obtain clarity on questions as they arise.

Another form of barrier, according to Nutt (1986), is implementation tactics. Managers use diverse tactics to implement strategies. There are four tactics related to strategy implementation as demonstrated by Nutt. The first is the intervention tactic, which involves some tests for the implementation to be possible. For strategy to be successful, there is a need to conduct a test, for instance, feasibility, norm and dual tests. By doing these tests, the implementation plan is strengthened. The second is known as the participation tactic. This type of tactic refers to nominating a task force who will identify implementation options after strategic goals are articulated by the senior manager. The third is the persuasion tactic, which involves managers taking time to explain to employees and convince them with regard to the actions and decisions that need to be accomplished. In this tactic, two experts are involved: the process and the content experts. The process experts are familiarised with the procedures and processes. On the other hand, the content experts are familiar with the topics and the systems. The fourth and final tactic is implementation by edict, which focuses on whether the change is affecting an individual, the organisation or both. In this tactic, change is analysed to judge whether it is required or not. It should be noted that an individual is usually affected by a change, especially when it hinders his/her upward mobility. In another study, Akan *et al.* (2006) concluded that these implementation tactics are dependent on the kind of strategy being implemented.

3.6.3 Consensus

This section deals with consensus as a barrier to strategy implementation. As defined, consensus occurs when senior and middle managers agree to pursue

the common goals to be achieved in the organisation (Akan *et al.*, 2006). The consensus may differ across the various levels of the organisation. This implies that there must be a common ground for sharing important information among members of the organisation. It was revealed in the literature on strategic consensus that the majority of the studies have concentrated on consensus at the senior management level. However, there has been a realisation that consensus needs to be considered at all managerial levels in an organisation in order to find the viable link between consensus and performance. This suggests that empirical testing of the consensus-performance link will face methodological problems (Wooldridge and Floyd, 1989, 1990).

3.6.4 Commitment

Another barrier to successful strategy implementation is commitment. It was observed that without commitment among employees and middle management, there is a chance of failure when it comes to strategy implementation. According to Heracleous (2000), this problem may arise if employees were not consulted during development phase. Thus, it is necessary to obtain employee commitment and involvement during the strategy process so as to promote successful strategy implementation. Boggiano *et al.* (1988) opine that there is a relationship between commitment and performance. According to them, high perception of goals is related to high performance. To achieve this goal, there must be a strong commitment among employees. Commitment of the employee is thought to be related to the perception of strategic goals. Goal fulfilment and goal setting (ambitions) are affected by the perception of the employee. Noble and Mokwa (1999) point out that there are three dimensions of commitment, namely, organisational commitment, strategy commitment and role commitment. The first dimension is organisational commitment, in which a member of the organisation associates with the goals and values of the organisation and is consciously working to achieve them. Likewise, strategy commitment is related to the support of the goals and objectives of a strategy by the manager. The last dimension refers to the resolve of the manager to perform

his/her duties and responsibilities even if the strategy does not conform to his/her beliefs.

3.6.5 Other Barriers to Strategy Implementation

The ideas of Noble and Mokwa are supported by Govindarajan and Fisher (1990) who advance three factors that may facilitate the process of implementation. These factors include “executive leadership characteristics; structural variables and control systems” which all contribute to the effectiveness of small business units competing through differentiation and low cost strategies. Al-Ghamdi (2005) reveals the need for effective management support and provision of suitable systems for employees, fair and effective reward systems, alignment of the strategy to the systems and the structure of the organisation and the close and effective involvement of senior management in order to support the process of implementation. The scholars further suggest the need to improve strategy implementation by utilising the 4 ‘I’s: Identify, Inform, Involve and Incentivise. Likewise, Lihalo (2013) examined the barriers to strategy implementation by medium-sized companies in Kenya, and found out that these obstacles can be either internal or external within an organisation. Lihalo identifies three internal barriers: systemic, behavioural and cultural. The most significant barriers to strategy, according to Lihalo, come from internal sources. These barriers stem from within the organisation, such as the resistance to strategic change demonstrated by some personnel. When change is introduced within the organisation, these personnel would rather maintain the status quo than embrace the unknown changes.

One example of a systemic barrier is when the organisation indirectly does not support a strategy. Other systemic barriers are problems arising at the time of strategy implementation, such as not meeting the deadline, rigid and bureaucratic organisational structure and insufficient financial resources. Examples of behavioural barriers include the behavioural attitudes of personnel, such as vested interests, mistrust, narrow-mindedness, intolerance and formed opinions.

Finally, examples of cultural barriers are inappropriate systems, institutionalisation and control of the strategy, lack of leadership of senior managers and a lack of commitment to the process of strategy implementation.

De Hildebrandt (2009) carried out a study on barriers to strategy implementation and identified five challenges/barriers. The most common barriers are discussed below:

- Insufficient partner buy-in, which refers to the lack of commitment of partners. This happens during strategic planning when partners are removed from the process, leading to misinformed choices. Lack of involvement of some partners may lead to a lack of awareness of the grounds for the chosen strategy. In short, those partners who were earlier removed from the process during strategy formation may show indifference during the implementation process. The lack of commitment of these partners will hamper the implementation process due to:
 - Ineffective leadership, which may lead to failure because some leaders may show their lack of interest especially when carrying out the decisions as agreed upon in the plan. This could be compounded by other problems such as partners not holding the leaders accountable for driving the implementation to failure.
 - Weak or inappropriate strategy, which results in overly ambitious or impractical leaders or partners adopting a strategy which is not appropriate for the current position of the business unit or company.
 - Resistance to change, a problem, which usually occurs when changes are introduced in an organisation. To avoid this problem, the organisation should identify and train those people who will resist the change because of 'fear of the unknown'.

Canhada and Rese (2011) aggregated various empirical evidence of the main barriers to and facilitators of the implementation of different strategies in organisations in Brazil. Seven barriers to strategy were identified, summarised as follows:

- Lack of consensus. This refers to a lack of understanding and agreement due to a lack of transparency regarding the strategy.
- Lack of relationship between the strategic content and strategic process. Since the process and strategic content remain unrelated, this barrier keeps the target strategic position from being converted into targets and objectives.
- Lack of coherence between strategic planning and resource allocation. In this case, the organisation's strategic planning is not aligned with the availability of funds.
- Lack of strategic feedback. There is a lack of process indicators to obtain feedback on strategy.
- Relatively inflexible formal structure. Sometimes the protocol in an organisation is inflexible. This may be evidenced by the inability of the information technology to keep up with the changes in the organisational processes (Jacques, 2006).
- Lack of involvement of the organisation's management. According to Galas and Forte (2004), process failure rather than design failure is a barrier to implementation due to the lack of strategic management culture amongst companies' managers.
- The application of models that are ill-suited to organisational reality. One study revealed that "the methodology ought not to be generic, but specific to the organisation's context" (Macedo-Soares and Dos Santos, 2001).

The discussion above explains the key factors and their relationships that led to the development of the first conceptual framework as shown in Figure 3.4.

Figure 3.4 shows the identified factors and variables. The left-hand circle represents the middle managers, which are the main subject of the investigation. The next column consists of six boxes, which represent expectation, the roles according to position, the roles as practised, practices impeding strategy implementation and other context factors impeding strategy implementation. The box above the roles shows the expectations of middle managers and their agency-enabling conditions. These expectations are linked to the objective to explore middle managers' strategic agency-enabling conditions, that allow for the

fulfilment of their roles as perceived by themselves and their senior level management. The first four propositions of the research represent the perceptions of middle level managers and senior managers with regard to role expectations in terms of championing alternatives, P1; synthesising information, P2; facilitating adaptability, P3; and implementing deliberate strategy, P4. These propositions are linked to the middle managers' agency-enabling conditions which are shown in the right-hand column: narration of the expectation to implement strategy (P5), contextualisation of the top-down objectives to be implemented (P6), sufficient shifts in resource allocation (P7) and respect (P8), which refers to the commitment to implementation by the senior managers.

Below these, 'Roles in Practice' represents the practices that impede strategy implementation, which is linked to the objective to look at how to deal with barriers and challenges faced by middle managers within strategy implementation, and will shed light on the enabling conditions that facilitate their agency in implementation.

Under this is shown 'Context Factors Impeding Implementation'. This objective will focus on other factors, such as organisational structure and organisational culture, recognising that the environmental context may affect the strategy implementation of middle managers. All the aforementioned variables are then linked to the successful strategy implementation as represented by the circle in the far-right column of the conceptual framework.

Finally, this will lead to the creation of a new conceptual framework through exploratory qualitative research, to understand the roles and enabling conditions which affect middle managers in the area of strategy implementation. The first conceptual model is shown below.

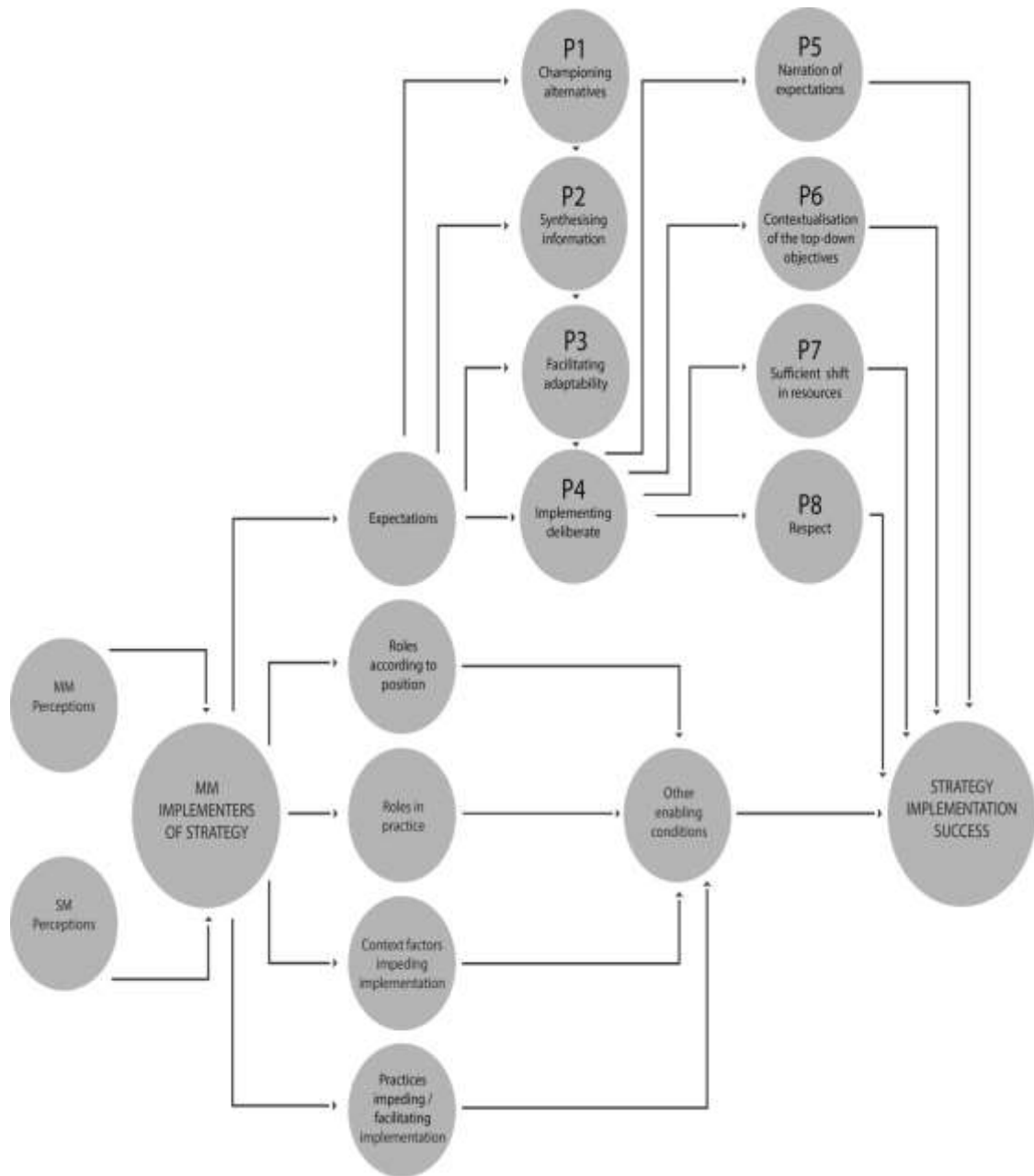


Figure 3.4: The First Conceptual Framework.

Developed by the researcher.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

This chapter covers the various details of the research plan, the steps taken to collect the data needed to answer the research questions, the design and development of the main research instrument, as well as the interview protocol and the coding and themes which were used or emerged to analyse and interpret the data collected.

4.1 Research Methodology

The methodology is the framework relating to the entire process of research. These methods are specific techniques of data collection and analysis to guide the researcher on data collection analysis so as to achieve the main objectives of the research (Blaikie, 2010; Creswell, 2003). The choice of the research methodology depends on understanding the philosophy behind the assumptions made by the researcher. According to Saunders *et al.* (2007), it is necessary to understand the philosophical aspect of the research, the nature of knowledge, the approach to be used, and the research method in an effort to answer and address the research questions. Holden and Lynch (2004) argue that choosing a research methodology necessitates the understanding and choosing of a philosophical solution. This idea is supported by Burrell and Morgan (1979), who state that developing a philosophical perspective involves making a few core assumptions related to the nature of society and nature of the science. One of the approaches in choosing a research philosophy is the sociological dimension, which views society's evolution as resulting from the current situation or from what can be rationally explained.

Subjectivism argues that happenings in the world are made up of the views or experiences and the resulting actions of people who are social actors. Saunders *et al.* (2007) suggest that subjectivism is socially constructed belief based on the continuous study of those happenings and the interpretations of individuals (Saunders *et al.*, 2007; Gasson, 2003).

This research adopts subjectivism as a response to the calls to contribute to micro-level research and to elaborate more deeply on the views of the

everyday practice of middle-level managers and how they are enabled to implement strategies to achieve organisational goals. Two identified gaps support this approach: first, strategy is seen as a proactive process, which poses challenges to strategy research and practice, meaning there is an identified need to explore what organisations actually do, compared with what the leadership intended; and second, there is a gap in micro-level investigation that deals with strategy as a social phenomenon coupled with how practitioners act and interact.

Interpretivism argues that social roles played by people as part of their behaviour are interpreted according to meanings assigned by the observer to those roles. In this research, interpretivism was adopted since middle managers have instrumental roles to play in the strategy of their organisations. As a result, their perceptions of these roles and the structural elements in an organisation affect their agency. Most of the studies of organisations have taken a macro-level approach in a positivist manner; this research, however, will take another direction in an attempt to offer another perspective on what transpires in organisations.

4.2 Methodology Design

This research has adopted an interpretive approach, which relies heavily on naturalistic methods, including semi-structured interviews, observations and the analysis of existing texts or documents. This research is guided by the ideas of Cavana *et al.* (2001), who shared the idea that interpretivists adopt the theoretical view that reality is socially constructed and fluid. Since this research adopts the interpretive approach, Phillips and Pugh's (2005) four elements of research, identified as: background theory, focal theory, data theory and contribution of the research, have been used. The specifics of the four elements are discussed below.

4.2.1 Background Theory

The first stage of research design is the background theory, undertaking a review of the literature on the theme of strategy and strategy-as-practice by middle management. It includes state-of-the-art developments, controversies and

breakthroughs. The review identified the current trends in research activity and defined areas of theoretical and empirical weakness to establish and identify the gaps. The literature affords the reader insight into the aspects that have already been established or concluded by other authors. In addition, the literature review serves as an overall framework where each variable fits into the 'big picture'. Thus, the review provides a baseline and links the current research to the published research as the frame of reference. In addition, the literature review explored the roles of middle managers in an effort to shed light on their wide variety. Furthermore, two issues were explored in this research: the actual link between strategic roles as practised and the role expectations of middle managers and their agency-enabling conditions. Likewise, the literature explored middle managers' strategic practices and highlighted the existing gaps in research that have yet to be explored.

This section also includes the conceptual framework development, which is referred to as a visual or written output, which clarifies the concepts, variables and their relationships. In this research, the key concepts of the research include middle managers as implementers of strategy, their roles, expectations, context factors affecting the implementation, and the practices that may impede or facilitate the strategy implementation.

4.2.2 Focal Theory

The next element of the research design is the 'focal theory'. A focal theory is commonly recognised as the adoption of an existing theory, which is usually well established in the chosen field. As an important part of the research, it provides a clear 'story line' of the research, as well as the presentation of the theoretical model or paradigm that forms the focal theory. By using the focal theory, the data derived from the sources is exposed, explored and analysed. In this section, the model was subjected to critical analysis.

4.2.3 Data Theory

The third element is the data theory. In this section, the justification for the relevance and validity of the materials used to support the investigation are

spelt out. In this research, the propositions were introduced as the means by which the data was collected and analysed to generate new insights into the phenomena in this research. To substantiate each proposition, the key themes were introduced for data collection and analysis. Data collection was made possible through semi-structured interviews, observation techniques and archival records. The findings of the research are utilised so as to allow valuable assessments concerning the investigation subject.

4.2.4 Contribution

In this research, the fourth element of the research highlights the significant contribution, meaning the evaluation of the importance of the research to the development of the discipline. This part underscores the significance of the research findings, data analysis, the limitations of the research materials and their weaknesses, so that suggestions and recommendations may be offered for further consideration.

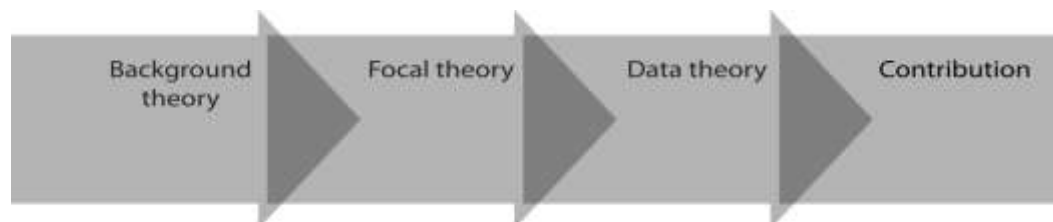


Figure 4.1 Design of the Research Methodology.

Adapted from Phillips and Pugh (2005).

4.2.5 Qualitative Approach

This research used the qualitative approach, which is grounded in the interpretative social sciences paradigm. This approach tends to be based on acknowledgment of the significance of the subjective stance as experienced by human beings (Blanche *et al.*, 2006). In this research, qualitative data was used, which was sourced through the completion of interviews (Boyce and Neale,

2006). In this qualitative approach, data were sourced from semi-structured interviews with two sets of respondents – senior and middle managers – in relation to the latter’s strategic practices, as well as from written views as they responded to the semi-structured interview guide.

Qualitative research methods cover numerous approaches, which rely on meaningful data analysis through the use of linguistic narratives (Polkinghorne, 2005; Patton, 2002). Five distinctive features of this method are highlighted: first, it emphasises understanding phenomena in their own right; second, it uses open, exploratory research questions; third, it uses unrestricted and emergent description options rather than predetermined variables; fourth, it uses special strategies centred on enhancing the credibility and reliability of the design and analyses. Finally, it leads to the discovery of something new, as opposed to confirming what was proposed.

4.2.6 Triangulation

In this research, triangulation of data was used by cross-validating the data sourced from each case study organisation.

