The influence of informal power structures on corporate strategy of a Selected mining organisation in Northern Cape Province, South Africa

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By

Arthur Kadakure

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Supervisor: A/S Prof Sean Gossel

Co- Supervisor: A/S Prof Michel Tshiyoyo

Co- Supervisor: A/S Prof Michael Twum-Darko

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DECLARATION

I, Arthur Kadakure, hereby declare that the work on which this thesis is based is my original work (except where acknowledgements indicate otherwise) and that neither the whole work nor any part of it has been, is being, or is to be submitted for another degree in this or any other university. I authorize the University to reproduce for the purposes of research either the whole or any portion of the contents in any manner whatsoever.

Signature:

Date: 10 January 2023

Dedications

Psalms 30 vs 5 "For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

To my mother Rebecca, you kept my faith alive through the dungeons of oblivion and grief. To my father you were everything a son would ever need in a parent, though you did not manage to finish this journey with me, I have finished the race and I have kept the hope you left me with. To Sheila my wife you are my pivot and source of strength I cannot forget all the late nights you stood by me as I worked on this project. To my late brother Paminasi and late brother-in-law Gorden I am happy that I have accomplished this milestone that you always encouraged me to pursue. To Elvis my brother words cannot contain my gratitude.

"They always say in the end everything will be fine, so if it is not fine then maybe that is not the end"

various research colloquiums.

I am happy that I eventually completed this project though the entire process was under the weather. I am fortified by the fact that in the end everything aligned and that everything happens for a reason.

ABSTRACT

Corporate strategy has gained a lot of traction in academic discourse as a critical field that ensures organisational success and the role of informal structures in achieving this success has also gained a lot of focus. However, several scholars have pointed out that most of the studies on informal structures have used western and Asian socio-ecological narratives to contextualise informal structures. The contextual gap identified by the study and the assumptions by scholars that African, Asian and Western contexts have huge variances prompted the study to explore the contextual gap in South Africa. After defining the contextual gap, the critical question that the study sought to answer was; How are informal structures responding to corporate strategy within a South African context? To answer this question the study used an interpretive approach and a single case study to draw from the subjective experiences of 30 employees using in depth interviews. To ensure the abstraction of high-quality data the study utilised heterogeneous purposive sampling to draw insights from informed participants which in turn enabled the study to explore diversified perspectives. The study established that the socio ecological context of the organisation had both positive and negative influence on the employee's desire to accept or reject corporate strategy. The study established that the positive influence enabled smooth flow of information, flexibility, fulfilment of social needs and sharing of ideas. However, the study also established that the negative influence which manifested in resistance to corporate strategy, social fragmentation, conflict and political bickering outweighed the positive influence. The study concluded by adopting a strategic management model and extending it to contain the negative attributes of the socio-cultural environment with the hope that the model may enable the organisation to positively influence informal structures.

Keywords: Informal, Formal, Structuration, strategy, enacted, social identity

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This study is aimed at exploring the influence of informal structures on corporate strategy of a selected mining organisation in South Africa. Strategy is classified into two main classes, that is corporate and competitive strategy, the study however purposefully ignores competitive strategy and focuses on corporate strategy. This is informed by the fact that good corporate strategy addresses micro factors that provide a grounded basis for the development of a good competitive strategy as argued by Abdulwase, Ahmed and Yan (2020). Corporate strategy addresses institutional micro factors which includes social ties and informal networks, if these are managed well competitive strategy which deals with macro-based dynamics can be enhanced. This is further echoed by Feldman (2020) who disaggregates the organisation into three stratus that are intra, inter and extra organisational frames. Inter and extra organisational frames apply to the macro institutional frames that are relevant to competitive strategy. Intra organisational perspective focuses on the internal business processes which includes looking at social ties and informal relationships. The study therefore concentrates on the internal relationships and assess the influence of social ties on corporate strategy.