This research triangulates data from the two sets of respondents: the senior managers and the middle managers who participated and provided data for the research, which in turn was supported by the literature review. The main purpose of this triangulation was to check and establish the validity of this research by adopting multiple perspectives (Paul, 1996). This means the findings are ‘true’ if they accurately reflect the situation and ‘certain’ if they are supported by the evidence (Guion *et al.*, 2011).

4.3 Data Collection Procedures

The data collection started from January 2014 and continued till June 2014. As shown in Figure 4.2, the first box depicts the interview protocol, which was described along the continuum as ‘semi-structured’. The interview guide was sourced from the literature review, which provides the basis of the first conceptual framework. Initially, this interview guide was presented to selected

experts. Following its revision, it was used to collect the necessary data from the respondents. The results led to the findings being used as the basis for the revision of the conceptual framework.

4.4 The Bahrain Context

Bahrain has a long history of trade; its geographic location in the middle of the Arabian Gulf has given it a unique position in the trade routes in Asia. The country has a highly skilled and educated workforce compared with its neighbours; the first schools for boys and girls were established in Bahrain. This skilled workforce has been instrumental in the economic development of Bahrain. It is a unique country as the majority of the early blue-collar workers in its manufacturing companies have also been Bahrainis, which, again, distinguishes Bahrain from its neighbours. The Bahrain economy has always pioneered diversification in comparison with neighbouring states, because of its limited hydrocarbon wealth. The economy will undergo changes in the future; the country relies on oil and its downstream industries and the financial sector as the major contributors to the economy. The aluminium industry has also been strong. The country is facing challenges and competition from its neighbours and the Asian countries as well, and hence there was a major drive by its Crown Prince and the deputy prime minister, his Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, to introduce a long-term plan for 2030 focusing on education reforms, labour market and public sector reforms, in order to offer a more competitive and fair economy for the country and its population.

4.4.1 Bahrain and its Industrial Market

The Bahrain Economic Yearbook 2013 mentions that Bahrain has long been a pioneer of economic diversification in the Gulf region. This country was the first regional economy to discover oil in 1932 and established its first oil refinery in 1936. Economic transformation occurred during the first decade of the 21st century in terms of economic diversification and rapid expansion across much of the non-oil economy. According to the report, social and personal services, construction, and transportation and communications were considered the three fastest growing sectors over the period. However, economic growth has

been driven, above all, by four main sectors: manufacturing, financial corporations, telecommunications and transport, and personal and social services. It should be noted that manufacturing and financial corporations are the two segments that have shown a consistent track record of high growth rates over the last decade.

The researcher conducted the field research in three large industrial manufacturing organisations in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The three organisations are headquartered in Bahrain and operate in the international market. They have grown considerably in recent years through their markets due to manufacturing line expansions. The organisations served as an appropriate setting for this research for several reasons. First, the organisations have been operating in Bahrain for the past three to four decades; they are stable industrial organisations with clear mandates and are strong financially. Second, these organisations are backed by their shareholders, which are either Gulf Cooperation Council governments or organisations who are majority-owned by these governments. Third, these organisations do have a high Bahrainisation ratio which means most of their front-line posts are occupied by Bahrainis, who have also been afforded the highest management posts.

They also enjoy a stable organisational structure, management structure and governance. In addition, they are exploring new opportunities through new technology and markets. Likewise, their strategic priorities are to diversify their product-market domains. The organisations' business units enjoy their own decision-making and budget responsibilities and they are encouraged to take an active role in their profession and society. All three organisations are taking environmental issues seriously but at different levels. The organisations from the outset have had clear strategies and priorities and have been transparent in their markets. They are systematic in terms of their strategy formation (formulation and implementation) practices.

The three organisations also face similar challenges in their operations. Increased competition for raw materials, energy supply and gas has meant that prices for these are increasing, and furthermore, because of Bahrain's geography

as an island, their logistics, shipping and distribution are also challenging as their sea shipping is expensive and there is only one causeway out of Bahrain linking it to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

4.4.2 Respondents of the Case Study

In this research, two sets of respondents were chosen: middle managers and senior managers. Consequently, samples were chosen from manufacturing organisations in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The participants were selected with the cooperation of human resources and administration departments of the manufacturing organisations in an effort to represent a cross-sample of senior managers and middle managers.

Table 4.1: Distribution of the Respondents According to Hierarchal Position.

Name of the Organisation	Senior Managers	Middle Managers	Total
BALEXCO	4	11	15
GARMCO	4	11	15
GPIC	4	11	15
Total	12	33	45

As can be seen from Table 4.1, three manufacturing organisations were selected to participate in the research: Bahrain Aluminium Extrusion Company (BALEXCO), Gulf Aluminium Rolling Mill Company B.S.C. (c) ('GARMCO') and Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company (GPIC). From each organisation, 15 participants were selected, including 4 senior managers, and 11 middle managers. There were 45 respondents in total, all of whom answered the qualitative questions via interview.

4.4.3 Ethical Approval

To ensure that this research complies with relevant regulatory and ethical standards, ethical approval was given by the university Research Ethics Committee before the actual data collection. The four key ethical rules considered were: Veracity or the truthfulness or absence of deception; privacy or the freedom from unwarranted

public intrusion; confidentiality or non-disclosure and fidelity or the accuracy in recording and reporting data.

The application for the ethical approval covered the following important factors: Consent and information for the participants; any physical or mental risks to the participants, and the mitigation of those risks; and any risks to the author or other researchers if any on the project, and their mitigation.

4.5 Data Preparation

The initial step in data preparation was to obtain data from the notes and tape recordings. The interviews which were recorded were first transcribed verbatim in the NVivo software. Subsequently, the notes were interwoven with the transcripts. During this stage of analysis, the whole data set was reviewed so that the researcher could gain insight into the whole picture of what was studied. This activity became the pre-analysis of the collected data. Then the data were subjected to initial editing by checking words which were redundant, repeated and trivial. These words or phrases were again coded and categorised into domains. From these categories, the meaning units evolved.

4.5.1 Output of Coding and Themes

This part discusses the output of the coding and themes. Coding is a process of organising and sorting the data collected from interviews, and serves as a way of labelling, compiling and organising them. It is generally understood, then, that 'coding is analysis' (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998). Moreover, codes are needed to summarise and synthesise the data collected.

The steps undertaken for coding the data were as follows: First, the textual data were sorted out in a systematic way. Then definite words, phrases and themes were assigned for each category. In this research, two codes were initially used, both pre-set and open. During the coding scheme, the 'start list' of the pre-set codes was used. Initially, the bases of these codes were derived from the literature review and the conceptual framework. In this research, words or phrases and numbers were used as codes. The last step in coding involves refining the codes. At this point, codes were added, collapsed, expanded and

revised. This happened because some codes did not work or otherwise did not merge well with other ideas from different codes. By refining the codes, the data were better organised so that the codes could be broken down into sub-codes to fit the data. The coding and the themes are presented in Table 4.2.

As presented in Table 4.2, below, the first column shows the code, the middle column gives the conceptual component and the last column depicts the propositions of the research. These codes were applied in the final interview guide after it was revised. The newly constructed interview guide included possible questions to be explored during the interview.

Table 4.2: Coding and Themes.

Code	Conceptual Framework Component	Proposition	Objectives
CSA	Championing Strategic Alternatives	P1	To gauge the perceptions of middle managers and senior managers of the roles of the middle managers in strategy implementation.
SI	Synthesising Information	P2	
IDS	Implementing Deliberate Strategy	P3	
FA	Facilitating Adaptability	P4	
NOF	Narration of Expectation	P5	To assess the role expectations and the agency-enabling conditions as perceived by both middle and senior managers on the middle managers' strategy implementation.
COTDO	Contextualisation of the top-down objectives	P6	
CI	Commitment to Implementation	P7	
RA	Resource Allocation	P8	

4.5.2 Qualitative Data Set

After organising and coding the data, the next step was to sort them into domains that led to the conceptual framework development (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). In this process, the meaning units were continuously filtered until all the data were sorted. While doing this, flexibility was exercised so as to derive meaningful data. This was done by critically auditing and testing out different possible frameworks.

4.5.3 Final Data Set

After sorting the data into the generation of categories, a taxonomy was drawn up that described and interpreted the whole phenomenon emerging from the gathered data. This was followed by abstracting the filtered data into categories. In this part, the rule of essential sufficiency was applied. This was done by simplifying the categories so as to communicate them clearly to the reader.

4.6 Qualitative Sampling Procedures

Some key features of qualitative samples that were used in the selection of samples in this research are discussed below:

First, purposive or theoretical sampling is used for drawing the samples of the research. Second, samples should generate sufficient information needed by the research based on their qualifications. Third, the sample selection is based on their qualification to answer the interview questions posed in the statement of the research questions and problems. Fourth, qualitative samples are designed to meet analytic generalisations. Based on these features, this research adopted the set of criteria proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994) for the selection of the samples, which includes six different attributes of sampling strategies. These six criteria are discussed below.

The first criterion is the relevance of the sampling strategy to the specific research questions and the conceptual framework of the research; second, the sample must generate meaningful data and rich information on the type of phenomena to be studied; third, the sample should contribute to the analytical ‘generalisability’ of the findings; fourth, the sample should produce plausible explanations or descriptions in the sense of being true to real life; fifth, ethical considerations should be taken into account and sixth, the plan should be feasible.

This research utilised purposive sampling techniques in the selection of respondents. This type of sampling procedure is based on familiarity with the research population and its relevance to the purpose of the study (Babbie, 2004).

In this research, senior management, who were chosen for sampling, were made up of senior executives of an organisation. Most of the responsibilities of senior management include planning, organising and setting the major objectives and goals of a company to be achieved in the near future. Their leadership role can extend over the entire organisation or for specific divisions such as marketing, finance, human resources, or operations. In this research, 12 senior managers were selected to participate as respondents of the research. The titles accorded to the senior management include Chief Operating Officer (COO), Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Chief Financial Officer (CFO), President (P), Vice President (VP), and General Managers (GM).

Since the subject of the investigation was about the roles of middle managers in strategy implementation, 33 middle managers were asked to participate. These levels of managers serve as the heads of major departments and/or their specialised units and report to the senior management. Included in their responsibilities are serving as a liaison between the senior managers and the rest of the organisation from a very unique standpoint.

4.7 Factors Considered in the Selection of the Case Study Organisations

The following sections describe the three factors considered in the selection of the case study organisations. These include the relevance of organisational structure, unit of analysis, and accessibility. In order to achieve this, the advice of Darke *et al.* (1988) was followed in the selection of the case study organisation.

4.7.1 Relevance of the Organisations

It is important for an organisation to be appropriately structured as it carries out its business. The structure is the arrangement by which various organisational activities are divided up and coordinated. By adopting the structure as a frame of reference, organisational members can complete actions that comply with the organisational strategy. These actions become the organisational culture, which is derived from the accepted patterns of behaviour. It could be said that the more effective the structure, the more effective the

working relations between the people and departments.

Three manufacturing organisations were selected for participation in the completion of the investigation. The manufacturing industry is one of the drivers of economic growth in Bahrain, together with financial corporations, telecommunications companies, transport and logistics, and service companies. Manufacturing and financial corporations are the two segments that have shown a consistent track record of high growth rate over the last decade (Bahrain Economic Year Book (2013)).

The relevance of what was to be studied was, in part, dependent upon the organisational structures of the selected manufacturing organisations. The bases for selecting the case study organisations were the size, related authorities, workflow, and the type of services inherent within them. Also included were the vision and mission of the organisation under investigation.

4.7.2 The Unit of Analysis

The participants needed to have suitable managerial and organisational support. Organisations which had a number of hierarchies and had been involved in strategic planning for decades were deemed suitable.

The selection of the unit of analysis served as the basis for the case study of the organisations. The unit of analysis considered was the senior and middle managers of the three manufacturing firms who were selected and interviewed to participate. The case selection was determined by the research questions, the propositions of the research and the conceptual framework, which underpinned the investigation.

4.7.3 Accessibility of the Case Study Organisations

Two relevant factors considered in the selection of the case study organisations were first, its accessibility, and second, the willingness of participants to take part in the research, with the support of both the executive and operational levels. To ensure the participation of selected respondents, a research protocol was used as a guide to collect the data required to be sourced

from the semi-structured interviews. Data in this research were sourced from primary and secondary data.

4.8 Primary Data

This research sourced the primary data from interviews and observations. Primary data refers to data collected for the specific research questions at hand (Saunders *et al.*, 2007). The interviews were conducted to elicit the necessary information about the topic from the senior managers and the middle managers of the selected manufacturing organisations as subjects of the investigation.

4.9 Secondary Data

This research also used secondary data to complement the current research with additional information and descriptions at the different stages of the research. Secondary data were those which have already been collected and published in written or electronic forms. These data were also collected from archival records and multiple other sources an examination of existing archival records was undertaken to corroborate the findings.

4.10 Experts' Opinion

The following steps were undertaken to elicit expert opinion. The first draft of the interview guide was constructed following a thorough literature review and with reference to the conceptual framework of the research. Next, the draft was presented to 10 academics from Ahlia University and the University of Bahrain, and 10 senior and middle managers in Bahrain whose long-standing experience in their own fields of endeavour gave credence to their qualifications to verify, analyse and offer recommendations for the revision of the interview guide. The experts' opinion survey was conducted in 2014 for six months prior to ethics approval being given for the data collection. The comments and suggestions given by these experts helped modify the interview guide to suit the objectives of the research and also helped in validating the research instrument (see Appendix G). Systematic development of the interview guide for data collection was undertaken in an effort to reduce errors. Well-crafted

conceptualisation of the interview guide is essential to minimise errors so that the research questions can be reliably answered by the respondents. This was the main reason why the proposed interview guide was modified after undertaking the experts' opinion survey before the actual interview. The following rubrics on Table 4.3 were used to validate the interview guide adapted from Simon and Goes (2011).

Table 4.3: Rubrics for the Interview Guide.

Adapted from Simon and Goes (2011)

Clarity
To ensure that the participants understand each question and that the questions are specific and relate directly, with no more than one question choice given
Negative Wording
No negative wording is used and affirmative language is used
Overlapping Responses
Ensure that any ambiguity is eliminated, that the response answers one question and that all possibilities are addressed
Balance
Neutral tone is used in asking questions to avoid leading the respondent
Use of Jargon and Use of Technical Language
Ensure clear terms are used and are well understood by the respondents and eliminate any jargon and clarify acronyms
Appropriateness of Responses Listed
Ensure that discussion allows an appropriate response that pertains to the specific situation or applies to all situations
Application to Praxis
Ensure that questions cover and are sufficient to answer the research problem and research questions, and that the responses pertain to the praxis and practices by the respondents

The interview was described along the continuum as ‘semi-structured’. This could provide depth of meaning as the respondents shared new insight and understanding of the roles, role expectations, agency-enabling conditions, and other context factors related to strategy implementation and barriers to implementation.

4.11 Interview Protocol

First, the interviewees were identified to establish whether or not they would be considered suitable for the objectives of the research and, accordingly, to determine if their qualifications suited the objectives of the research, as well as to find out vital background information about them. Next, a set of interview questions tailored to the interviewees was prepared. Subsequently, the date and time of interview were set. Finally, interview questions were sent ahead of the interview with a covering letter asking for any documents, data and resources that might be helpful during the interview.

First, short explanations of the purpose of the interview and background information to the research were provided to the interviewee. During the course of the interview, it was pointed out that research confidentiality would be upheld and the interview would be used for academic purposes only. Moreover, it was confirmed that transcripts of the interviews would be provided to the selected participants.

During the course of the activity, the participant was given flexibility to ask questions and raise concerns. Appreciation was given to the participant for his/her participation in the activity. Notes were taken during the interview to make it easier for the interviewer during the analysis phase of the research. A tape recorder was used to record the interview, which was set within a maximum of 90 minutes to keep both participants energised so as not to lose their concentration during interview.

The newly constructed interview guide included possible questions to be explored during the interview and an informed consent form was attached to the guide (see the final interview guide, Appendix E).

4.12 The Main Research

The main research followed after making the necessary corrections and amendments to the interview guide. The data collection phase of the research was implemented after validating the interview guide and the following steps were

undertaken during the main research:

4.12.1 Plan

First, the researcher prepared a list of the number of interviewees involved. Three organisations were chosen to participate in the research.

4.12.2 Data Collection

The interviews were arranged through the human resources departments of the respective organisations with the participants. During the course of the interview, a thorough explanation of the main purpose of the research was reiterated to the participants. Similarly, the reasons why the respondent was selected, and the main purpose of the interview were also explained again. Informed consent was given by the organisation's human resources departments, and the informed consent of each interviewee was also elicited before the interview took place. The interview of participants started on January 5, 2014 and ended by the end of June 2014.

4.12.3 Case Study Protocol

The interview protocol consisted of five sections, which contained questions tied to the research questions and the propositions. This case study protocol was the guide for the researcher during data collection in order to generate a theory. Table 4.4 presents the Case Study Protocol.

Table 4.4: Case Study Protocol.

Developed by the researcher.

No	Section	Aim	Themes/Coding
1	Profile of the respondents	To collect data about the respondents of the research.	General Information about the Respondents
2	This part is concerned with contextualising the research.	To know and understand the concepts and definitions of strategy and strategy implementation.	Definitions and Concepts of Strategy
3	This part explores the middle managers' strategic agency-enabling conditions that allow for the fulfilment of their roles as perceived by themselves and their senior management.	To gauge the perceptions of middle managers and senior managers of the roles of the middle managers in strategy implementation. (Propositions 1, 2 3, and 4)	Championing Strategic Alternatives (CSA) Synthesising Information (SI) Implementing Deliberate Strategy (IDS) Facilitating Adaptability (FA)
4	This part explores middle managers' strategic agency-enabling conditions that allow for the fulfilment of their roles as perceived by themselves in terms of narration of the expectation to implement strategy, contextualisation of the top-down objectives to be implemented, sufficient shifts in resource allocation and respect.	To assess the role expectations and the agency-enabling conditions as perceived by the middle managers and senior managers of the middle manager's strategy implementation (Propositions 5, 6, 7, and 8)	Narration of Expectation (NOF) Contextualisation of the top-down objectives (COTDO) Commitment to Implementation (CI) Resource Allocation (RA)
5	This part identifies the other related context factors for the middle managers and senior management that might affect strategy implementation	To discover other related context factors identified by the middle managers and upper level management that might affect strategy implementation.	Related Context Factors that Affect Strategy Implementation
6	This part identifies the barriers and challenges related to strategy implementation. Assessment will be done by the senior managers and middle managers.	To identify the barriers and challenges related to strategy implementation.	Barriers and Challenges Related to Strategy Implementation

4.12.4 Observations and Archival Records

In order to become familiar with the case study organisations, observation was carried out on various occasions in an effort to gain the trust and confidence of the manufacturing organisations involved. This personal immersion lasted 3–4 hours in each case study organisation. The researcher was able to familiarise herself with the case study organisations by blending in with employees and attending meetings with various middle managers and employees. This experience also offered the chance to obtain insights into the manufacturing organisation under investigation. To supplement the data from the semi-structured interviews, examinations of existing archival records were undertaken. The analysed data and observations were triangulated to strengthen the results.

4.12.5 Analysis of Data

The analysis of data began after conducting the interviews, when important and key data were collected and summarised. Subsequently, the summarised data were transcribed and reviewed. These processed data were then sorted and transcribed using the NVivo 10 software. The selection of this software helped the investigator to manage, shape and make sense of unstructured information. Moreover, it also helped in providing a workspace and tools to allow a simple work-through of the data gathered from the interviews. The software also helped in classifying, sorting and arranging information, which speeded up the research process and led to the development of meaningful, evidence-based conclusions (Qsrinternational.com, 2014).

Chapter 5: Analysis and Findings

5.1 Introduction

12 senior managers were selected to participate as respondents of the research, representing a cross sample of managers from Bahrain Aluminium Extrusion Company (BALEXCO), Gulf Aluminium Rolling Mill Company B.S.C. (c) ('GARMCO'), and Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company (GPIC). The majority of the selected respondents were the Chief Operating Officers, the President, or Vice President.

The first company chosen to participate in this research is GARMCO. Established in 1981, it is one of the largest downstream aluminium facilities; the company has fifteen subsidiaries and markets worldwide. The company relies on the Aluminium Bahrain company (ALBA) as a major source of its raw material and, due to the expansion of ALBA Potline 6, Garmco is investing USD50\$ million in expansion. This expansion is part of their restructuring strategy to increase their revenues, rationalise their portfolio, reduce costs, introduce process improvements and create jobs. Competition from China and declining aluminium prices in the international commodities market coupled with rising production costs has put pressure on the downstream companies, as their margins remain stagnant.

The next case study company is BALEXCO which started operations more than three decades ago and has marketing operations in Bahrain and worldwide. With its recent expansion and new line capacity, the company relies on ALBA for its raw materials. However, due to ALBA's expansion, the company saw its revenue sliding and, as a result, upgraded its factory and is also rethinking its strategy in order to improve returns and expand its activities. The company faces increasing competition coupled with low demand in the market and cheaper producing markets. When compared with other manufacturing companies in the market, GARMCO is faced with increasing gas and water prices. The current volatility in metal markets means that many aluminium smelters are closing down worldwide. This has caused the downstream industries to rethink new strategies to face new realities. At present, the company has some

issues with the availability and retention of high calibre human resources, so the company is investing in retention strategies and training.

The third company is the Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company (GPIC), which was established in 1979. The petrochemical company is a joint venture between the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain, Saudi Basic Industries Corporation (SABIC), Saudi Arabia and Petrochemical Industries Company (PIC). The company at the outset had only two plants that were commissioned in 1989. Subsequently, the company added new capacity to its plant and currently its production amounts to 1.46 million tonnes in its product line. The company also plans to expand its capacity in the future. GPIC has been a leader in safety and environmental consciousness in the region and as such it has been awarded many certificates for both its safety and environmental records. GPIC has a good record of safety in its production and is recognised for its environmental consciousness and achievement. The management approach at GPIC is to be one team, and the senior and executive management are very involved in every aspect of running the company; they also live their visions and company guiding principles with their employees. The company invests much time and effort in sharing its vision, mission and goals with all levels of employees and extends this to their families as well through many programmes and various responsible committees. The company culture and spirit is evident internally and externally. GPIC faces competition in the region but has so far managed to overcome its challenges, and the management seem confident about their prosperity in the future.

5.2 Case Study 1: The Bahrain Aluminium Extrusion Company (BALEXCO)

The Bahrain Aluminium Extrusion Company (BALEXCO) was established in 1977. The company is known for being the first aluminium extrusion plant in the Arabian Gulf. Currently BALEXCO boasts highly trained and qualified personnel, coupled with the most advanced state-of-the-art plant. Historically, the company has been in pursuit of high end products and operations in order to enhance its value for its customers. BALEXCO has increased its

capacity more than three times and expanded into markets in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Middle East, and West Asia. In terms of quality management, the company was accredited with the ISO certification due to its strict adherence to procedures, which pervades the quality management system in the company.

The organisational structure of BALEXCO is divisional in nature. This type of organisation divides the functional areas of the organisation into divisions. From the structure, it could be deduced that there are four divisions, namely, finance and administration, sales and marketing, technical services and the production plant. To function independently each division is equipped with its own resources. Every organisation needs a structure that fits the nature and maturity of the organisation. From the organisational chart, it could be inferred that BALEXCO subscribes to a divisional structure. As described, one of the known weaknesses of this structure is that competition may allow office politics and divisions to bring compartmentalisation that subsequently may also lead to incompatibilities.

Since the organisational structure of BALEXCO is divisional in nature, authority comes from the top and cascades down to front-line employees from executives occupying senior management positions, through managers that are responsible for departments. Like any other bureaucratic structure, BALEXCO's organisational structure shows that authority is generally at the apex of the organisation with information flowing from the top down. When a decision is needed, naturally it has to cascade through multiple layers of management. The chain of command is prominent in this type of structure; thus, decision-making authority has to pass through a larger number of layers. Banton, (2014) mentions that bureaucracy in hierarchical institutions relies on a strict chain of command and this type of structure is often referred to as 'red-tape'. Although specialisation can bring order to a large company, a small business could face substantial problems in efficiency and profitability. Thus, in this organisational structure, rules and standards must be obeyed, which consequently stifles creativity among members. Moreover, operational processes in bureaucratic structures are rigidly controlled by those who hold the power.

Table 5.1: Description of BALEXCO’s Organisational Structure.

Case	Level of Hierarchy	Description of Organisation
Bahrain Aluminum Extrusion Company (BALEXCO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divides the functional areas into divisions. • There are four divisions: finance and administration, sales & marketing, technical services and the production plant. 	A divisional organisational structure comprises numerous parallel teams focusing on a single product or service line. In each division, a leadership structure supports its major strategic objectives. In this structure, divisions are more autonomous, typically managing their own hiring, budgeting and advertising (Gillikin, 2014).

5.2.1 Results of Interviews with Senior Managers on Strategy and Strategy Implementation

When an interviewee was asked the question “What do you understand by the term strategy?” he replied, immediately “*It is a plan*”. According to him, it is a kind of plan we have to prepare, for example, for certain work where we need to prepare the steps of what are we going to do in order to complete that work. On the question of strategy implementation, the interviewee said, “*The strategy itself, sometimes we have to prepare it. For example, if we have unforeseen type of work that we did not expect to come in a certain project, so immediately we have to prepare our strategy for it on how we are going to do the action to solve that issue. To complete that next step for that.*” The key participant further elaborated, “*Involvement from the senior and the middle management is necessary. Senior management are the ones who formulate the strategies*”. In terms of strategy process participation, the interviewee said, “*There is no formal role. When strategy is approved, it is shared to the other members, senior management set the rules*”. Moreover, in terms of strategic practices, the key participant revealed that, “*Whatever available resources that we have, that is where we will focus to use in order for us to fulfil the requirement, so we can finish that particular hindrance to our work*”.

5.3 Summary of Interviews for BALEXCO

The following sections summarise the results of the interviews for our first case study organisation below.

5.3.1 *Perceptions of the Senior Managers on the Roles of Middle Managers in Strategy Implementation*

During the course of the interview, the first question asks “How do middle managers and upper management perceive the roles of middle managers in strategy implementation?” This part examines the roles of middle managers as perceived by the upper management and by themselves through their activities and practices in the strategy implementation. The first participant, a senior manager, gave his insight on strategy implementation: *“Since strategy is changing, it is action on the ground. It is a smart plan to outperform competitors. So in order to implement strategy, there is a need to break down into task.”*

On strategy participation, the interviewees’ responses are summarised as: *“Teams take the initiatives of developing plans for specific tasks. Teams are dedicated to check the development of specific strategies. These are checked regularly.”* *“The middle managers are mediators between the senior management and bottom or the rank and file. So the middle managers are link between the top and bottom of the organisation.”* *“We have designated persons who look into the system if they are working good. We have a management system administrator” (MR).*

In their handbook for middle managers, Arya and Green (2013) point out that middle managers have to manage the operations between the seniors and the front line. In other words, they (the middle managers) have to manage complexity through all the management issues required from them such as planning and budgeting, lead their teams and revert back to senior management. Likewise, it is a part of their job to manage change through aligning their employees through their leadership efforts.

Thus, the existing gap between the actual roles performed by middle managers could be pinpointed by the role ambiguity. This was observed by Dance (2011), who states that such ambiguity leads to uncertainty and confusion at executive level. Moreover, this ambiguity creates problems for many middle managers who become uncertain of their job's strategic tasks. Furthermore, the mix-up leads senior executives to put the blame on middle managers for holding back the organisation from achieving its full potential. Consequently, senior executives' dissatisfaction with middle managers' performance leads to their questioning the value of this position within the organisation. Role ambiguity, therefore, is cause for a great deal of concern and cost within organisations.

5.3.2 Perceptions of the Middle Managers of their Roles as Managers in Strategy Implementation

When asked about their perceptions of their roles as middle managers in strategy implementation, varying insights were given by the participants. One middle manager said: *“Middle managers must know all the issues that affect the management. Senior management must handle big issues. Middle management must sustain the day to day activities and handle issues.”* Another participant said: *“Involvement from the senior and the middle management is necessary. Senior management are the ones who formulate the strategies.”* Likewise, another middle manager said: *“Team work must be encouraged. Resource commitment is needed.”* Furthermore, another interviewee said: *“Middle management involvement is necessary in the execution of strategy.”* To support this, he further said that: *“Middle managers contribute to the competitive advantage of the company because they know the ins and outs of what is going on in day to day operations.”*

Considering the question ‘How do you participate in the strategy implementation?’ The participants' responses are summarised as the following. *“There is no formal role. When strategy is approved, it is shared to the other members. Senior management set the rules.”* *“There is a written communication.”* *“So whatever available resources that we have, that is where*

we will focus to use in order for us to fulfil the requirement, so we can finish that particular hindrance to our work.”

It should be noted that the literature suggests that the middle managers' roles as strategists have been doubted, due to the popular view of strategy as an executive manager top-down exercise (Whittington, 2006; Jarzabkowski *et al.*, 2007). This negative view was confirmed by one middle manager who said: *“There is no formal role. When strategy is approved, it is shared to the other members. Senior management set the rules.”*

The interviews from the middle management revealed that their participation in the strategy process is not limited to a mechanical role of an implementer of the strategies. To be effective, it was relayed by middle managers that *“there is a need to have an alignment of goals at different organisational levels”*. Extant literature, such as that of Balogun and Johnson (2004), points out that the reduced interaction between middle and senior management caused by the increased separation between the two levels hinders such alignment. Going back to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, it can be discerned that there exists a strong link between individuals, their tasks, activities, practices and the processes carried out at the organisational level.

Table 5.2 presents a summary of the interviews with senior and middle managers on the roles of the latter with regard to the strategy implementation of Case 1. As can be seen from the table, the interviews revealed no big difference in the perception of the senior managers and middle managers on the three themes: championing alternatives, synthesising, and implementing deliberate strategy. However, no information was given by the senior manager on the theme of ‘facilitating adaptability’ in which the direction is downward and divergent. This particular theme reflects flexible organisational arrangements. However, the views of middle managers showed otherwise, which could be attributed to the bureaucratic structures of the organisations under investigation. This was confirmed by one middle manager who said: *“Senior management set the rules.”*

Table 5.2: Summary of Interviews on the Perception of Senior Managers on the Roles of Middle Managers in Strategy Implementation—Case 1

Concept	Senior Managers	Middle Managers	Proposition
Championing Strategic Alternatives	P	P	P1
Synthesising Information	P	P	P2
Implementing Deliberate Strategy	P	P	P3
Facilitating Adaptability	O	NP	P4

Legend:

P-Practised

NP-Not Practised

O- No Answer

5.3.3 Perceptions of Senior Managers on Strategic Agency-enabling Conditions of Middle Managers in Strategy Implementation

This section answers the question ‘What are the strategic agency-enabling conditions of middle managers in strategy implementation as perceived by themselves and their upper level management?’ The results of the interviews are discussed below. The first participant said: “*They have to take control and take responsibility for their decision.*” The expectation to implement strategy is top-down in nature so middle managers expect that these strategies will be disseminated downward to one’s subordinates. Well-defined objectives provided by senior management may enable middle managers to focus on their work, thus supporting contextual decision-making. Another senior manager shared his insight on strategy-enabling conditions when he imparted that, “*We encourage them to give feedback or insights from their work experiences.*” His ideas were supported by another senior manager who said: “*There is a constant communication between the senior managers and the middle managers.*”

5.3.4 Perceptions of Middle Managers on Strategic Agency-enabling Conditions in Strategy Implementation

This section aims to assess the role expectations and the agency-enabling conditions as perceived by the middle managers themselves in strategy

implementation and explores middle managers' strategic agency-enabling conditions that allow for the fulfilment of those roles as they perceived them. A middle manager said that, "As a part of the team, I must know the span of my responsibility to take decisions". Another participant revealed that, "We are encouraged to participate in planning. Policies and procedures are in place so that we can refer to them from time to time". In addition, another participant said, "Communication is important between and amongst stakeholders".

Table 5.3 presents a summary of interviews of senior managers and middle level managers with respect to the middle managers' enabling agency in Case 1. As can be seen from the table, both the senior and middle managers revealed that the four indicators with regard to enabling agency in the aspects of narration of the expectation to implement strategy (P5), contextualisation of the top-down objectives to be implemented (P6), sufficient shifts in resource allocation (P7) and respect (P8), which involves further demonstration of senior management's commitment to implementation, were practised by the middle managers. Thus, the results of the interviews in Case 1 revealed no significant difference between the views of senior managers and middle level managers with respect to middle managers' enabling agency.

Table 5.3: Summary of Interviews of Senior Managers and Middle Managers with Respect to the Middle Managers' Enabled Agency – Case 1

Description	Senior Managers	Middle Managers	Proposition
Narration of expectation	P	P	P5
Contextualisation of the top-down, well-defined objectives	P	P	P6
Commitment to Implementation	P	P	P7
Resource Allocation	P	P	P8

Legend:

P-Practised

NP-Not Practised

O- No Answer

5.4 Case Study 2: Gulf Aluminium Rolling Mill Company B.S.C.(c) (GARMCO)

The next case involved in this research is the Gulf Aluminium Rolling Mill (GARMCO). This company started operating in 1981 to manufacture and market aluminium rolled coils and sheets. The aluminium company started as a joint venture amongst GCC countries. Forging unity among these countries, GARMCO has been developed to sell its products globally, through Bahrain or its network of international service centres and sales subsidiaries. The majority shareholders of GARMCO include the Bahrain Government and Saudi Basic Industries Corporation, Gulf Investment Corporation, Industrial Bank of Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, and Iraq. The CEO has shown significant support and commitment to strategic objectives which include cost reduction, efficiency and productivity, improved on-time delivery, products and services quality improvement to name a few. To keep at par with its competitors, GARMCO has undertaken many initiatives with the establishment of the GARMCO Excellence Centre (GEC). At present, GARMCO provides the major downstream aluminium facility in the Middle East where it produces over 165,000 MT and has strengthened its efforts to reduce costs, improve quality and better serve its valuable customers.

In terms of quality management, GARMCO is Bahrain's first manufacturing company with an international certificate in the area of Business Continuity, which helps protect GARMCO's image, brand, and reputation. GARMCO's organisational chart is represented by various departments. In this organisational structure jobs are grouped according to work functions, taking a bottom-up approach to structural design. There are five departments, namely, production, investment, marketing, technical and the human resource department. Then job specialisation follows, which involves determining how many activities each job position should shoulder. A tall or vertical structure emerges from the management hierarchy. This structure allows companies to achieve high levels of efficiency, which creates economies of scale. Moreover, it allows the company to standardise processes, products and services and to mass-produce. However, hampered by mechanisation and bureaucracy, departmental structures are too rigid to quickly respond to outside market forces. The structure stifles innovation

and creativity as well. Table 5.4 presents GARMCO's Description of the Organisation.

Table 5.4: Description of GARMCO’s Organisational Structure.

Case 2	Level of Hierarchy	Description of the Organisation
Gulf Aluminum Rolling Mill (GARMCO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are five departments, namely, production, investment, marketing, technical and the human resources department. • Jobs are grouped according to work functions, taking a bottom-up approach to structural design. 	Departmental organisation where jobs are grouped according to work functions. This type of structure takes a bottom-up approach to structural design. There is job specialisation determining the involvement and activities of each job position. It allows the company to standardise processes, products and services and to mass-produce. A tall or vertical structure emerges from the management hierarchy. This structure allows companies to achieve high levels of efficiency and creates economies of scale. Hampered by mechanisation and bureaucracy, departmental structures are too rigid to quickly respond to market forces. The structure stifles innovation and creativity as well.

5.4.1 Results of Interviews with Senior Managers on Strategy and Strategy Implementation

When a participant was asked about the concept of strategy in general, he said, “*We do strategies within four or five years*”.

In terms of strategy implementation, the interviewee said, “*We need strategy to keep up with competition like pricing and switching costs*”. Moreover, he said “*International markets are some issues to strategy implementation.*” When asked about the strategy process, he said that, “*the Board and the CEO create the strategies which means implementation comes from the executive managers.*” However, he continued that “*Middle managers must know all the issues that affect the management. Senior management must handle big issues. Middle management must sustain the day to day activities and handle issues*”. He continued that, included in the strategy process were executive meetings wherein

strategies are discussed with all branches, such as marketing, accounting, sales and other departments. Whatever the results, these are discussed in terms of how strategies are implemented. Middle managers are empowered to strategic ideas on how to execute and implement strategies. When asked if he had any influence on the creation of strategy or strategy process in his company, the participant said that teamwork should be encouraged and resource commitments are needed, so involvement from the senior and the middle management is necessary. However, he said that senior management are the ones who formulate the strategies.

On the question, 'What do you think of the working environment and the impact of strategy on it?' the participant said, "*We must be cost effective, so there is a need to have a full support from the senior management*". Thus, improvement and enhancement of operations and cost savings are the reasons why strategies are implemented. Accordingly, the participant further said that, "*to adapt to the new changes, especially when there are new comers to the industry, we do SWOT analyses*".

5.5 Summary of Interviews for GARMCO

5.5.1 Perceptions of the Senior Managers on the Roles of Middle Managers in Strategy Implementation

A participant said that "*Strategy is implementing the day to day activities. Improvement and enhancement of operation and cost saving are the reasons for implementing strategies.*" According to him, the middle managers are mediators between the senior management and bottom or the rank-and-file.

On strategy participation, the interviewees' responses are summarised as: "*The middle managers are mediators between the senior management and bottom or the rank-and-file. So the middle managers are the link between the top and bottom of the organisation.*"

5.5.2 Perceptions of the Middle Managers of their Roles as Managers in Strategy Implementation

When asked about their perceptions, as middle managers, of their roles as managers in strategy implementation, varying insights were given by the participants. According to one participant, *“Involvement from the senior and the middle management is necessary. Senior management are the ones who formulate the strategies”*.

Considering the question ‘How do you participate in the strategy implementation?’ the participants’ responses are summarised as: *“There is no formal role. When strategy is approved, it is shared to the other members. Senior management set the rules.”*

Various literature sources highlighted that the middle manager’s function as a strategist is underestimated by the main top-down perspective on strategy (Whittington, 2006; Jarzabkowski *et al.*, 2007). This negative view was confirmed by one middle manager, who said, *“There is no formal role. When strategy is approved, it is shared to the other members. Senior management set the rules”*.

Table 5.5 presents the summary of the interviews on the perceptions of senior and middle managers on the roles of middle managers in strategy implementation for Case 2. As Table 5.5 shows, the senior and middle managers perceived that three areas of strategy implementation— championing alternatives, synthesising, implementing deliberate strategy – were being practised in their organisations. However, there was a clash of ideas on the theme ‘facilitating adaptability’ in which the direction is downward and divergent. According to the senior managers, this particular theme reflects flexible organisational arrangements. However, the views of middle managers showed that this was not practised, which could be attributed to the bureaucratic structures of the organisations under investigation.