Extensive study has been done on informal structures and on corporate strategy, however little is known on the influence of informal structures on corporate strategy. Furthermore, there has been an emerging interest by scholars to develop indigenous management theories that are sensitive to an African social context because of the institutional and environmental variances between developed and developing economies (Mom, 2018: Mom & Omoyele, 2019). In apparent agreement to the prior notion Horak, Afiouni, Bian, Ledeneva, Muratbekova-Touron and Fey (2020) citing Berger *et al* (2019) observe that multinational companies operate in divergent culturally embedded social contexts and as such the study joins this debate by exploring an organisation within an African context. The study elected to do a single case study in a mining organisation in direct response to the emerging call and interest by multinational organisations and scholars who are

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seeking to understand the unique frames of the informal structures in developing economies.

To critically understand and discuss the social phenomenon that relate to informal structures it is imperative to define the relationship between formal and informal structures. An organisation is made up of formal and informal structures, a formal structure (hard elements) of the organisation is a systematic division of duties, relationships and reporting protocols (Ahmady, Mehrpour & Nikooravesh, 2016). Corporate strategy is embedded in formal structures through organisational mission, vision and objectives (Babafemi, 2015). Scholars have often referred to informal structures as informal organisations, social networks, informal networks, informal groups or social structures (Hunter, Bentzen & Taug, 2020). Informal networks naturally emerge around formal structures through social interaction, homogeneous interests and common ethnic origin among other social antecedents (Ali Sarlak, Mohammad & Salamzadeh, 2014). Research has proven that informal structures are established through social dialogical interaction which is not regulated by policy therefore the collective goals of group members may result in divergent attitude towards corporate strategy (Horak, Afiouni, Bian, Ledeneva, Muratbekova-Touron & Fey, 2020). Scholarship has defined a clear debate on how formal structures may be reconciled with informal networks because of the fundamental need for these two structures to function in synergy (Hunter, Bentzen & Taug, 2020b). Corporate strategy is dependent on organised structure which entails both institutional formal frameworks and informal ties however, this synergy is proving to be problematic in most organisational contexts (Mukherjee, 2015). The study therefore seeks to critically investigate the relationship between corporate strategy and informal structures in a bid to propose an environment specific conceptual framework.

McEvily, Soda and Tortoriello (2014); Daniel (2018) contend that scholarship has not fully addressed the managerial burden that is created by informal structures that often espouse a parallel vision to the corporate vision. The disconnect between formal and informal structures presents a critical corporate strategy agenda because some

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managers may not have the competencies to deal with intransigent social structures. The study argues that informal structures can be better understood from a sociological perspective but contemporary research has migrated to quantitative business models and organisational design thinking as means to conceptualise informal structures (Parker, 2000; Grothe-Hammer & Kohl, 2020). To bridge this gap in literature the study used a dual social theoretical lens (Social identity and Structuration theory) to gain deeper understanding of the normative social influence of values and beliefs on individuals and informal groups. To compound the limitation of prior studies there has been limited academic enquiry on informal structures in the African context, thereby creating a contextual vacuum (Blunt, 1983; Mom, 2018).

 In practice Informal structures which are perceived to be social networks are increasingly getting attention from senior management as indispensable core players in corporate strategy (Flynn, 2015). Little is known regarding the influence of informal structures on corporate strategy, yet this influence has direct impact on performance (Huning, Bryant & Holt, 2015). Most scholars in organisational studies have written extensively on the formal institutional frameworks and have greatly ignored the covert dynamics of the informal structure that has salient effects on corporate strategy (Huning, Bryant & Holt, 2015). Analysing informal structures is important because they have an inherent potential to accelerate or to become impediments in the implementation of corporate strategy (Mohammad & Salamzadeh, 2014). Informal structures through social ties and networks may provide a conduit for corporate strategy implementation however, informal networks may lead to nepotism, cliques and corrupt behaviour (Horak, Afiouni, Bian, Ledeneva, Muratbekova-Touron & Fey, 2020).

Informal structures transcend the formal boundaries through advice seeking, knowledge sharing and trust (Hunter, Bentzen & Taug, 2020), this overlap presents a clear influence on corporate strategy. Furthermore, scholars have extensively explored informal structures based on western social contexts, social ties, social cultural values (Blunt, 1983; Mom, 2018) and this has created a literature vacuum in the African context. Little

has been said or discussed about informal structures in Africa and more importantly in the mining sector of South Africa which is clearly a hub of contention. Andrews, Elizalde, Billon, Hoon Oh, Reyes and Thomson (2017) posit that the mining sector has a lot of contentious issues that require an in-depth study to unearth the nature or source of this inherent order. To carry out a structured academic inquiry into the relationship between formal and informal structures the study employed Structuration and Social identity theories which are discussed in chapter 3 (theoretical frameworks). Chapter two demonstrates the gap in literature through critiquing prior literature and thereby justifying the need for a subsequent study on informal structures. The section below discusses the underlying drivers of formal and informal structures.

1.1.1 Underlying drivers of formal and informal structures

Informal structures are basically created by members through social interaction whereas formal structures are created through laid down rules, procedures and objectives. Corporate strategy is summarised by the mission, vision and objectives of the organisation (Ajagbe & Bih, 2016). The key differences of informal and formal structures based on underlying drivers are shown below in figure 1.1.
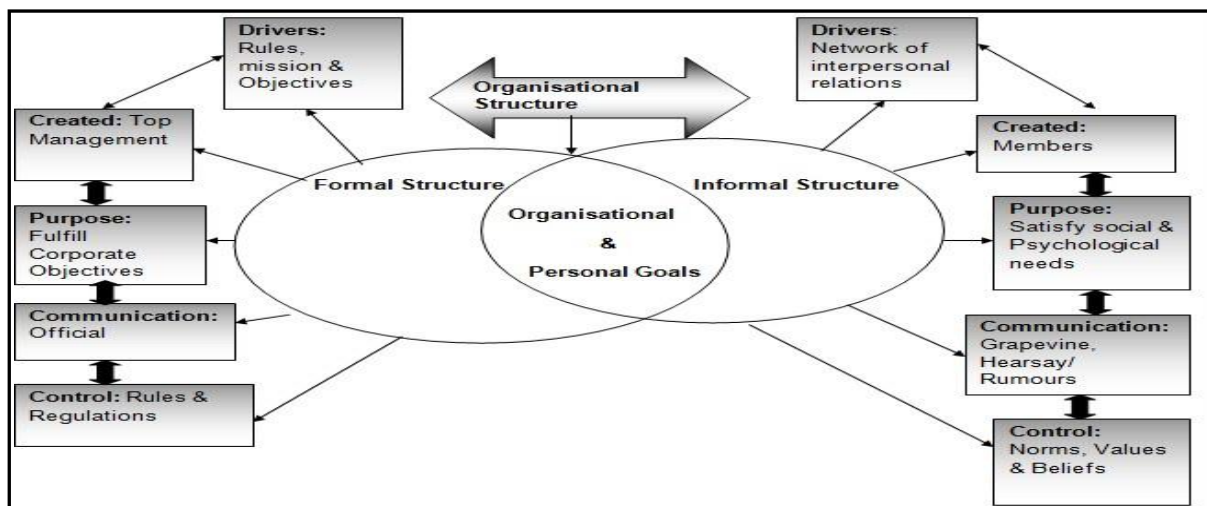
Figure 1.1: Formal and informal structures: Key differences (Adapted from: Surbhi, 2016)

Figure 1.1 above clearly demonstrates that the informal structure is driven by social goals

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while the formal structure is driven by organisational goals. The informal structure due to its social goals may challenge parts of corporate institutional frameworks (Aşçı, Çemberci, Civelek, & Günel, 2015). The section that follows discusses the theories that are relevant to this study, theories expose the underlying assumptions that underpin the context of this study.