Table 5.5: Summary of Interviews on the Perception of Senior and Middle Managers of the Roles of Middle Managers in Strategy Implementation – Case 2

Descriptions	Senior Managers	Middle Managers	Proposition
Championing Strategic Alternatives	P	P	P1
Synthesising Information	P	P	P2
Implementing Deliberate Strategy	P	P	P3
Facilitating Adaptability	O	NP	P4

Legend:

P-Practised

NP-Not Practised

O- No Answer

5.5.3 Perceptions of Senior Managers on Strategic Agency-enabling Conditions of Middle Managers in Strategy Implementation

As revealed by one participant, “We expect middle managers to be adapted to the changing environment. The designated persons have to check and control how the system works. This is given to the management system administrator.” Another senior manager who supported the above idea said, “We expect them to share innovative ideas and solve particular problems at hand. Motivation and rewards are given to those who innovate new ideas in solving problems in the workplace”. Accordingly, senior managers must aim to recognise the factors that enable agency for middle managers functioning within the realm of particular role expectations.

5.5.4 Perceptions of Middle Managers on Strategic Agency-enabling Conditions in Strategy Implementation

When asked about the flexibility to devise their own strategy, the interviewees answered: “We are encouraged to participate in planning.” Moreover, another interviewee revealed, “I can give feedbacks to update the seniors of what is going on”. These dimensions of agency are reflective of what

really happens in the organisation, which mirrors the responses of participants, for example, *“Of course, I must be flexible to the changing environment”*. Likewise, another participant said, *“To prove myself, I have to innovate new ideas to solve particular problems”*.

Table 5.6 presents a summary of the interviews with senior and middle level managers with respect to the middle managers’ enabling agency in Case 2. The table reveals that both the senior and middle managers agree on the four indicators with regard to enabling agency in the aspects of narration of expectation to implement strategy (P5), contextualisation of the top-down objectives to be implemented (P6), sufficient shifts in resource allocation (P7) and respect (P8). Thus, it could be surmised that there was no significant difference between the views of senior managers and middle level managers with respect to middle managers’ enabling agency.

Table 5.6: Summary of Interviews with Senior Managers and Middle Managers with Respect to the Middle Managers’ Enabling Agency – Case 2

Description	Senior Managers	Middle Managers	Proposition
Narration of expectation	P	P	P5
Contextualisation of the top-down well-defined objectives	P	P	P6
Commitment to Implementation	P	P	P7
Resource Allocation	P	P	P8

Legend:

P-Practised

NP-Not Practised

O- No Answer

5.6 Case Study 3: Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company (GPIC)

The third case study organisation is the Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company (GPIC), which is a joint venture between the Kingdom of Bahrain, SABIC (Saudi Basic Industries Corporation) and PIC (Petrochemical Industries

Co.) for the production of ammonia, urea and methanol. GPIC was established in 1979 in Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain, where, over the years, production capacities have been improved, and plants have expanded and been supplied with additional facilities. Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company (BSC) manufactures fertilisers and petrochemicals and other products. The company also provides urea for uses including fertilisers, cattle feed, and urea formaldehydes. Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company (BSC) has strategic partnerships with other companies which include the Petrochemical Industries Company; National Oil and Gas Authority; Saudi Basic Industries Corporation; Kingdom of Bahrain EGovernment Portal; inJAz Bahrain; Supreme Council for Women; Bahrain Economic Development Board; National Safety Council; Bahrain Petroleum Company B.S.C.; Bahrain National Gas Company B.S.C.; United Nations Environment Programme; the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents; Bahrain Shura Council; Nebosh; and US-Bahrain Business Council.

The organisational structure of GPIC is divisional in nature. This type of organisation divides the functional areas of the organisation into divisions. From the structure, it could be deduced that there are nine divisions headed by various managers: finance, the manager of which also serves as corporate secretary, operations, maintenance, human resources, IT and knowledge, environment, public relations, marketing and technical. To function independently, each division is equipped with its own resources. The divisional structure is characterised by a great deal of flexibility for the overall organisation. In this type of structure, each division focuses on the most pressing issues and operates separately. So each division leaves the overall strategic management of the company to the people at the corporate headquarters. The specific issues and problems are decided upon in the division where the issues originate. However, a central authority is still maintained in the hierarchy. From the organisational chart of GPIC, it could be inferred that GPIC subscribes to a bureaucratic structure of organisation. Table 5.7 presents a description of GPIC's organisational structure and divisions.

Table 5.7: Description of GPIC Organisational Structure.

Case 3	Level of Hierarchy	Description of the Organisation
Gulf Petrochemical Industries Co. (GPIC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divides the functional areas into divisions. • There are 9 divisions headed by various managers: finance manager, who also serves as corporate secretary, operations manager, human resources manager, IT & knowledge manager, environment manager, public relations manager, marketing & technical manager. 	<p>The GPIC organisational structure is a divisional structure, which is split up into semi-autonomous units called divisions. Each division has control over its day-to-day operations. However, each division is still answerable to a central authority who is responsible for the overall strategy of the organisation and coordinates its implementation over the divisions.</p>

5.6.1 Results of Interviews with Senior Managers on Strategy and Strategy Implementation

When asked for his ideas about the strategy in general, a key participant revealed that, “*Strategy is changing. It is action on the ground*’. He further said that, “*it is a smart plan to outperform competitors. Resources are part of the strategy. Doing and carrying out the tasks broken down into steps and processes. Challenges are people elements and resources*”.

When asked about the strategy implementation, the key participant said that “*strategy is broken into tasks*”. He further shared that stakeholders could affect the course of action in strategy implementation, which means everyone must carry out the tasks assigned to him/her. The senior manager further underscored that, “*improvement and enhancement of operations and cost saving are the reasons why implement strategies to adapt to the new changes, especially when there are newcomers to the industry. We do SWOT analysis and tools to identify our strengths and weaknesses*”.

In terms of strategy process participation, the key participant said, “*Teams take the initiatives of developing plans for specific tasks. Since, sometimes, external environment does affect the strategy. We need to know what is*

happening. Teams are dedicated to check the development of specific strategies. These are checked regularly.”

5.7 Summary of Interviews for GPIC

5.7.1 Summary of Interviews on Senior Managers’ Perceptions of the Roles of Middle Managers in Strategy Implementation

A senior manager gave his insight on strategy implementation: *“Teams take the initiatives of developing plans for specific tasks. Teams are dedicated to check the development of specific strategies. These are checked regularly.”* Furthermore, another participant revealed that: *“The board and the CEO create the strategies. Implementation comes from the executive managers.”* He added *“we have designated persons who look into the system if they are working good. We have a management system administrator.”*

On strategy participation, the interviewees’ responses summarised it as: *“The middle managers are mediators between the senior management and bottom or the rank and file. So the middle managers are the link between the top and bottom of the organisation.”*

5.7.2 Perceptions of the Middle Managers of their Roles as Managers in Strategy Implementation

When asked about their perceptions of their roles as middle managers in strategy implementation, varying insights were given by the participants. One participant said that: *“Involvement from the senior and the middle management is necessary. Senior management are the ones who formulate the strategies”*. Another middle manager said: *“Teamwork must be encouraged. Resource commitment is needed.”* Another interviewee said: *“Middle management involvement is necessary in the execution of strategy.”*

Considering the question ‘How do you participate in the strategy implementation?’ The participants’ responses are summarised as: *“There is no formal role. When strategy is approved, it is shared to the other members. Senior management set the rules.”*

Table 5.8 presents a summary of the interviews on the perceptions of senior and middle managers on the roles of middle managers in strategy implementation in Case 3. As presented in Table 5.8, from the perspectives of both the senior and the middle managers, the three indicators on strategy implementation, which include championing alternatives, synthesising, and implementing deliberate strategy, were being practised in their organisations. Again, it could be noted that there was disagreement on the theme ‘facilitating adaptability’ in which the direction is downward and divergent. From the middle managers’ point of view, this dimension was not practised, which could be attributed to the bureaucratic structures of the organisations under investigation.

Table 5.8: Summary of Interviews on the Perception of Senior Managers of the Roles of Middle Managers in Strategy Implementation – Case 3

Description	Senior Managers	Middle Managers	Proposition
Championing Strategic Alternatives	P	P	P1
Synthesising Information	P	P	P2
Implementing deliberate strategy	P	P	P3
Facilitating Adaptability	O	NP	P4

Legend:

P-Practised

NP-Not Practised

O- No Answer

5.7.3 Perceptions of Senior Managers on Strategic Agency-enabling Conditions of Middle Managers in Strategy Implementation

This section answers the question ‘What are the strategic agency-enabling conditions of middle managers in strategy implementation as perceived by themselves and their upper level management?’ One senior manager shared his insight on strategy-enabling conditions when he imparted that “*The designated persons have to check and control how the system works. This is given to the management system administrator.*” Another senior manager supported these ideas, commenting that: “*Full support is given by means of allocating resources*

to implement top-down objectives. We expect them to share innovative ideas and solve particular problems at hand. Motivation and rewards are given to those who innovate new ideas in solving problems in the workplace.”

5.7.4 Perceptions of Middle Managers on Strategic Agency-enabling Conditions in Strategy Implementation

The summary results of the interviews are as follows. A middle manager said *“Communication is important between and amongst stakeholders. Full support must be given like financial, materials and machinery to implement the strategies”*.

When asked about the flexibility to devise their own strategy, the interviewees answered: *“I can give feedback to update the seniors of what is going on.”* In the same way, one middle manager said: *“Of course, I must be flexible to the changing environment.”* These dimensions of agency are reflective of what really happens in the organisation, which mirrors the responses of participants: *“To prove myself, I have to innovate new ideas to solve particular problems.”*

Table 5.9 presents a summary of the interviews with managers at the senior and middle management levels with respect to the middle managers’ enabled agency in Case 3. It was noted that managers at both the senior and middle levels agreed on four descriptions with regard to enabling agency, on the aspects of narration of the expectation to implement strategy (P5), contextualisation of those objectives to be implemented (P6), sufficient shifts in resource allocation (P7) and respect (P8), which takes into account the commitment of the management of the organisation at its most senior level to the implementation practised by the middle managers. Thus, it could be surmised that in Case 3, there was no significant difference between the views of both the senior and the middle managers with respect to the enabling agency of middle managers.

Table 5.9: Summary of Interviews of Senior Managers and Middle Managers on Middle Managers’ Strategic Agency-Enabling Conditions – Case 3

Description	Senior Managers	Middle Managers	Proposition
Contextualisation of the top-down, well-defined objectives	P	P	P5
Narration of expectation	P	P	P6
Commitment to Implementation	P	P	P7
Resource Allocation	P	P	P8

Legend:

P-Practised

NP-Not Practised

O- No Answer

Chapter 6: Discussion and the Revised Conceptual Framework

This research aimed to respond to the calls for a contribution to micro-level research on middle management by uncovering their enabling conditions, such as role expectations and practices, in an attempt to suggest alternative ways of exploring strategy.

As stated in Chapter 2, there is a pressing need to clarify the concept of a role and how it affects middle managers as they implement strategies. It is noteworthy for senior managers to recognise the causes that enable agency for middle managers to function within the realm of particular role expectations. Although the senior management are the ones given the authority to make strategic decisions, a receptiveness in how they respond to other actors in the organisation, specifically middle managers, is required of them. From the literature review, it was noted that there is role ambiguity in the middle management in an organisation. This role ambiguity causes middle managers to be confused in terms of what is required of them within the role. This confusion leads to executives blaming middle managers for holding back the organisation from attaining its objectives. Because of this vagueness about roles, problems often lead to uncertainty and confusion at an executive level (Dance, 2011).

The results of the cross-case analysis in Chapter 5, Table 5.7 showed that there was an identified gap between the roles relative to the position and the roles as performed by the middle managers in practice in terms of 'facilitating adaptability' (P3). Thus, it was concluded that there was a difference in perception between the senior managers and middle managers on the roles of the latter according to the position they hold versus actual roles enacted in practice. It is noteworthy that the two sets of respondents agreed on the three dimensions: championing strategic alternatives as the first, synthesising information as the second, and implementing deliberate strategy as the third, with the exception of the theme of facilitating adaptability. Reciprocal actions by senior management are needed in order to facilitate the agency of the middle managers. Middle managers were found to have a significant role as far as society is concerned.

The results of the empirical investigation were reflected in the cross-case analysis in Table 5.8, which showed that there was no significant difference between the perceptions of senior managers and middle level managers with respect to the middle managers' enabling agency in terms of: P5, narration of the expectation to implement strategy; P6, contextualisation of those objectives to be implemented which are characterised as coming from the top; P7, sufficient shifts in resource allocation; and P8, respect, which takes into account the commitment of management at senior level to implementation practices by middle managers. The three cases, when compared, revealed the same result: that the four dimensions cited were practised from the perspectives of both senior and middle managers, thus accepting all the propositions of the research.

The results of the empirical investigation revealed that senior managers and middle managers considered that teamwork, communication, commitment and trust do have a positive relationship with strategy implementation. The respondents pointed out that "*Teamwork purports to increase productivity and value in employee and it could easily work towards specific goals if empowered with teams who work with direct information.*" It was also said that "*Alignment between organisational culture and strategy sets the foundation for successful strategy implementation.*"

The results of the empirical research revealed that obstacles in strategy implementation were entrenched in deep-seated issues of leadership, teamwork and strategic direction in management. It was also found that the common organisational structure of the three manufacturing organisations under investigation was bureaucratic in nature, whereby authority flows from the top to the bottom of the hierarchy. Supporting literature reveals that this type of structure stifles creativity with its inflexible rigid rules and standards. Managers who are bound by rigid controls cannot easily adapt to differing conditions in the business arena. Moreover, it was also found that lack of shared understanding results in an 'implementation gap' because the senior management are the ones who conceive strategies without sharing the information with the lower levels.

A new conceptual framework was created through exploratory qualitative research that will facilitate understanding of the roles of middle managers in practice and the enabling conditions in the area of strategy implementation. The results became the basis for a new conceptual framework, which emerged from the investigation. This chapter revises the conceptual framework proposed in Chapter 3 and presents its modification as a result of the analysis of the investigation.

6.1 Cross-Case Analysis

This section discusses the cross-case analysis of interviews on senior and middle managers' perceptions of the roles of the latter in strategy implementation. Thus, this method may help reveal the common ground and some differences in each selected case study organisation. Adopting this method helps to delineate and identify several factors that may have contributed to the results of the cases. Moreover, the cross-case analysis provides explanations of the reasons why one case is different from or the same as others.

In Table 6.1, the data on cross-case analysis of interviews of senior and middle managers on the roles of the latter in strategy implementation and its enabling conditions is presented. This table was generated from the three cases from the summary of interviews of senior and middle managers from Bahrain Aluminium Extrusion Company (BALEXCO), Case 1; Gulf Aluminium Rolling Mill Company B.S.C. (c) (GARMCO), Case 2; and Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company (GPIC), Case 3.

The results of the interviews were triangulated with respect to how the middle managers and senior managers perceived the roles of the former in strategy implementation, so as to identify any existing gaps. Likewise, the findings also dealt with a comparison of the perspectives between middle managers and senior managers on the strategic agency-enabling conditions that allow for the fulfilment of those roles. As revealed in Table 6.1 it could be seen that, in Case 1, there was no difference between the perception of the senior managers and middle managers on strategy implementation on three themes: championing alternatives, synthesising, implementing deliberate strategy. To

reiterate, championing alternatives refers to the persistent and persuasive strategic options which are provided by the middle managers to senior management. The presented ideas are divergent and the direction of influence is upward. On the other hand, synthesising information refers to the interpretation and evaluation of information affecting senior management. From the cognitive perspective, the direction of the influence is upward and integrative. Furthermore, implementing deliberate strategy means that there is an alignment of action initiated by the organisation with that of the strategic intentions prevailing at the senior management level. There is downward and integrative influence from the cognitive perspective.

However, the result on the theme ‘facilitating adaptability,’ was ‘O’ since no information was given by the senior managers. However, the middle managers imparted that this dimension was not practised (NP) so “*Involvement from the senior and the middle management is necessary*”. Facilitating adaptability refers to flexible organisational arrangements. From the cognitive perspective, the influence and the promoted ideas are divergent which means there is a downward influence towards lower levels of the organisation. This finding supported the idea given by a middle manager who said: “*Senior management are the ones who formulate the strategies*” Thus, facilitating adaptability was ‘not practised’ (NP). Likewise, in Cases 2 and 3, the same perceptions were given by both sets of respondents on three themes: championing alternatives, synthesising, implementing deliberate strategy, which, according to the respondents, were practised (P) within their respective companies. The senior managers did not comment on the dimension ‘facilitating adaptability’, while the middle managers perceived that it was ‘not practised’ (NP). Likewise, this finding was supported by a senior manager who revealed that “*the board and the CEO create the strategies. Implementation comes from the executive managers.*” Furthermore, it was noted from the interviews that: “*Middle managers must know all the issues that affect the management, senior management must handle big issues. Middle management must sustain the day-to-day activities and handle issues.*”

Based on the interview from both the middle and top managers, it was noted that the problem of doing strategy is significant for both practitioners and

strategy theorists. This means managers at all levels of the firm desire better answers to issues relevant to their positions as practitioners of strategy. Thus, this research answers the baffling problem of a gap faced by academics between their theories of what strategy is and its actual practice. It could be inferred that middle managers communicate and share information with both the top and bottom of the organisation. As such they exercise the role of defender, synthesiser and implementer. These roles are evident in the response of another participant who said “*The middle managers are mediators between the senior management and bottom or the rank and file.*” The role of middle manager is significant and influences all levels. The role of the manager at the middle level creates a continuous assimilation of information stream, which is important and vital to strategy implementation (Rouleau, 2005). They also play a central role in bringing together or meshing relevant information that can come from the players in the organisation or the players beyond it.

It could be noted that the three companies in the research have hierarchical organisational structures, thus, the process of decision-making has to go through multi layers of approvals. This decision-making authority can stifle and discourage the creativity of the lower level employees. With such organisational structures, the lack of flexibility may deter managers from competing effectively in the changing business environment. The results of findings on roles of middle managers in strategy implementation from the perspective of the senior and the middle managers are presented in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1: Cross-case Analysis of Interviews on Perceptions of Senior and Middle Managers on the Roles of Middle Managers in Strategy Implementation.

Descriptions	Case 1		Case 2		Case 3		Proposition	Results
	SM	MM	SM	MM	SM	MM		
Championing Alternatives	P	P	P	P	P	P	P1	S
Synthesising Information	P	P	P	P	P	P	P2	S
Implementing Deliberate Strategy	P	P	P	P	P	P	P3	S
Facilitating Adaptability	O	NP	O	NP	O	NP	P4	NS

Legend

- SM-Senior Manager
- MM-Middle Manager
- P-Practised
- NP-Not Practised
- O- No Answer
- S-Supported
- NS-Not supported

As revealed on Table 6.1 it could be noted that there is a difference between the senior managers and the middle managers' perceptions of the roles of the latter, according to the position they hold versus actual roles enacted in practice. The two sets of respondents agreed on three dimensions: championing strategic alternatives, synthesising information, and implementing deliberate strategy, but not the fourth theme of facilitating adaptability.

In conclusion, this research carries on the practice perspective which concerned itself with the activity as the level of analysis, and the actions and interactions that comprise activity as the unit of analysis. This research has led to an understanding of those detailed actions and practices that constitute a strategy process, specifically in the manufacturing firms in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Although strategy involves change, this investigation focuses on how strategy is constructed rather than how the firms change.