1.1.2 Intersection of relevant theories

Informal structure literature has its intersection in organisational theory, organisational behaviour and strategic management theories (Mcauley, Duberley & Johnson, 2007). This makes the study a multi field study and in an attempt to gain clarity concerning this topic subsequent scholarship review drew insights from organisational theory, organisational behaviour and strategic management as shown below in figure 1.2.
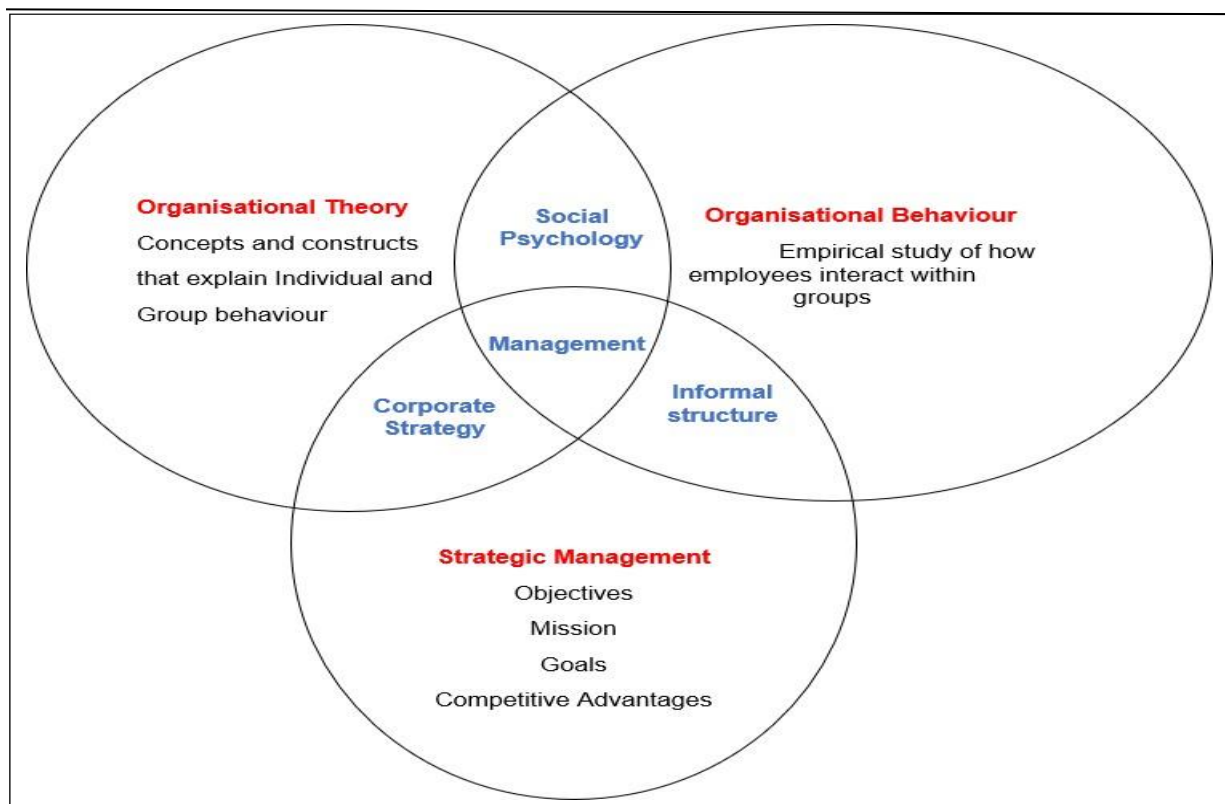
Figure 1.2: Organisation and strategic management theories (Adapted from: Daft, 1997)

The intersection of theories indicated above defines the underlying theoretical assumptions that guide this study. Oyibo, Gabriel, Obrenovic and Akhunjonov (2020) posit that an in-depth appreciation of organisational theory and its evolution enables one to get great insights into the structural dynamics (formal and informal) of an organisation. It is against this understanding that the below section deals with a brief evolution of organisational theory to establish the theoretical conversations around informal structures and how they relate to corporate strategy.

1.2 Rationale of research

1.2.1 Background of the study

Informal structures have been alluded to through the discursive progression of classical, neo classical and contemporary organisation theories (Starbuck, 2009). Classical theories developed soon after the Second World War and inherently pursued a rebuilding agenda which led to the entrenchment of formal structures. The entrenchment of formal structures was meant to expedite productivity and efficiency for economic recovery after the second world war (Khorasani & Almasifard, 2017). The need to increase productivity and efficiency for profit motives undermined human factors that were later discussed in neo-classical theories (Hussain, Haque & Baloch, 2019). Neo classical theories contends that classical theories created a rigid organisation through inflexible boundaries which rendered impersonality to the social relationships within the organisation (Serpa & Ferreira, 2019). These boundaries undermined the notion of agency which views employees as free moral agents who possess innovative capabilities and function through social interaction (Parthemore & Whitby, 2013).

The classical theories introduced tall hierarchical structures that emphasised line and staff functions and the same structures did not consider informal structures or social needs of employees (Nadrifar, Bandani & Shahryari, 2016). This introduced the concept of a bloodless organisation where human beings were seen as part of the machinery that was responsible for production (Alvinius, Ahrne & Lindgren, 2012). This insensitive approach to human beings led to the development of neo-classical theories that unearthed the role

and function of informal structures within the organisation.

The neo-classical theories basing on Hawthorne studies by Mayo between 1924 and 1927 revealed the emotional side of human beings. The findings of the study confirmed the psychological and sociological nature of human behaviour mirrored by the natural existence of informal structures within organisations (Whetten, Rodgers & Kessler, 2015). Halima and Adam (2018) assert that neo classical school of thought established the importance of the physiological, sociological, and psychological needs of employees. However, the neo classical theories did not establish the influence of social needs on corporate strategy.

The contemporary organisation theory perceives the organisation as an organism with interdependent parts functioning as a whole. Furthermore, contemporary organisation theory contends that the organisation is made up of numerous sub structures that should operate through synergy (Ferdous, 2016). Contemporary organisation theory advocates for elaborate communication and training in order to meet some of the critical needs of the informal structures (Khorasani & Almasifard, 2017). With the arguments made so far, the conversations around informal structures can be projected as illustrated below in figure 1.3.
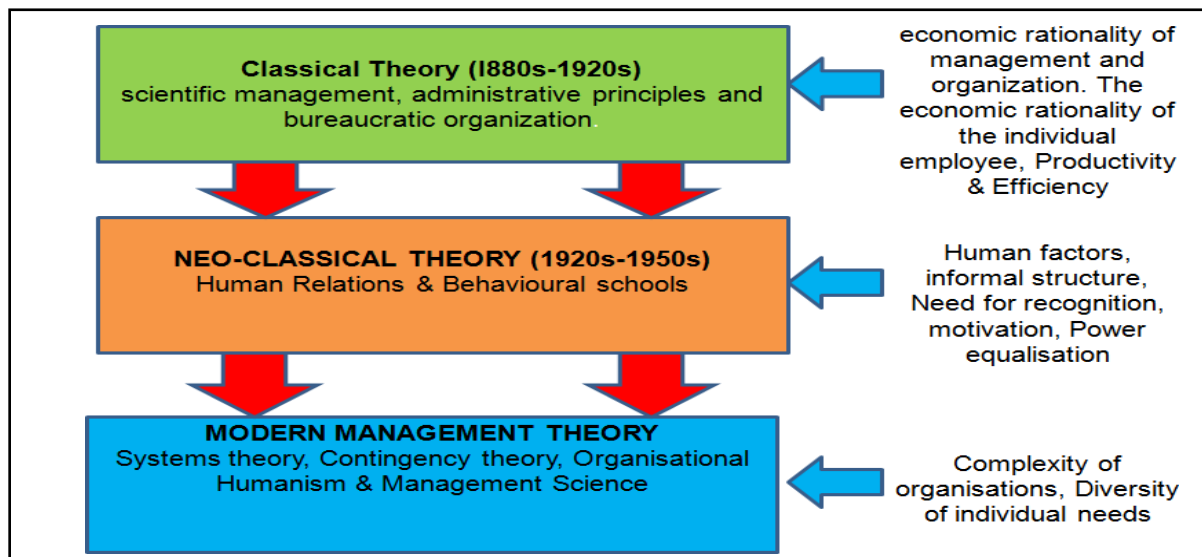
Figure 1.3: Conceptualisation of the background of the study

Figure 1.3 above shows the different dispensations in organisational studies with the transitional changes from economic rationality in the 1920s due to the urgent need to rebuild post the second world war. The 1950s marked the discourse around human factors or social needs of employees which increased the relevance of informal structures within the organisation. The current theories are represented by contemporary theories that have established the complexity of individual needs of employees. Drawing from this transition and current dispensation that posits that individual needs are not homogeneous and therefore cannot be generalised the study seeks to unpack this complexity and propose a framework that increases a deeper understanding of the individual needs with the view of establishing strategies that enable convergency of social needs.