Table 6.2: The Summary Results of Findings on Roles of Middle Managers in Implementation from the Perspective of Senior Managers and Middle Managers.

Roles of Middle Managers in Strategy Implementation	Propositions	Results
Championing Strategic Alternatives	P1	Supported
Synthesising Information	P2	Supported
Facilitating Adaptability	P3	Not Supported
Implementing Deliberate Strategy	P4	Supported

The cross-case analysis is presented in Table 6.2 which shows that there was an identified gap between the roles relative to the position and the roles in practice performed by the middle managers in terms of ‘facilitating adaptability’ (P3), thus, rejecting the proposition: ‘There is no significant difference between the perceptions of middle level managers and senior managers with respect to role expectations of middle managers in strategy implementation in terms of championing alternatives (P1), synthesising information (P2), facilitating adaptability (P3) and implementing deliberate strategy (P4)’.The conceptual results are represented in Figure 6.1 below.

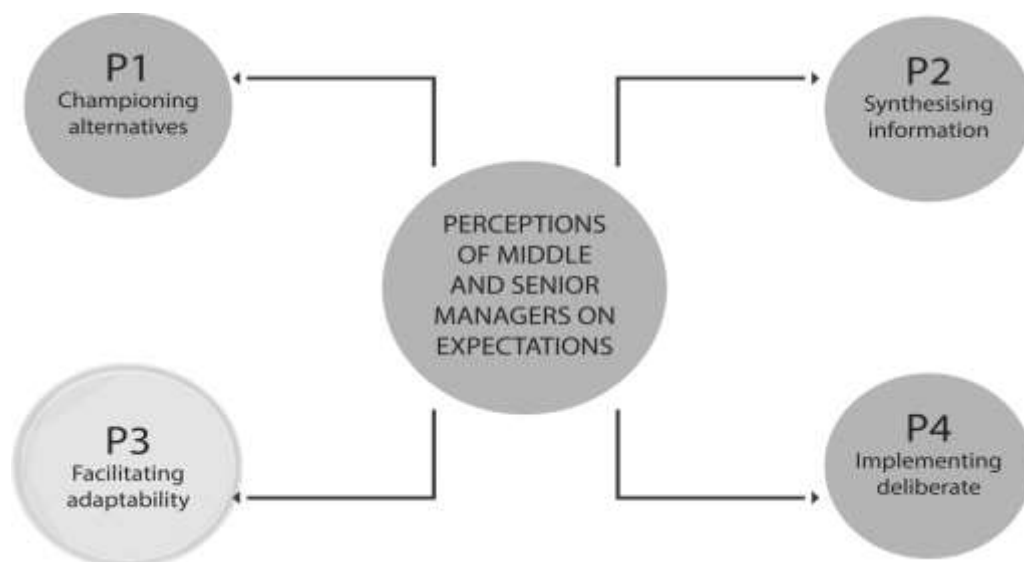


Figure 6.1: The Conceptual Results on the Perceptions of Roles of Middle Managers as Perceived by the Senior and Middle Managers.

6.2 Strategic Agency-enabling Conditions of Middle Managers in Strategy Implementation as Perceived by Senior and Middle Managers

The cross-case analysis of interviews on senior and middle managers' perceptions of strategic agency-enabling conditions in strategy implementation is shown in Table 6.3. This section explores middle managers' strategic agency-enabling conditions that allow for the fulfilment of those roles.

The cross-case analysis in Table 6.3 shows that there was no significant difference between the perceptions of senior managers and middle level managers with respect to the middle managers' enabling agency in terms of: P5, narration of the expectation to implement strategy; P6, contextualisation of the top-down objectives to be implemented; P7, sufficient shifts in resource allocation; and P8, respect, which involves senior management commitment to implementation. The three cases, when compared, revealed the same result: that the four dimensions cited were practised (P) from the perspectives of both senior and middle managers, thus accepting all the propositions.

The research adopts the four enabling conditions used by Mantere (2008) as a result of the implementation of role expectations as a structural element; narration, contextualisation of the top-down objectives to be implemented, sufficient shift in resource allocation, and respect, which indicates the portrayal of senior management commitment to implementation. First, the narration of the expectation is likely to have a positive influence on agency when one sees that the top objectives develop or build some sort of continuity in work. The results of the interviews revealed: "*We are encouraged to participate in planning. Policies and procedures are in place so that we can refer to them from time to time.*" A middle manager shared an important revelation when he said "*I must be adaptable to changes taking place in the work place.*"

According to Chia and Holt (2006), a well-defined set of objectives that stem from the top of the organisation provides a 'backbone' or a template for work activities. Strategy becomes a tool in everyday 'practical coping'. This idea relates to the second enabling condition, which is the contextualisation of the top-

down, well-defined objectives that give understanding and focus to the work of a middle manager in support of the decisions to be implemented. As one middle manager said: *“As a part of the team I must know the span of my responsibility to take decisions. I need to consult the senior manager when the need arises. Training plays an important role. Of course, motivation and benefits are of equal importance.”*

The third enabling condition refers to the sufficient shift in resource allocation that is vital in order for middle managers to have the necessary support for the implementation of the objectives. This resource allocation must be in coherence with top-down objectives, which reflect the senior management commitment to strategy. According to a participant: *“Full support must be given like financial, materials and machinery to implement the strategies. To prove myself, I have to innovate new ideas to solve particular problems. There are motivation and rewards specially for those who proved their worth in the department.”*

The fourth enabling condition is respect, which involves giving a clear message and example of the senior management commitment to implementation. As revealed by one middle manager: *“As a part of the team I must know the span of my responsibility to take decisions.”* Another participant said: *“Of course, I must be flexible to the changing environment”*. Likewise, another participant said: *“To prove myself, I have to innovate new ideas to solve particular problems.”*

When senior management show respect towards middle managers and their everyday problem-solving or ‘practical coping’, then implementation expectations may enable middle managers’ agency in strategic activities (Chia and Holt, 2006; Chia and MacKay, 2007). This mirrors the view of another participant who revealed that *“We are encouraged to participate in planning. Policies and procedures are in place so that we can refer to them from time to time.”*

It was noted from the literature that agents draw upon the existing organisational structure to invest their actions with power. Power is defined by

their position in the hierarchy. It could be said that senior managers have power because of their hierarchical positions (Whittington, 1992; Hardy, 1996). Likewise, “Agency is an exercise of power in that to be an agent is to be able to deploy a range of causal powers” (Giddens, 1984, p. 14). Thus, power, is well encompassed by the notion of practical-evaluative agency.

On the other hand, middle managers’ roles are important at all levels since they provide the link between the senior management and all the employees at the bottom of the hierarchy. As such, they are capable of the exchange of information between all the players in the organisation, whether at the top or the bottom of the hierarchy. They also act as defenders or protectors of implementation by supporting and advocating alternatives, supervising employees, and promoting and backing ideas to bring them to senior management attention as alternatives. In addition, they also act as synthesisers by linking and applying the information then synthesising it. Middle managers act as synthesisers and as facilitators, promoting the adaptation and continuous flow of information and participation. As one middle manager conveyed: *“I usually give my feedbacks on new strategies being implemented. I need the trust of my seniors so that I can work effectively with my team.”*

As facilitators, middle managers protect and promote adaptation activities. Finally, as implementers, middle managers also act as developers, who organise, motivate and adapt to new methods in executing strategic plans and make a place for themselves in the organisation. As one participant mentioned: *“Communication is important between and amongst stakeholders. Full support must be given like financial, materials and machinery to implement the strategies. To prove myself, I have to innovate new ideas to solve particular problems. There are motivation and rewards specially for those who proved their worth in the department.”*

Strategy is mediated by the language used by strategists with consequential effects on the practice of strategy (Hodgkinson and Wright, 2002), for instance those practices that create opportunities for and organise the interaction between practitioners in doing strategy, such as meetings and

workshops. These activities are clearly consequential for the practice of strategy. The focus of the investigation is to find the practices-in-use and examine their consequences for the strategy, the actors who use them, and the interactions that are conducted. As revealed by Whittington (2004), strategy work has transformed from a centralised work of professional planners to a work of middle managers and organisational peripheries, so there is a need to investigate micro-level activities and their influence on strategy work with emphasis on the practical issues and the role of different actors. This research is, thus, a response to this call, so that practitioners may increase their awareness of the power residing in dominant and prevailing discourses of strategic action and their potential to be reproduced in essentially stable and unquestioning ways.

The cross-case analysis of interviews on senior and middle managers' perceptions of strategic agency-enabling conditions in strategy implementation is presented in Table 6.3 below.

Table 6.3: Cross-Case Analysis of Interviews on Perceptions of Senior and Middle Managers on Strategic Agency-Enabling Conditions in Implementation.

Descriptions	Case 1		Case 2		Case 3		Proposition	Results
	SM	MM	SM	MM	SM	MM		
Narration of Expectation	P	P	P	P	P	P	P5	S
Contextualisation of the top-down well-defined objectives	P	P	P	P	P	P	P6	S
Commitment to Implementation	P	P	P	P	P	P	P7	S
Resource Allocation	P	P	P	P	P	P	P8	S

Legend:

- SM- Senior Manager
- MM-Middle Manager
- P-Practised
- NP-Not Practised
- O- No Answer
- S-Supported
- NS-Not supported

Table 6.4 presents the summary results of findings on the strategic agency-enabling conditions of middle managers in strategy implementation as perceived by senior and middle managers.

Table 6.4: Summary Results of Findings on Strategic Agency-Enabling Conditions of Middle Managers in Implementation as Perceived by Senior and Middle Managers.

Role Expectations	Proposition	Findings
Contextualisation of the Top-down Well Defined Objectives.	P5	Supported
Narration of Expectation.	P6	Supported
Resource Allocation.	P7	Supported
Commitment to Implementation.	P8	Supported

Based on the results of the research, it could be inferred that there was no significant difference between the perceptions of senior and middle level managers with respect to the middle managers' enabling agency in terms of: P5 – narration of the expectation to implement strategy; P6 – contextualisation of those objectives to be implemented characterised as coming from senior management; P7 – sufficient shifts in resource allocation – supports the managers with the necessary resources; and P8–respect, which takes into account the commitment of management at senior level to implementation practices by middle managers, thus accepting all the propositions of the research, and finalising the conceptual framework as shown in Figure 6.2.

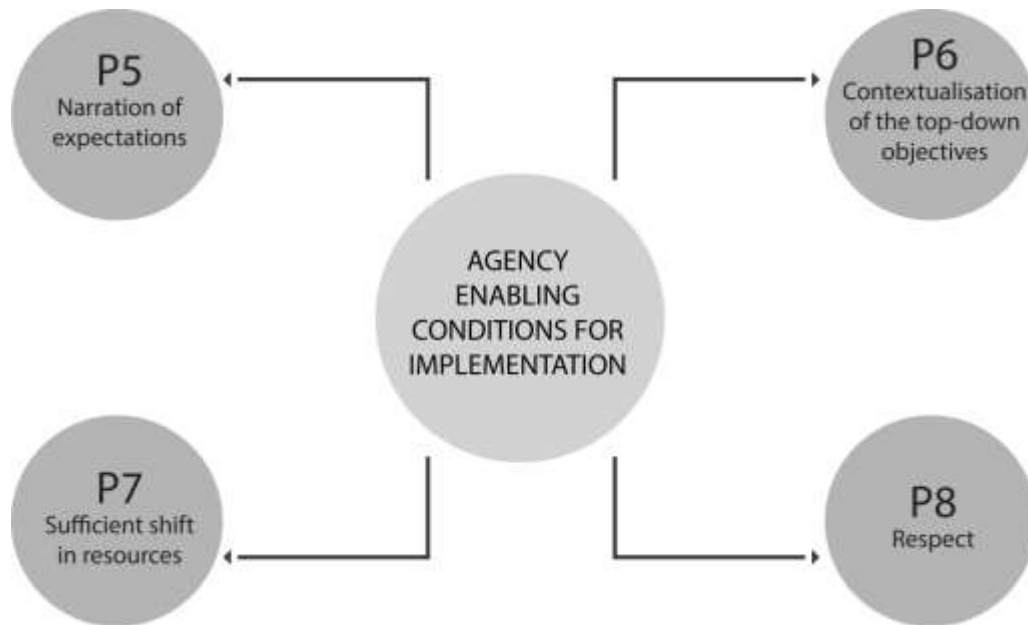


Figure 6.2: The Conceptual Results of the Middle Managers’ Agency Enabling Conditions.

6.3 Other Related Context Factors that May Affect Middle Managers’ Strategy Implementation

This part answers the question ‘What other related context factors may affect middle managers’ strategy implementation?’ One senior manager mentioned that *“There is a need to build rapport with people.”* He further said that *“Team work and social activities to remove the barriers.”* According to him, *“Shared values are important, and these things are something that we believe in.”* Another senior manager noted that *“Exposure and involvement of middle managers are important. There is a need to make people feel that you are there. Expose them to the learning environment.”* On the other hand, middle managers shared their views on the same question as summarised by one middle manager, who indicated that *“It is important for the people to work as a team.”* Another participant said *“There must be effective communication whereby everyone is informed of what is happening in the organisation.”* his was supported by another participant who confirmed that *“There must be participation from both the seniors and middle managers in strategy implementation.”*

Another view was given by an interviewee who said that “*Employee commitment and trust are needed for successful strategy implementation.*” This idea was supported by another middle manager who said that “*Both management and employees understand what is being implemented.*”

Table 6.5 presents a summary of interviews of both the senior and middle managers on their perceptions of related context factors that may affect middle managers’ strategy implementation.

Table 6.5: Summary of Interviews of Related Context Factors that Affect Middle Managers’ Implementation.

Senior Managers	Middle Managers	Themes
Build rapport with people. Teamwork and social activities to remove the barriers.	It is important for the people to work as a team	Teamwork
Shared values are important. Something that we believe in.	Training of the people who implement the strategies.	Organisational Culture
Exposure and involvement. Make people feel that you are there. Expose them to the learning environment.	There must be effective communication whereby everyone is informed of what is happening in the organisation.	Communication
Allow staff to participate, discuss ideas in the planning process. Managers must be trustworthy and must be experienced in their tasks. Be a team player.	Employees’ and managers’ commitment and trust are needed for successful strategy implementation	Commitment and Trust

6.3.1 Teamwork

The first dimension related context factor that may affect middle managers’ strategy implementation is teamwork. Teamwork is very important to improve productivity. An organisation can easily work towards its specific goals if it is empowered with teams who work with direct information. The empowerment of teams is connected to the organisation's business needs. By stabilising the team's direction, management focuses on developing employees and supporting the organisational goals. Related to this is that when an

organisation develops a strategy for implementation, it must ensure that everyone is involved in the process. This means the support of the upper-management and other stakeholders must take part in the strategy process. However, many organisations discover during team formation that many obstacles can arise in the organisation, such as lack of resources, or lack of commitment and support across the organisation. By nurturing this business climate of teamwork and involvement, executive and senior management in an organisation can create a culture of empowerment that can spread across the organisation and create a virtuous circle that is conducive to creativity and innovation and hence, it is claimed, the successful teamwork and empowerment leads to a more successful and profitable organisation.

6.3.2 Organisational Culture

Another identified contextual factor that may affect middle managers' strategy implementation is culture. Considered as a key element of managing organisational change and renewal, culture provides an identity for the organisation. Aanya (2014) emphasises that organisational culture sets the foundation for strategy. Alignment between culture and strategy is needed so as to develop and implement strategy successfully. It is therefore important that initiatives and goals are established in support of organisational culture. Furthermore, Aanya explains that organisations that remain flexible are more likely to embrace change and will foster cooperation amongst employees. The advantage related to flexible cultures is that it tends to affect strategy implementation in a positive manner.

Ahmadi *et al.* (2012) adopted the Cameron and Quinn (1999) model by measuring a typology of organisational culture with Competing Values Framework (CVF) categorised into four types, namely hierarchy, clan, market and adhocracy. The first among the four is hierarchy culture, which focuses on the internal efficiency of the organisation, cooperation among members and adherence to the prevailing characteristics of the firm. On the other hand clan culture (family culture), puts emphasis on flexibility rather than stability, which also focuses on internal issues. This type of culture features cooperation,

teamwork, and commitment to employees. However, the market culture focuses on external organisation affairs and is characterised by control orientation. Finally, adhocracy emphasises flexibility and change over resistance, and is directed to external organisation matters. Ahmadi *et al.* (2012) conclude that a strong social culture leads to a unified organisational culture whereby it maintains the implementation process, which in turn upholds the culture of the society.

6.3.3 Communication

The third related context factor that affects middle managers' strategy implementation as seen in the table is communication. Richard (2014) confirms that communication strategy is a way of ensuring that all employees feel they are involved in decisions that affect their daily activities. On the other hand Argenti and Forman (2002) are of the opinion that communication adds value to the business and is something that most practitioners see as essential. A communication environment, which is secretive, might stifle involvement, which will result in lost ideas and opportunities. Richard (2014) emphasises that there is a need for organisations to think about what employees need to know, and communication must be strategically focused on achieving measurable results. This means communicators must know how to use multiple channels to communicate with various audiences in the organisation.

6.3.4 Commitment/Trust

Another context factor, which may affect strategy implementation, is commitment or trust. Shared understanding or commitment is relevant to effective implementation (Rapert *et al.*, 1996). In support of this idea, Wooldridge and Floyd (1989) point out that shared understanding without commitment may negatively affect performance. Visible commitment from the executor is needed for effective strategy implementation (Permana *et al.*, 2013). This implies that by giving low commitment, unnecessary delays may result which can seriously compromise the quality of implementation. The negative effect of lack of commitment or trust is the failure to implement strategy. This usually happens when middle managers are not consulted during the development

phase (Heracleous, 2000). If middle and lower managers are not involved in detailing the implementation of strategy, significant obstacles to effective implementation may result because of low-level commitment.

The above findings bear significance to the ideas of Jarzabkowski *et al.* (2007) who noted that strategy-as-practice is an effort to ‘humanise’ research on management and organisations. Strategy-as-practice theorists aim to overcome the existing dualism between individualism and societism. This in line with the ideas of Whittington (2006) who mentioned that there is a need to have a better understanding of the different meanings of ‘practice’ which serves as a guide for activities within organisations and their potential influence on the whole society.

By adopting a practice approach, this research opens up the avenue to broaden the category of activities that are considered strategic, which include the things that people do in the organisation coupled with their activities that are important in reaching the strategic goals (Jarzabkowski *et al.*, 2007). These activities are those that are undertaken in order to reach strategic goals and directions, business survival, or to maintain the competitive advantage of the organisation. Thus, this research offers a new understanding of the *raison d’être* in relation to the activities, innovation and ingenuity in the practice of strategy and the practitioners themselves. Strategy-as-practice is mostly concerned with explaining the existing problems, the strategy practitioners and their identity as strategists, their activities, and the reasons and means behind them (Jarzabkowski *et al.* 2007). In addition, the authors emphasised that ‘the field of strategy does not require new knowledge *per se*’, but instead tries to use the existing body of knowledge to investigate new identified problems. Table 6.6 shows the results of findings on related context factors. As can be gleaned from Table 6.6, both sets of respondents agreed that teamwork, cultural communication, and commitment or trust have a positive relationship with strategy implementation.

Table 6.6: Results of Findings on Related Context Factors that Affect Middle Managers' Strategy Implementation.

Themes	Senior Managers	Middle Managers	Relationship to Implementation
Teamwork	A	A	PR
Culture	A	A	PR
Communication	A	A	PR
Commitment/Trust	A	A	PR

Legend:

A- Agree

D- Disagree

PR- Positive Relationship

NR- Negative Relationship

Thus, in general, it could be inferred that in the view of the senior managers and the middle managers, teamwork, cultural communication, and commitment or trust have a positive relationship with strategy implementation. The conceptual framework is modified as shown in Figure 6.3.

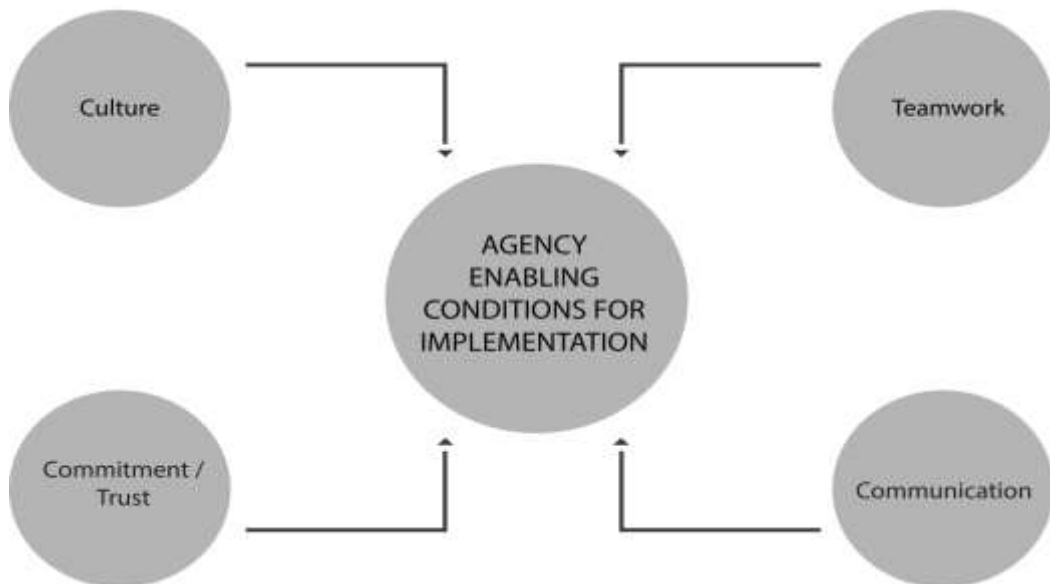


Figure 6.3: The Conceptual Framework of Context Factors that Affect Strategy Implementation.

The reviewed literature and conceptual framework identified the most common context factor that may affect strategy implementation as organisational culture. This is pointed out by Rose (2014) who states that strategy must be fully aligned with organisational culture in order to be able to operate more efficiently

in the global marketplace. Moreover, flexible cultures can be more supportive of the implementation process, according to Ahmadi *et al.* (2012) who state that contemporary organisations are more inclined to behave organically to meet market demands.

6.4 Barriers and Challenges to Strategy Implementation as Perceived by Upper Management and Middle Managers

This part aims to identify the barriers and challenges to strategy implementation. This objective will open up avenues on how to deal with the barriers and challenges met by middle managers within strategy implementation and will shed light on the enabling conditions that facilitate their agency in implementation. Both senior managers and middle level managers were asked to identify the barriers and challenges to strategy implementation. Questions were asked to open up avenues on how to deal with barriers and challenges faced by middle managers. Moreover, this part will shed light on the enabling conditions that facilitate their agency in the implementation of strategies. The views of the senior management on barriers related to strategy implementation are summarised as the following. When asked ‘What are the barriers to strategy implementation?’ One senior manager pointed out that “*Centralisation is the barrier.*” Another view was stated by another participant who said: “*Systematic change not implemented is a barrier.*” Another participant observed that “*...the longer the time for execution of plans the more the chances of failure of plans.*” A deeper context was relayed by another senior manager, who said “*Not understanding the culture of the people of the organisation is very important in strategy formulation*”. He emphasised the need to understand the culture of the people who make up the organisation.

In the same way, the same question was directed to the middle managers of the companies under investigation. The responses are summarised as the following. According to one participant, “*Inefficiency is an identified barrier which is not only a waste of valuable resources.*” Another middle manager pointed out that an identified barrier is “*not reviewing plans regularly results in ineffective strategic implementation.*” One participant revealed that “*lack of*

commitment from management in the planning processes could lead to ineffective implementation of strategy.” A surprising revelation was exposed by another participant who said that “The management imposed rigid rules and procedures which become barriers toward effective strategic plan.”

As shown in Table 6.7 the barriers and challenges to strategy implementation as perceived by senior managers and middle managers were identified as: the influence of culture that balances the external and internal strategic elements; managerial tactics and leadership style; bureaucratic organisational structures with numerous layers of management; lack of shared understanding labelled as the ‘implementation gap’; lack of commitment by the majority of employees including middle management; and the ineffective management of change or resistance to change as presented in Table 6.7.

Table 6.7: Barriers to Successful Strategy Implementation as perceived by Senior and Middle Managers.

Senior Management	Middle Management	Barriers
Not understanding the culture of the people of the organisation has negative effect on strategy formulation.		Cultural
Inadequate training and instructions to employees.	Lack of reward and motivation of employees.	Managerial Tactics / Leadership Styles
Centralisation is the barrier.	The management imposes rigid rules and procedures which become barriers toward effective strategic plans.	Bureaucratic Structures
The longer the time for execution of plans the more the chances of failure of plans.	Systematic change not implemented is a barrier	Implementation Gap
Ineffective teams.	Lack of commitment from management in the planning process	Lack of Commitment
Resistance to change.	Fears and ignorance are barriers.	Resistance to Change

It was noted that the three companies under investigation had bureaucratic organisational structures. As revealed in the literature, one disadvantage of this structure is that decision-making authority has to pass through a huge number of layers, which may discourage innovative ideas and flexibility among members. Because of delays in strategy implementation, creativity and innovation amongst the lower levels of management are stifled. Managers in this type of environment cannot easily adjust to changing conditions in the marketplace, thus becoming rigid in their rules and procedures. Another barrier to successful strategy implementation is a lack of shared understanding also known as an “implementation gap” and it is understood as the gap between strategies conceived by senior management and awareness of these strategies at lower levels. If there is no consensus among the actors of strategy implementation, then strategy is hopeless. There must be an agreement or consensus among senior, middle, and operating-level managers on the fundamental priorities of the organisation. This reflects the view of one participant who mentioned that “*there is a need to build rapport with people.*” He further commented that “*team work and social activities are needed to remove the barriers*”. According to him, “*shared values are important, and these things are something that we believe in.*” Another senior manager expressed the view that: “*Exposure and involvement of middle managers are important, so there is a need to make people feel that you are there. Expose them to the learning environment*”. A deeper context was relayed by another senior manager, who said, “*Not understanding the culture of the people of the organisation is very important in strategy formulation*”. He emphasised the need to understand the culture of the people who make up the organisation.

Thus, initiatives and goals must be established within an organisation to support and establish an organisational culture that embraces the organisation’s strategy over time. When culture is aligned with strategy implementation, an organisation is able to operate more efficiently in the global marketplace. In addition, the three most common problems related to strategy implementation are: insufficient capabilities of employees to perform their jobs; incompetently

trained lower-level employees; inadequate leadership and direction of employees. This reflects the view of an interviewee who said: *“Inefficiency is an identified barrier which is not only a waste of valuable resources.”* Another middle manager pointed out that an identified barrier is *“Not reviewing plans regularly results in ineffective strategic implementation.”*

Communication issues may be influenced by shared understanding but also by the way the organisation is structured. A surprising revelation was exposed by a participant who said that *“The management imposed rigid rules and procedures which become barriers toward effective strategic plan.”* Another participant revealed that *“Centralisation is the barrier.”* He said *“Fears and ignorance are barriers”*. He further revealed that ‘indifference’ is another barrier to strategy implementation.

This research also revealed that one of the obstacles to strategy implementation was failure in the management of change. One participant said *“Resistance to change”* is another barrier. Change can be difficult as many variables are interconnected and can affect its success, and change becomes a complex process. As one participant said *“employee commitment and trust are needed for successful strategy implementation.”* This could be linked to how the company motivates the employees. This reflects the sentiment of one middle manager who said: *“Lack of reward and motivation of employees becomes a barrier to strategy implementation.”* Thus, it is important for managers to have a deeper knowledge of the organisation’s operational activities at the individual level and at the same time be aware of the overall strategic direction in which the organisation is heading.

In summary, the obstacles identified for successful strategy implementation were: the influence of culture that balances the external and internal strategic elements; managerial tactics and leadership style; bureaucratic organisational structures with numerous layers of management; lack of shared understanding labelled as the ‘implementation gap’; lack of commitment by the majority of employees including middle management; and the ineffective management of change or resistance to change.

The aim of the practice agenda is to see strategy through the eyes of practitioners who can talk and share their experiences within the organisations. At this point, this research collected the data from practitioners – the top and middle managers - as social individuals who interact within social circumstances while doing strategy. Furthermore, the research digs deeper inside the flow of strategy in the manufacturing firms in order to understand how practitioners shape strategy as practice. In the same manner, this research examines and addresses the issues of strategy practitioners viewed from the perceptions of middle and top managers on how the former apply their skills in doing different aspects of the work of strategy. This domain might be considered one of the most pertinent to the strategy-as-practice agenda in terms of uncovering what strategists do. The summary of barriers is shown in Table 6.8.

Table 6.8: Summary of Barriers as Perceived by the Senior Managers and Middle Managers and their Relationship to Strategy Implementation.

Barriers	Senior Managers	Middle Managers	Relationship to Strategy Implementation
Cultural Barrier	A	A	NR
Managerial Tactics / Leadership Styles	A	A	NR
Bureaucratic Structures	A	A	NR
Implementation Gap	A	A	NR
Lack of Commitment	A	A	NR
Resistance to Change	A	A	NR

Legend:

A- Agree

D- Disagree

PR- Positive Relationship

NR- Negative Relationship

Representations of the findings are depicted in the conceptual results in Figure 6.4 below.



Figure 6.4: Conceptual Results of the Identified Barriers Affecting Strategy Implementation.

6.7 Summary of Findings

First, the results of the findings revealed that there was no significant difference between the perceptions of the senior managers and middle managers on strategy implementation on the three themes of: championing alternatives (P1), synthesising (P2), and implementing deliberate strategy (P4). However, the result on the theme ‘facilitating adaptability’ (P3) showed significant difference, which implied that there was an identified gap between the roles relative to the position and the roles as they are performed in practice by the middle managers. Thus, with regard to proposition (P3), there is no significant difference between the perceptions of senior managers and middle managers regarding the actual roles of middle managers in strategy, meaning this proposition is not agreed on by both levels of management, and middle managers’ role expectation to facilitate the adaptability in the organisation is rejected according to the results of the interviews.

Second, it could be inferred that there is no significant difference between the perceptions of senior and middle level managers with respect to the enabling agency of the latter in terms of narration of the expectation to implement strategy (P5), contextualisation of the top-down objectives to be implemented (P6), sufficient shifts in resource allocation (P7) and respect (P8), thus accepting these propositions of the research.

Third, it could be inferred that both senior managers and middle managers considered that teamwork, organisational culture, communication, and commitment or trust have a positive relationship with strategy implementation. The rationale is discussed as follows:

- a. Teamwork purports to increase productivity and value in employees and it is easy for an organisation to work towards specific goals if empowered with teams who work with direct information.
- b. Alignment between organisational culture and strategy sets the foundation for successful strategy implementation.
- c. Communication functions when aligned with strategic decisions in an organisation may lead to employees' involvement in decisions that affect their daily activities.
- d. Successful strategy implementation is a by-product of employee commitment and involvement. Inversely, low commitment to the intended strategy can be a major impediment to its effective implementation.

Fourth, the obstacles to successful strategy implementation were identified as follows:

- a. The research revealed that obstacles to strategy implementation are grounded in basic management aspects of leadership, working in teams and planning or setting strategy for the future.
- b. The common organisational structures are bureaucratic, therefore, authority is generally concentrated at the top, and information generally flows from the top down. It was noted from the literature that this structure encourages a company culture focused on rigid rules

and standards. Managers who are bound by rigid controls cannot easily adapt to varying conditions in the marketplace, industry or legal environment.

- c. Lack of shared understanding results in an ‘implementation gap’, described as strategies conceived by senior management of which there is a lack of awareness at lower levels.
- d. In terms of culture, Bahrain’s cultural dimension scores highly on Power Distance and Uncertainty Avoidance (Elzéar Executive Search, 2014, citing Hofstede, 2001).The amalgamation of these two dimensions results in a circumstance in which leaders practically possess eventual power and authority.
- e. Finally, another identified obstacle to strategy implementation was the ineffective management of change. Resistance to change from those who execute strategy will hinder its implementation.

The revised conceptual framework emanates from the findings of the research and was supported by the reviewed literature. It is notable that the critical reviews revealed that a strategy-as-practice lens and approach is the most relevant and appropriate method for studying middle managers’ roles in organisations. The revision of the conceptual framework was the outcome of key modifications based on the empirical evidence found in the investigation. From the key propositions offered, three out of four were confirmed from the roles relative to the position and the roles in practice performed by the middle managers. The proposition in terms of ‘facilitating adaptability’ was rejected. Thus, it could be inferred that there was an identifiable gap between the roles relative to the position and the roles performed in practice by the middle managers.

On the other hand, it was found that there was no significant difference between the perceptions of middle level managers and senior managers with respect to the role expectations of middle managers in strategy implementation. Thus, all four propositions in this aspect were accepted.

This qualitative research was conducted from a near-experience perspective that sees human action as meaningful and historically contingent. Since the subjects of the investigation were middle managers from organisations in the Kingdom of Bahrain, the participants were commonly located within a particular linguistic, historical, and values standpoint. These are the reasons why the first conceptual framework was revised. The final conceptual framework is shown on page 154.

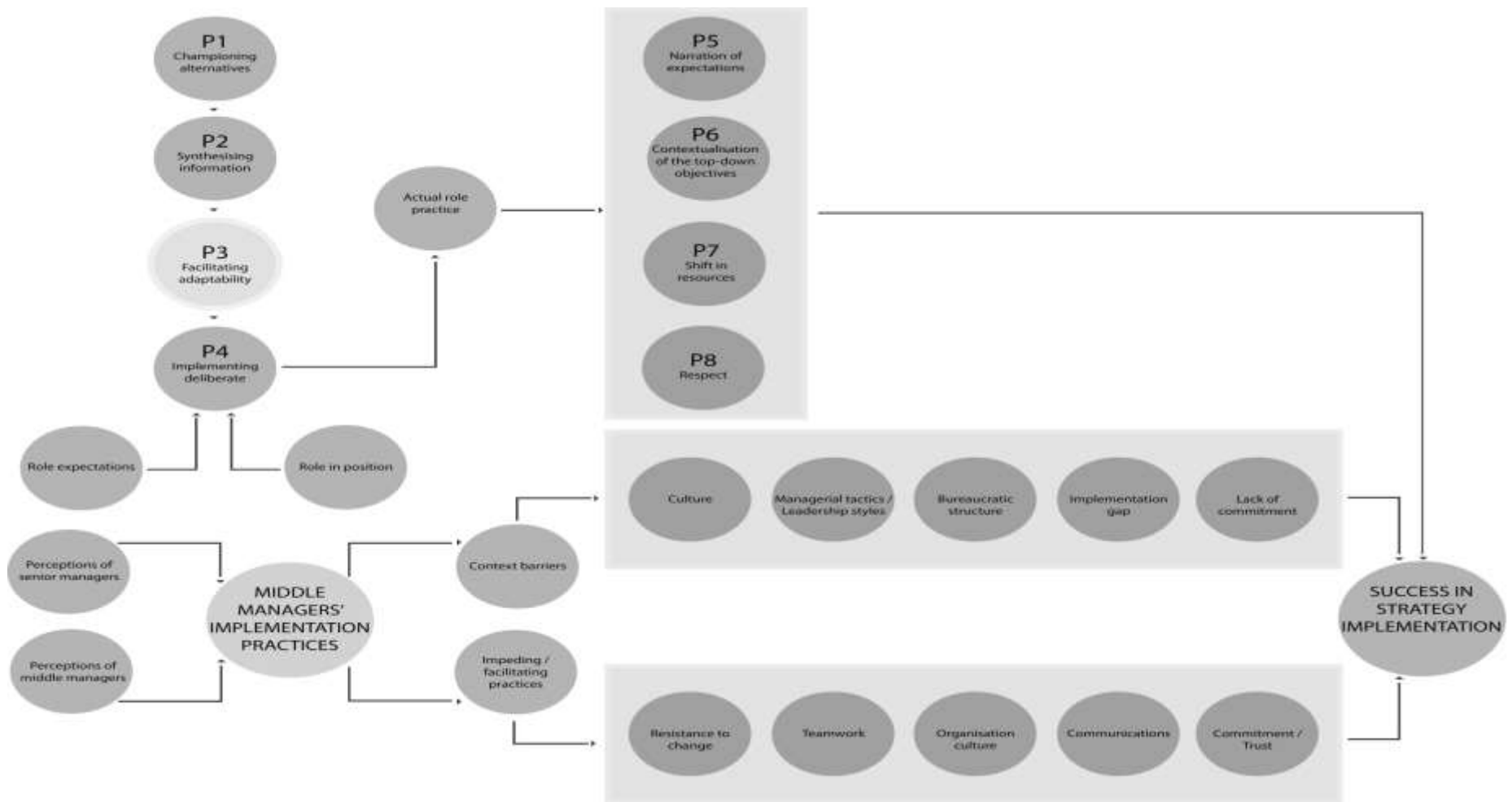


Figure 6.5: The Final Conceptual Framework

Chapter 7: Conclusion

In this chapter, the summary, limitations and possible future research are discussed. Relevant factors of the research offer information with respect to middle managers' roles, strategic agency-enabling conditions, other related context elements and barriers and challenges to strategy implementation.

7.1 Summary of the Research

The current research serves to investigate the views on strategy-as-practice to complement contemporary strategic management (Jarzabkowski and Whittington, 2008). In addition, this research explored the area of middle managers' strategy to bridge the gap between the theory and practical relevance in the practice of strategising. By using the strategy-as-practice lens, this research looked into middle managers' roles in organisations and, thus, a new conceptual framework emerged which emanated from the findings of the research and was supported by the extant literature. The critical review of literature has contextualised the roles of middle managers as practised which may provide baseline information about the current theme that may be of help to future researchers in other academic settings. Since one of the objectives of the research was to explore the roles of middle managers in strategy, this research has established a more concrete link between the variables, namely the roles of middle managers, their role expectations, their strategic agency-enabling conditions, and other related context factors and barriers that affect strategy implementation.

The research has uncovered the existence of a gap between the roles relative to the position and the roles actually performed in practice by the middle managers, which was identified in the theme 'facilitating adaptability', thus rejecting the proposition. This sheds light on the aim to identify any existing gaps between the roles of middle managers based on their own perceptions and the perception of these roles held by senior level managers.

The results of the empirical research confirmed and offered an understanding that upper and middle level managers shared a mutual view with respect to the enabling agencies; narration of the expectation to implement strategy; contextualisation of the top-down objectives; sufficient shifts in resource allocation; and respect. This is linked to the objective of exploring the middle managers' strategic agency-enabling conditions that allow for the fulfilment of their roles as perceived by themselves and their senior level management.