As starting point in pursuit of reduction of complexity of social needs there is need to monitor and circumvent the negative politics of shadow power elites within the organisation. Boogers (2014) asserts that organisation are run by shadow power elites who are not pronounced on the organisational charts, however he points out that the existence of these informal power structures is contextual and is predicated on the cultural environment. Having given the brief overview of organisational theory the study proceeds to define the research gap which is largely around the ecological and contextual setting which may directly sustain shadow power elites.

1.2.2 Summary of the research gap

The study attempts to present an Afrocentric epistemological grounded perspective of the socio-cultural constructs that underpin the manifestation of the influence of informal structures on corporate strategy. Numerous studies on informal structures have used Western and Asian socio-cultural contexts that are motioned by social capital influence creating a vacuum in empirical research in the African context. The aforementioned vacuum was noted by Blunt (1983) and then echoed by Mom (2018), the time period in which this vacuum has remained relevant clearly demonstrates the lack of subsequent studies that have addressed this gap. The underlying assumptions that frame the study are based on the notion that western structural frames which constitute majority of studies

in informal structures are divergent from the Afrocentric context. These structural differentials are premised on frames like the economy, socio-cultural climate, psychological and anthropological underpinnings.

1.2.3 The research problem

Prior studies have established the indispensable role of the informal structure in executing corporate strategy and have also discussed the inherent negative potential to block corporate strategy by the same structures. Pursuant to stating the position of prior studies the problem is thus, few studies have attempted to explore the sociological drivers that determine the influence of informal structures on corporate strategy. Further to the afore mentioned, limited studies have provided an Afrocentric based context on the influence of informal structures which has its bedrock on the broader social antecedents and social connections that are unique to an African context. Most studies on informal structures have dealt with the visible manifestations of employees' social behaviour without exploring the underlying subjective and normative social variables that influence the same behaviour.

1.2.4 Significance of the study

The study may fill a contextual void through defining the social covert connections that drive informal structures in an African context. The pluralistic perspective espoused by the study enables management to draw a deeper meaning and understanding of the influence of the environment specific social dynamics on corporate strategy. The study is an attempt to produce a context specific academic output on informal structure and lays a critical foundation on building a localised theoretical framework. The study explores the mining sector of South Africa through elucidating unique social antecedent elements like social norms, values and beliefs that are flanked by a multicultural complex and an apartheid past (Jackson & Van De Vijver, 2018). The focus of this study clearly places it as a replication study as it investigates the applicability of organisational theory (mediated by social theory) on the informal structures of South Africa.

1.2.5 Summary of Contribution to the Body of knowledge

Contribution to the body of knowledge should apply to methodology, theory and practice (Boer, Holweg, Kilduff, Pagell, Schmenner & Voss, 2015). The three dimensions of contribution are discussed below.

(a) Methodological Contribution

Kuhn (1996) as cited in Bergh *et al.* (2022) contends that methodological contribution is critical in achieving cumulative knowledge in a research area. He (Kuhn, 1996) states that methodological contribution enables scholars to answer new questions regarding how individuals, groups and organisations behave and perform. Furthermore, Bergh *et al.* (2022) asserts that methodological contributions provides an opportunity for the study to respond to existing questions in a more rigorous way. To achieve the afore mentioned the study employed heterogenous purposive sampling to circumvent a situation where inconclusive data and insights are gathered by selecting participants that are conversant with the subject matter (Anthony J Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). More importantly this approach enabled the study to obtain rich sources of data through semi structured interviews which are fundamental to the crafting of theoretical models. In addition, the study combined structuration and social identity theories to establish a multi-layer analysis of the individual, groups and the organisation (See section B, below). The study further refined the analysis of data through NVivo 12 which led to high order abstraction of concepts that were used to produce a deeper understanding of the phenomenon through concise iteration of themes which led to the process of subsumption of emerging categories. The study subsequently used the findings of the research to extend an existing strategic management model with the hope that the model would provide a concise precision in containing the informal structures of the organisation under study. The methodological approach as outlined above clearly demonstrates a plausible contribution derived from the methodology.