In addition, the empirical evidence showed that a positive relationship exists between teamwork, cultural communication, and commitment or trust, and strategy implementation. As revealed, teamwork increases productivity and value in employees; organisational culture and strategy, when aligned together, set the foundation for successful strategy implementation; communication ensures that all employees increase their involvement in organisational activities, and commitment and involvement promote successful strategy implementation. These results are linked to the objective, which is directed towards discovering any other associated context factors that may affect middle managers' strategy implementation results

The results of the research provide a deeper insight into how strategy implementation may be impeded by obstacles such as management issues of leadership, teamwork and strategic direction; bureaucratic organisational structure which leads to rigid rules and standards in a company culture; lack of shared understanding which might result in an 'implementation gap'; the national dimensions of culture described as high 'Power Distance and Uncertainty Avoidance,' which collectively create a situation where executives and senior managers have ultimate power and authority; and lastly, a resistance to change in those who execute strategy. These findings shed light on the barriers against, and the challenges facing strategy implementation.

Furthermore, a new conceptual framework emerged from the exploratory qualitative research, which confirms and opens up new avenues in understanding

the roles of middle managers in practice in the area of strategy implementation. The development of a new conceptual framework facilitates understanding of the roles of middle managers in practice and the enabling conditions of their agency in the area of strategy implementation.

The results of the interviews have provided in-depth information about the perceived roles of middle managers in strategy implementation from the perspectives of both the senior and middle managers. In this research, the first four propositions were advanced to discern the perceptions of senior managers and middle managers on four themes: championing alternatives (P1), synthesising (P2), facilitating adaptability (P3) and implementing deliberate strategy (P4). It was found that there were no significant differences in the perceptions of the two groups of respondents on the variables except 'facilitating adaptability'. Thus, it could be inferred that there was an identified gap between the roles relative to the position and the roles in practice performed by the middle managers – known as 'role ambiguity'. This ambiguity often leads to uncertainty and confusion at executive level, and creates problems for many middle managers who become uncertain of their jobs' strategic tasks.

Four propositions explored the views of the two sets of respondents on middle managers' strategic agency-enabling conditions. The four propositions were accepted with respect to the enabling agency of the middle managers in terms of: narration of the expectation to implement strategy (P5), contextualisation of the top-down objectives to be implemented (P6), sufficient shifts in resource allocation (P7) and respect (P8).

It was noted that the three companies under investigation had hierarchical organisational structures with numerous layers of management. A tall structure encourages a company culture focused on rigid rules and standards. Since they are bound by rigid controls, managers cannot easily adapt to varying conditions in the marketplace, industry or legal environment.

The results of the interviews revealed that the most common context factor that may affect strategy implementation is organisational culture. Other authors support the claim that there is a significant correlation between strategic accents amongst culture and implementation of the strategy (Ahmadi *et al.*, 2012; Lund, 2003; Mehta and Krishnan, 2004).

In summary, the obstacles to successful strategy implementation were identified as: the influence of culture that balances the external and internal strategic elements; managerial tactics and leadership style; bureaucratic organisational structures with numerous layers of management; lack of shared understanding labelled as the ‘implementation gap’; lack of commitment by the majority of employees including middle management; and the ineffective management of change or resistance to change. This research offers additional insight as it uses a strategy-as-practice lens. The research has leveraged a real-world scenario in the corporate world, with its aim of enhancing the understanding of strategic issues in management from the point of view of senior and middle managers. The following are the gaps filled by the research:

First, strategy is a relatively perplexing subject and connotes varied meanings to different people, so there is the need to draw together their diverse experiences in an effort to grasp its meaning in its entirety. The majority of the research on strategy focuses on what senior management does, consisting of the important actions necessary to realise its direction. In strategy implementation, middle managers’ roles can be crucial to the implementation success; however, these roles are not universally agreed upon or well understood, as the literature suggests overlapping roles (Rouleau, 2005; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997). It is therefore necessary to explore how middle managers’ strategic practices are affected by various factors and accordingly, to highlight the existing gaps in research that have not yet been explored, specifically in a particular sector (manufacturing organisations) and in a particular country/culture (Bahrain), a region of the world that has been the focus of little research in this field.

The research has explored the practices of middle managers by proposing alternative ways of exploring strategy. It can be noted that one of the identified gaps in the literature was that the ‘majority of the research in strategy focuses on what senior management does - and which comprises significant actions and decisions by senior managers that are essential to realise its directions.’ It is therefore important to address the identified research gap by investigating the strategy of middle managers at the micro level rather than the societal macro level.

Second, it was observed that strategy research was directed by, and usually recognised as the responsibility of senior management. The dearth of research on middle managers needs to be addressed, specifically in the Middle East, of which the Kingdom of Bahrain is a part. It is within this context that the current research aims to establish the roles of middle level managers in strategy-as-practice from the point of view of two levels of management, the middle-level and senior-level managers. Within this perspective, there is an identified need to explore what organisations actually do as opposed to what the leadership intended. Strategy is a complex subject which has driven many scholars and advocates to look for an emergent approach to it (Archer and Otley, 1991; Roslender and Hart, 2003; Tuomela, 2005).

The challenges posed by strategy research and practice were addressed by this research. Viewed from a wider perspective, the research looked into the perceived strategy implementation by senior and middle managers. These challenges were identified as procedural, with existing structures that could restrain implementation, or structures imposing situations where the hierarchy and its processes are not supportive of the implementation process, or at least might complicate it to its detriment. By timely identification of the barriers to strategy implementation, implementation challenges may be mitigated (Kajanto *et al.*, 2004).

Third, research attempts were directed in order to address the identified gaps through what is known as micro-investigation of strategy as a social

phenomenon, meaning a sociological approach to strategy as well as humanising strategy through the investigation of how the middle managers really act and interact in the process of strategy implementation. For instance, Whittington (1996) points out that there still exists a gap in the body of knowledge of strategy realisation on micro-sociological levels that transform the wider level in organisations. However, in the Middle East, of which the Kingdom of Bahrain is a part, research has been scarce, specifically in the minds of those whose aim is to uncover the link between the roles of middle managers, role expectations and agency-enabling conditions and other contextual factors related to strategy implementation in manufacturing organisations.

This research has identified and addressed this gap by exploring middle managers' strategy-as-practice with emphasis on how these strategies are lived out and put into action by middle managers in three manufacturing organisations in Bahrain. Moreover, the current investigation has also identified the agency-enabling conditions and the barriers and challenges to strategy implementation.

Fourth, the strategy-as-practice lens encompasses questions concerning what people do within such organisations in relation to strategy and how these are linked to outcome. As such there is a need to research the strategy process from a wider perspective, to further understand the variations of how strategies are implemented. This was evidenced by the ideas of Golsorkhi *et al.* (2009), who said that the "strategy-as-practice lens shifts the attention from a top-down approach to other levels of outcomes". This was supported by Whittington (2007), who imparted that "the sociological eye" looks into the research of strategy to find connections between organisation and society-level outcomes; hence, strategy needs to be socially embedded. By discovering the link between the roles of middle managers, role expectations and agency-enabling conditions in strategy implementation, this research contributes to strategy-as-practice research – not only locally but also internationally.

By adopting the interpretative approach, this research looked into the interpretations or underlying meanings which are time and context-dependent and

focused on understanding the phenomenon in its setting. In this research, the qualitative data collection and analysis produced findings related to details where values and human experiences are relevant: in this case, the strategic practices viewed from the perspectives of the middle and senior managers of the three manufacturing industries in the Kingdom of Bahrain. With their positions in their respective organisations, the participants shared a common culture, language, history and values system, which ensured a collaborative construct of a meaningful reality during the investigation.

Fifth, strategy in organisations is usually considered in terms of what leaders ‘plan’ to do in the future, hence, strategy formation has been treated as an analytical process. In this way, by applying the current trends in strategy-as-practice research, this research will ask the same relevant questions: what do people do in relation to strategy in organisations; how do such expectations enable their actions in organisations; what other factors or artefacts enable or constrain them?

To close this gap, this research used a strategy-as-practice approach, which is appropriate and relevant when studying middle managers' roles in organisations. By adopting this approach, two significant activities were undertaken: first, this research digs deeper inside the flow of strategy in the manufacturing firms in order to understand how practitioners shape strategy as practice and second, this research examines and addresses the issues of strategy practitioners viewed from the perceptions of middle and top managers on how the former apply their skills in doing different aspects of the work of strategy.

7.2 Limitations of the Research

The first limitation was that it focused on a small population and limited number of cases. Since the sources of data came from semi-structured interviews with the senior and middle managers of three manufacturing firms, the chosen samples did not fully represent the target population, so generalising the results beyond the actual sample tested must be stated with qualification. This research

did not have the generalisability or statistical power of a quantitative investigation. Another limitation was that self-reported data of the participants was limited by the fact that it could not be independently verified. The responses of the participants were considered at their face value, so interviewees who tend to self-report their views on their own strategic practices might resort to selective memory or exaggeration by embellishing events as more significant than was actually suggested from other data. Moreover, during the conduct of such research, participants tend to respond differently depending on how they perceive the researcher. The participants considered the gender, age and status of the interviewee, in which case the amount of information they were willing to share, or come forth with openly might not reveal their honest perception. With the Arab culture prevailing in this country, this type of problem was dependent on the nature of the topics being discussed.

Another drawback was the use of non-probability sampling in the selection of the interviewees. In this type of sampling the correct proportions of members of the population might suffer. It is therefore imperative to acknowledge that the chosen samples did not fully represent the target population, and hence, due to the limited number of participants, there is also the difficulty associated with generalising the findings of the research. Finally, the weakness of this type of study, as pointed out by Guion *et al.* (2011), is the personal interpretations made by the researcher. By so doing, there is the risk of bias from the researcher.

7.3 Recommendations for Further Studies

The new direction of research looks into strategic management as a fundamental issue that explains the success or failure of organisations. This entails identifying the aspects that will lead to the success of the organisation. Thus, it is recommended to pursue research that goes beyond the industry's traditional analysis by introducing new environmental variables such as cultural dimensions or traditions in order to understand the relationship between the environment and strategy. Another approach to research of this type is directed at

internal aspects of the organisation, such as dynamic capabilities and the resource orchestration approach. Likewise, approaches that focus on individual or group behaviour – behavioural strategy – at different levels of analysis within the organisation may also be considered.

Other researchers must also undertake deeper analysis on behavioural strategy, which analyses the behaviours that have an impact on strategy. By undertaking this type of research, an investigator may address and analyse strategy through realistic assumptions about human cognition, emotions and social behaviour. Finally, since this research employed a strategy-as-practice approach to relatively large manufacturing organisations in the Kingdom of Bahrain, other research should be undertaken in a much wider setting that includes other types of industry such as banking, communication or educational institutions and in countries/cultures other than that of the one selected for study here.

7.4 Concluding Remarks

This research looked in-depth at the perceptions of both top and middle managers of strategy implementation and explored the area of middle managers' strategy to bridge the gap between the theory and practice. By using the strategy-as-practice lens, a new conceptual framework emerged from the findings of the research, which was supported by the extant literature. Finally, based on the identified gap between the actual roles performed by the middle managers and their practices, this research has also identified the agency-enabling conditions, barriers and challenges to strategy implementation. The findings implied that there is a strategic issue within the organisations. Identification of such an issue may offer a view to create the momentum for change in the organisation. As such, senior managers and decision makers must understand the strategic issue and must have the capability to deal with it. By considering that such issues are urgent and feasible to resolve, the senior management may be able to consider initiatives for change in response to a particular strategic issue.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethics Form



Brunel Business School

Research Ethics Form

PhD Students and Staff

Any research that involves human participation, the collection or study of their data, organs and/or tissues, and that is carried out on Brunel University premises and/or by Brunel University staff or Brunel University students under the supervision of Brunel University staff requires ethical approval.

This document is designed to help you ensure that your research is conducted in an ethical manner. It is the ‘Ethical Clearance’ part of your research (whether it requires funding or not). You need to submit this form with your research documents. In addition to this and other requirements for your project, you might need to submit three documents – see Ethics Submission Guidelines for PhD-Staff for consideration by BBS Research Ethics Committee (via your supervisor if you are a PhD student:

1. A Participant Information Sheet (created by you)
2. A Participant Consent Form (created by you)

3. A Company Confidentiality Agreement Form (created by you, not always required)

Section A – Information About You and Your Research Project

This is used to identify you and to give us a brief overview of your project.

Name:	Contact email address:
Date: Click here to enter a date.	
Name of Supervisor (if PhD student):	
Title of Research Project:	
Describe of Data Collection Process (200 words):	

Section B – Identification of Ethical and Risk Issues

Most research projects involve a number of potential risks (either to participants or yourself). The more risk factors that can be identified at the start, the easier it will be to guard against them. Answer the questions below to identify potential risks in your project. Please refer to the guidelines if you are unsure about your answer to any of these questions. Please indicate your answer by selecting either ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ options.

<p>1. Is it possible participants might have been told to cooperate rather than freely volunteering?</p> <p>Sometimes it is difficult to ensure interviewees do not feel ‘obligated’ in some way. You will need gatekeeper consent for</p>	<p>Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input checked="" type="radio"/></p>
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<p>this.</p>	
<p>2. Is it possible that participants might be under eighteen years of age?</p> <p>Normally minors are not legally able to give their consent to participation.</p>	<p>Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input checked="" type="radio"/></p>
<p>3. Is it possible that participants might be required to discuss sensitive issues (e.g. private or of criminal nature)?</p> <p>Such discussion could put yourself or the participants in danger.</p>	<p>Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input checked="" type="radio"/></p>
<p>4. Is it possible that your research might cause clinical or psychological harm to participants or yourself?</p> <p>This may include discussion of topics of sensitive nature or prolonged strenuous psychological or physical pressure for participants and/or yourself.</p>	<p>Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input checked="" type="radio"/></p>
<p>5. Are all or some of the participants unable to give their own consents</p> <p>Including organisations with gatekeepers (e.g. schools and prisons); or vulnerable participants (e.g., children, people with learning disabilities, your own students).</p>	<p>Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input checked="" type="radio"/></p>
<p>6. Will you be recording the identity of any participants (e.g. their name or employee number)?</p> <p>Sometimes it is difficult to guarantee anonymity. If so, you will need explicit consent.</p>	<p>Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input checked="" type="radio"/></p>
<p>7. Is it possible that identity of participants could be traced (e.g. their name or employee number)?</p> <p>Sometimes anonymity can be broken by combining information from more than one source. If so, you will need explicit</p>	<p>Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input checked="" type="radio"/></p>

consent.	
<p>8. Will you be storing traceable participant data on a laptop or in a file at any point during and/or after the duration of your project?</p> <p>There is a risk if a laptop or file is lost or stolen.</p>	Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input checked="" type="radio"/>
<p>9. Is it possible that your company will want the research kept confidential?</p> <p>Some companies allow research only on condition that the results are not made public. If so, you will need to fill in Company Confidentiality Form.</p>	Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input checked="" type="radio"/>
<p>10. Is it possible that copyright material might be copied?</p> <p>It may be necessary to get permission to use it.</p>	Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input checked="" type="radio"/>
<p>11. Will the study involve recruitment of patients or staff through the NHS?</p> <p>If you answered ‘Yes’, you will have to submit an application to the appropriate external health authority ethics committee, after you have received approval from the School Research Ethics Committee.</p>	Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input checked="" type="radio"/>

- If you have answered ‘No’ to all questions, you may upload **the completed form to your supervisor via uLink** (see submission guidelines).
- If you have answered ‘Yes’ to *any* of the questions **1 – 5**, you will need to describe more fully how you plan to deal with the ethical issues raised by your research. You should use the University by clicking on this link: [Application Form for Research Ethics Approval](#). You will need to submit the form via uLink.
- If you have answered ‘Yes’ to *any* of the questions **6 – 10**, please tell us in the box below how you are planning to mitigate against these risks. On

completions you may upload **the completed form to your supervisor via uLink** (see uLink submission guidelines).

- If you answered ‘Yes’ to **question 11**, you will have to submit an application to the appropriate external health authority ethics committee, **after** you have received approval from the School Research Ethics Committee.

Describe which risks (6-10) you have said ‘Yes’ to and your mitigation plans:

Section C – Declaration

Please note that it is your responsibility to follow the University’s Code of Research Ethics and any relevant academic or professional guidelines in the conduct of your study. **This includes providing appropriate information sheets and consent forms, and ensuring confidentiality in the storage and use of data.** We should be notified of any significant changes in the protocol over the course of the research and may require a new application for ethics approval.

You need to indicate that you have carried out various activities prior to submitting this form along with your proposal.

<p>I have read through and understood the Brunel University Code of Ethics (available: http://intranet.brunel.ac.uk/registry/minutes/researchethics/CoEv6.pdf).</p>	<p>Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/></p>
<p>I have written and attached a Participant Information Sheet</p>	<p>Yes</p>

ONLY needed if your research involves direct data collection from people.	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/>
I have written and attached a Participant Consent Form ONLY needed if your research requires <i>explicit</i> consent.	Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input checked="" type="radio"/>
I have written and attached a Company Confidentiality Agreement Form Only needed if your research involves a company that is concerned about information being made public.	Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input checked="" type="radio"/>

For PhD students ONLY

I confirm that I am the supervisor mentioned in Section A and that I have discussed and fully support the application submitted by the PhD student named in Section A and confirm that the information entered is correct. This to be answered by a supervisor in case the applicant is a PhD student.	Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/>
--	--

Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet



Brunel Business School

Research Ethics

Participant Information Sheet

Dear Participant,

My name is Thaira M. Al Shirawi and I am currently undertaking a program of research on middle management involvement in strategy implementation in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The objective is to assess middle manager role implementation practices by identifying roles of middle managers and the enabling conditions of their involvement in strategy implementation, which is an integral part of strategy making in organisations. The questionnaire needs to be completed by senior management and staff who have the responsibility of participation in strategy operations in your organisation. I would be grateful for your help in answering the questions; it should take approximately 45-60 minutes.

The interviews are conducted with senior management, general managers, and middle managers in various organisations. These will be collated and published as part of my PhD thesis. Should you wish to share your company's experience of strategy implementation, please contact me to arrange for interviews for inclusion in the thesis.

The information you provide is totally confidential and completely anonymous; no one will be able to identify that you personally to have taken part in this research. I am interviewing and surveying a cross section of organisations, and

will aggregate this information to provide guidance on how to improve middle management involvement in strategy implementation. Your individual answer will not be identifiable in any way.

If you have any queries about this research project, you can contact me on the phone (+973 39477663) or by e-mail (thaira.al.shirawi@brunel.ac.uk).

Thank you for participating in this research.

Thaira M. Al Shirawi

Appendix C: Consent Form



Brunel Business School

Dear Sir/Madam

The researcher (Thaira Mohammed Al-Shirawi) hereby confirms that all the data from individuals collected through these interviews/questionnaire will be treated with maximum confidentiality and anonymity and will only be only for this academic research purpose and therefore, will not be disclosed to a third party.

Participant Consent Form

Many thanks for agreeing to participate in my research project. The project has to be completed in part fulfilment of my degree programme and so your assistance is much appreciated.

Consent:

I have read the Participation Information Sheet and hereby indicate my agreement to participate in the study and for the data to be used as specified.

Name of participant or informed third party: -----

Signature: -----

Date: -----

Appendix D: First Interview Guide

Part I: Background Information

The first part of the questionnaire will describe the demographic profile of the respondents based on gender, age, educational qualifications, occupation, length of service and position.

1. Please specify your gender

Female Male

2. In which category would you situate yourself?

Executive 01 Senior Management 02 Middle Management 03

3. What is the nature of your employment contract?

Permanent Fixed-Term Temporary

4. How many years (approximately) have you worked for this organisation?

1-2 yrs 3-5 yrs 6-10 yrs +10 yrs

5. What is your Occupation?

Executive Administrative Operational

Financial Legal Marketing

Engineering Human Resources Other
Please specify.
.....

6. What is your functional background?

- A. Strategy Management
- B. General management
- C. Human resource management
- D. Financial management
- E. Marketing management
- F. Engineering and production management
- G. Other professional training: please specify

7. How many years (approximately) have you been in your current role?

- 1-2 yrs 3-5 yrs 6-10 yrs +10 yrs

8. What is your Age:

- 16-25 26-30 31-40 41-50
51-60 61-65 65+

9. Qualifications: Please indicate all the qualifications (or their equivalents) that you currently hold.

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| School Certificate | <input type="checkbox"/> | Masters Degree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| BTEC | <input type="checkbox"/> | Doctorate (PhD, DBA) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Diploma | <input type="checkbox"/> | Professional Qualifications | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Bachelor Degree (BA/BSc) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Others | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | Please specify. | |

Part II: Perceptions of Roles of Middle Managers in Strategy Implementation

This part is asking the question ‘How do you perceive the roles of middle managers in relation to his/her position and their actual roles in strategy implementation?’ All three levels of staff, namely, senior managers and middle managers, will answer this part.

- a. Combines strategic (context-free) and hands-on (context-specific) information.
- b. Formulates new strategies and trying to convince the senior management of them.
- c. Acts as a bridge between the strategic and the operational levels as well as feeding ideas up the line.
- d. Does things right while constantly improving and innovating
- e. Manages complexity through planning, budgeting, organising, resourcing, controlling and problem solving.
- f. Manages change through setting a direction, aligning, motivating and inspiring people.
- g. Manages top-down processes by communicating, motivating and committing the personnel for the strategy.
- h. Understands strategies and adapts them to his/her daily actions.

Can you please elaborate on the role of middle managers in strategy implementation?

Championing Strategic Alternatives

- a. Acts as an initial screen of new business opportunities, new proposals, and administrative innovations.
- b. Nurtures the idea of new business opportunities, new proposals and administrative innovations.

Synthesising Information

- a. Supplies information to senior management concerning internal and external events.
- b. Frames information in certain ways that would control, or at least influence, senior management perceptions.
- c. Encourages senior management to take the needed risks on new business opportunities or innovations.

Facilitating Adaptability

- a. Encourages employee involvement program to redesign processes.
- b. Encourage work practices being adapted to the changing environment.

Implementing Deliberate Strategy

- a. Deploys existing resources efficiently and effectively.
- b. Demonstrates understanding of the strategic rationale behind the plan.

Part III: Level of Agreement on the Role Expectations of Middle Managers

This part of the questionnaire will ask, ‘What is the level of your agreement on the role expectations of middle managers in strategy involvement?’ The senior managers and middle managers will answer this part. The indicators are divided into the following sub headings: Championing strategic alternatives; Synthesising information; Facilitating adaptability; and Implementing deliberate strategy.

Can you explain more about the expectations in implementing strategy?

Part IV: Perceptions of the Strategic Agency-enabling Conditions of Middle Managers

This part of the questionnaire will ask ‘What is the level of your agreement on the conditions enabling agency of middle managers relative to the organisational strategy implementation? Two levels of staff, namely, senior managers and middle managers, will answer this part. This part will have the following sub-headings: Implementing, facilitating adaptability, synthesising information and championing alternatives.

3.A Implementing

- a. Senior management narrates the thought processes involved in the formulation of the goals to be implemented.
- b. There is a well-defined set of top-down objectives for work activities that supports everyday work.
- c. There is a sufficient shift in resource allocation to support implementation of the specified top-down objectives.

3.B Facilitating adaptability

- a. Middle managers are expected to promote experimentation and autonomous development of work within their areas of responsibility.
- b. Senior management expects middle managers' work- practices to be adapted to the changing environment.
- c. Senior management shows trust when middle managers facilitate adaptability on their work practices.

3.C Synthesising information

- a. Senior management provides feedback when middle managers offer information as a basis for strategic decision-making.
- b. Middle managers are expected to maintain annual target setting discussions with team members.
- c. Middle managers are encouraged to give feedbacks or insights from their work experiences.

3. D Championing alternatives

- a. Senior managers invite and expect middle managers to participate in planning.
- b. The middle managers are expected to champion ideas that have the potential to renew the current content of strategy.
- c. Senior managers evaluate and reward the quality of ideas championed.

Can you elaborate on what enables or helps you in your effort to implement strategy?

Part V: Perceptions of the barriers and challenges to strategy implementation

This part of the questionnaire will answer, 'What is your level of agreement with the following barriers and challenges to strategy implementation?' Two levels of staff, namely, senior managers and middle managers, will answer this part. This question sought to identify the level of agreement at all three

levels of the barriers and challenges to strategy implementation. This objective will open up avenues on how to deal with barriers and challenges met by middle managers on strategy implementation.

- A. Strategy Environment
- B. National Culture
- C. Organisation Culture
- D. Strategy Formulation
- E. Strategy Interpretation
- F. Strategy Monitoring
- G. Organisation Structure
- H. Shared Knowledge
- I. Communication
- J. Implementation Tactics
- K. Consensus
- L. Commitment
- M. Administrative Systems

Can you please tell me more about what factors in your opinion form a barrier to strategy implementation?

Appendix E: Final Interview Guide

Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Part I. This part of the interview guide aims to investigate the understanding of senior managers, middle managers and non-managerial employees of strategy and strategy implementation. This part is concerned with contextualizing the research.

A1. What is your conception of strategy in general?

What do you understand by the term ‘strategy’?

What kind of issues do you associate strategy with?

A.2 How do you define the concept of strategy implementation?

What kind of issues do you associate strategy implementation with?

A3. Do you have any influence on the creation of strategy or strategy process in your company?

What is the role of strategy in your daily work?

A4. How do you participate in your organisation’s strategy process?

Do you have a formal role in the organisation’s strategic process?

Are you given a voice in the formation and/or implementation of strategy?

Do you think you have influence in the process of strategy?

A.5 How do you participate in the strategy implementation?

A6. What is your perception of organisational strategic practices and their effectiveness?

What kinds of practices are involved in the organisational strategy?

Do they work?

A7. What do you think of the working environment and the impact of strategy on it?

Have there been changes in your work environment lately?

What kinds of changes?

Part II. This part of the interview guide aims to gauge the perceptions of middle managers, senior managers and non-managerial employees of the roles of the middle managers in strategy implementation.

B1. In your organisations, are middle managers involved in strategy?

If yes, what kind of involvement?

B.2 How do middle managers participate in strategy?

B. 3 What are the roles of middle managers in strategy?

Explain roles in Formation?

Explain roles in Implementation?

B4. In your organisation, are middle managers given any roles in strategy implementation?

If yes, how?

B5. What do you need in order to perform your role completely?

B6. How do you think your organisation can support middle managers in strategy process?

Part III. The third part of the interview guide aims to assess the role expectations and the agency-enabling conditions, as perceived by the middle and senior managers, in middle managers' strategy implementation.

C1. As manager, how do you take control of the situation when implementing strategy?

C2. How do senior managers support your actions during implementation?

C3. In what ways do the senior managers discuss strategy implementation in your organisation?

C4. Are you given flexibility to devise your own strategy during strategy implementation?

C5. Do you feel your input and initiatives are trusted and respected when it comes to strategy input and operations?

C6. What factors in your background or experience do you think determine success in the performance of your role?

C7. What do you think are the enabling conditions to personally fulfil these roles?

C18. How do you manage to solve difficult problems being a middle manager?

C9. If someone seems to oppose your idea when implementing strategy, in what way do you assert your point of view?

IV. The fourth part of the interview guide aims to discover other related context factors identified by the middle managers and upper level management that might affect strategy implementation.

D1. What do you think are the other factors that can affect the success of strategy implementation?

D2. Does organisational culture affect strategy implementation? If yes, how does it affect your strategy implementation?

D3. How about national culture? In what way does national culture affect your strategy implementation?

D4. How about the general business environment? Does it affect your strategy implementation? In what ways?

V. This part of the interview guide aims to identify the barriers and challenges related to strategy implementation. Assessment will be done by the upper management and middle managers.

E1. What are the barriers that you can identify when implementing strategy?

E2. How do you consider these barriers?

Do you consider them as bottlenecks or challenges to be surmounted?

E3. In what way does the upper management support the middle managers to overcome these barriers?

E4. Are there any other factors/entities that can support the middle manager in overcoming the barriers?

Appendix F: Interview Guide's Source Codes.

Questions	Initial code	Component	Author/s	Final Code
Part I. This part of the interview aims to know the understanding of top managers, middle managers and non-managerial employees of strategy and strategy implementation. This part is concerned with contextualizing the research.			General Questions from the various literature to contextualise the research are in part one developed by the researcher for all other parts below the following authors articles were used for the questions:	
A1.What do you understand by the term “strategy”?	SA 1	Strategy Definition		Def.
What kind of issues do you associate strategy with?	SA1.2			
A2 How do you define the concept of strategy implementation?	SA2	Strategy Definition		Def.
What kind of issues do you associate strategy implementation with?	SA 2.1	Issues to Strategy		Issues
A3. Do you have any influence on the creation of strategy or strategy process in your company?	SA 3	Influence in Strategy Process		Inf.
What is the role of strategy in your daily work?	SA 3.1	Roles in Strategy		Roles
A4. How do you participate in your organisation’s strategy process?	SA 4	Participation To Strategy		PS
Do you have a formal role in the organisation’s strategic process?	SA 4.1	Roles in Strategy		Roles
Are you given a voice in the formation and/or implementation of strategy?	SA 4.2	Roles in Strategy		Roles
Do you think you have influence in the process of strategy?	SA 4.3	Influence in Strategy process		Inf.
A.5 How do you participate in the strategy implementation?	SA 5	Strategic Practices		Prac.
A6. What is your perception of organisational strategic practices and their effectiveness?	SA 6	Strategic Practices		Prac.
What kinds of practices are involved in the organisational strategy? Do they work?	SA 6.1	Strategic Practices		Prac.
A7. What do you think of the working environment and the impact of strategy on it?	SA 7	Working Environment		WE
Have there been changes in your work environment lately? What kinds of changes?	SA 7.1	Working Environment		WE

Questions	Initial Code	Component	Author/s	Final Code
Part II. This part of the questionnaire aims to know the perception of middle managers, top managers and non-managerial employees on the roles of the middle managers in strategy implementation.			Whittington (2007); Bryson <i>et al.</i> (2010); Johnson <i>et al.</i> , (2007); Jarzabkowski, (2005); Johnson <i>et al.</i> (2003); Regner, (2003, 2008); Whittington (2010); Mantere (2005); Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009); Johnson <i>et al.</i> (2003, 2007); Jarzabkowski <i>et al.</i> (2007); Whittington (2007); Andrews, (1980); Sashittal and Wilemon, (1996); Schaap, (2006); Kotler, (1984) cited in Noble (1999); Reid, (1989) as cited in Schaap, (2006)	
B1. In your organisations, are middle managers involved in strategy?	RB 1	Championing Strategic Alternatives -CSA		CSA
If yes, what kind of involvement?	RB1.1	Championing Strategic Alternatives -CSA		CSA
B.2 How do middle managers participate in strategy?	RB 2	Championing Strategic Alternatives -CSA		CSA
B 3 What are the roles of middle managers in strategy?	RB 3	Implementing Deliberate Strategy		IDS
Explain your roles in strategy formation?	RB 3.1	Implementing Deliberate Strategy		IDS
Explain your roles in strategy Implementation?	RB 3.2	Implementing Deliberate Strategy		IDS
B4. In your organisations, are middle managers given any roles in strategy implementation? If yes, how?	RB 4	Implementing Deliberate Strategy		IDS
B5. What do you need in order to perform your role completely?	RB 5	Facilitating Adaptability		FA
B6. How do you think your organisation can support middle managers in strategy process?	RB 6	Facilitating Adaptability		FA

Part III. The second part of the questionnaire aims to assess the role expectations and the agency enabling conditions as perceived by the middle managers and top managers.				
Strategy Implementation				
C1. As manager, how do you take control of the situation when implementing strategy?	RC1	Contextualisation of the top down objectives		COT DO
C2. How do top managers support your actions during implementation?	RC2	Resource allocation		RA
C3. In what ways do the top managers discuss strategy implementation in your organisation?	RC3	Narration of Expectation		NOF
C4. Are you given flexibility to devise your own strategy during strategy implementation?	RC4	Commitment to Implementation		CI
C5. Do you feel your input and initiatives are trusted and respected when it comes to strategy input and operations?	RC5	Commitment to Implementation		CI
C6. What factors do you think in your background or experience determines success in the performance of your role?	RC6	Commitment to Implementation		CI
C7. What do you think are the enabling conditions to personally fulfil these roles?	RC7	Resource allocation		RA
C8. How do you manage to solve difficult problems being a middle manager?	RC8	Resource allocation		RA
C9. If someone seems to oppose your idea when implementing strategy, in what way do you assert your point of view?	RC9	Commitment to implementation		CI
Questions	Initial Codes	Component	Author/s	Final Code
IV. This part of the questionnaire aims to identify the barriers and challenges related to strategy implementation. Assessment will be done by the upper management, middle managers and non-managerial employees.			Argenti (2005); Heide, et al. (2002); Nutt (1987); Nutt (1989); Akan, et al. (2006); Noble, (1999); Floyd and Wooldridge (1992); Heracleous, (2000); Alexander (1985); Wooldridge and Floyd, (1989); Rapert <i>et al.</i> (1996); MacMillan and Guth (1985); McDermott and Boyer (1999); Rapert <i>et al.</i> (2002); Beer and Eisenstat (2000); Guth and MacMillan (1986); Guth and MacMillan (1986); Noble and Mokwa, (1999); Govindarajan (1988); Govindarajan and Fisher (1990); Roth,	

			et al. (1991); Al-Ghamdi, (2005).	
D.1 What are the barriers that you can identify when implementing strategy?	BD1	Barriers		Bar1
D.2 How do you consider these barriers? Organisational, environmental, or personal?	BD2	Barriers		Bar2
Do you consider them, bottlenecks or challenges to be surmounted?	BD2.1			
D.3 In what way the upper management support the middle managers to overcome these barriers?	BD3	Support to Barriers		Sup Bar
D.4 Are there any other factors/entities that can support the middle manager in overcoming the barriers?	BD4	Support to Barriers		Sup Bar
D.5 What are the most identified barriers that affect the performance of middle managers?	BD5	Top Barriers		Top Bar

Code	Conceptual Framework Component	Proposition	Objectives
CSA	Championing Strategic Alternatives -CSA	P1	To gauge the perceptions of middle and senior managers of the roles of the middle managers in strategy implementation.
SI	Synthesizing Information	P2	
IDS	Implementing Deliberate Strategy	P3	
FA	Facilitating Adaptability	P4	
NOF	Narration of Expectation	P5	To assess the role expectations and the agency enabling conditions, as perceived by the middle and senior managers, of the middle manager's strategy implementation.
COTDO	Contextualisation of the top down objectives	P6	
CI	Commitment to Implementation	P7	
RA	Resource allocation	P8	

APPENDIX G: Table of Experts for Interview Guide

No	Name	Expertise	Recommendation
1	Dr. Khalid Al Qahtani	Bahrain Defense force. Assistant Professor lecturing at the University of Bahrain	You should avoid very long questions in your interview guide. It should be simple. Avoid redundant questions and make them simple and clear.
2	Dr. A. Munem Al Shirawi	Assistant Professor at the Department of Management and Marketing at Ahlia University	Do not ask more than one question at a time. You need to combine the three or more questions into one question.
3	Dr. Lamea Al Teho	Associate Professor Department of Management and Marketing at Ahlia University	You need to avoid asking questions that can be answered with one word. You don't have to ask questions that require your respondents to do your analysis for you since this is your job.
4	Dr. Jameela Al Mahari	Assistant Professor – University of Bahrain	Make sure that the questions will motivate the participants to answer them as completely and honestly as possible. Avoid redundant questions.
5	Dr. Osama Al Bahrana	Assistant Professor, Electrical & Electronics Engineering, University of Bahrain	The interview guide needs editing. Be careful how you word each question. You have to avoid vague words in your interview guide.
6	Dr. Jassim Haji	Director of Information Technology, Gulf Air. Doctorate in Business Administration	You have to use probing questions like for example: Would you give me an example? Can you elaborate on that idea? Would you explain that further?
7	Dr. Ebrahim Al Hashemi	Dr. Ibrahim Al-Hashimi BIPD Board Member, Consultant and Board Chairman of a number of family and private companies, former	Be careful not to ask closed questions that leave respondents no room to elaborate and that

		member of the Shura Council, Former President of the University of Bahrain and former Adviser of Higher Education Affairs at the Ministry of Education. He holds a PhD degree in management	can slow the interview's pace.
8	Dr. Samia Costandi	Ph. D in Educational Philosophy, Associate Professor at Ahlia University	Use probing questions to obtain additional information. Combine some questions into one question.
9	Dr. Osama Al - Ali	Consultant of Strategy and Leadership Practice at ICON Investment, Ex Chief Executive Bahrain Airport Company – Ex Assistant Professor of Applied Sciences at Bahrain Arabian Gulf University	You must cover all of the pertinent topics included in the interview plan. Ask clear and direct questions such as How? Where? When? Who? What? Etc. This could help participants answer the questions clearly.
10	Dr. Rashid Al Jalahma	Assistant Professor	Make sure that you formulate questions based on the research objectives. Ask more questions to obtain additional information .Use probing questions.
11	Mr. Johan Mendis		You have to edit redundant questions. Use clear and direct questions such as How?, What? , and Why?
12	Mrs. Nawar Rajab	Risk Management Consultant	Be careful not to ask closed questions so that the participants can elaborate and give additional information. Avoid questions that can slow down the pace of the interview. Use probing questions.
13	Mr. Abdulelah Al Qassimi	Engineer – Director - Board Member at Naseej integrated real estate and infrastructure	There are some misspelled words. This interview guide needs editing.

		development company, Ex Chief Executive Bahrain Labour Fund (Tamkeen)	
14	Mr. Sharif Ahmadi	Chief Executive Aluminium Services WLL Manama	Please simplify some questions, which are too long. Make use of simple and clear questions.
15	Mr. Ahmed Al Sharif	Mechanical Engineer – Bahrain Workshop Company	Combine some questions into one. There are some topic questions that are too long. Simplify these questions.
16	Ms. Nawal Al Qameesh	General Manager Insurance company	There are some good questions. So keep it. Be sure that the questions are related to your research objectives.
17	Mr. Adam Tammam	Lead Account Manager at Oracle	Simplify some questions. You need to combine them into one question.
18	Mrs. Najla Al Shirawi	COO – Securities and Investment Companies	Please use probing questions so that participants can elaborate on the topic.
19	Mr. Talal Al Zain	Chief Executive Officer Pine bridge Investment – Ex Chief Executive Bahrain Economic Board	Use direct questions so that participants can answer clearly.
20	Mr. Jassim Al Shirawi	Engineer Jassim Isa Al Shirawi, the General Manager of The National Oil and Gas Affairs	The interview guide needs editing. Shorten your questions. Avoid misspelled words.