(b) Theoretical contribution

The study combined structuration and social identity theories to produce a dual theoretical lens to address the deficiency of structuration theory regarding structure and agency. Archer (1996); Rose (1998); as cited in Kort and Gharbi (2013) contends that structuration theory mainly majors on the social ontology of individualism and vaguely appeals to the ontology of social realism (where the agent and social structure are not constitutive). This contended deficiency of structuration theory exposes the gap of social constructivism in structuration theory which is addressed by social identity theory. The combination of the two theories enabled the study to pursue a balanced focus on the individual (agency) and social interaction (structure) thereby creating a pronounced perspective of the duality of structure. There is an emerging debate regarding the neglected focus of social theory in strategic management which has gravitated towards competitive advantage and macro-economic dynamics (Ring & van de Ven, 1992; Cited in Gibbons, Scott & Fhionnlaoich, 2015). The study joins the academic debate through investigating the influence exerted by normative sociological foundations like values, culture, ethics on employees and the subsequent influence of the former on corporate strategy.

(c) Practical Contribution

The case study approach provides detailed insight into the underlying concepts that underpin the operations of the informal structure. The case study reveals that leaders of social groups should be absorbed into strategy review committees. The integration of informal leaders into these committees provides a formalised duality of formal and informal structures. This integration will not only institutionalise strategic partnership and cooperation between legitimate and charismatic leadership but also provides management with an opportunity to appreciate the influence of social connections within the organisation. This implies that for effective integration to take place focus should be placed on understanding how the unique social context influences corporate strategy. This endeavour should hopefully lead to the formulation of a hybrid (formal and informal) corporate strategy think tank that regulates the divergence of formal and informal

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institutional structures.

The case study reveals that there is need for managers, corporate structures and scholars to treat informal structures as endogenous and not as exogenous structures that need to be circumvented. The drive should be to integrate the informal structure into corporate strategy formulation and implementation to achieve synergy and systematic flow of ideas.

Another critical contribution of the study is the dual lens (structuration and social identity theory) which provides a framework of analysis that champions a sociological perspective of the interplay between corporate strategy and informal structures. The study is predicated on theoretical assumptions therefore the dual lens can be adopted as an important framework or instrument to conceptualise and manage the influence of informal structures on corporate strategy.

1.2.6 CONTEXT OF ORGANISATION X

The study pursued a single case study approach and used a mining organisation which has a branch in the Northern Cape Province of South Africa. Since the mining industry is a closed space owing to its volatile nature the organisation was coded and is therefore referred to as organization X. The Northern Cape branch that was covered in the study employs more than 800 employees. These employees are predominantly from the Tswana and Afrikaner local communities and regional labour immigrants. The province uses four official languages namely Tswana, Afrikaans, Xhosa and English. The different languages provide the primary basis for diverse informal structures. Organisation X also employs a lot of international and regional immigrants that regard Northern Cape as a relatively peaceful province. Organisation X has been in operation just for over ten years and is relatively new. Organisation X due to its infancy is still in the process of integrating its informal structures into its corporate strategy processes and the study is justified given this background. The map of Northern Cape where organisation X is located is shown in figure 1.4.

Figure 1.4: Northern Cape Map (Source, Google Maps, 2018)

1.3 Objectives of the study

Given the problem statement the main aim of the study is to explore the influence of informal power structures on corporate strategy in a selected South African mining organisation. Pursuant to establishing the main aim of the study the following research sub objectives were developed:

- To investigate strategies that have been put in place to contain informal structures in a selected mining organisation in South Africa.

- To investigate the influence of the social context on corporate strategy

- To investigate how social and organisational theory can be applied to an African context of a selected mining organisation.

1.3.1 Research questions

To be able to address the research objectives, the research considered the main research question to be:

How is the influence of informal structures in the select organisation influencing corporate strategy?

To further understand how organisation X is managing informal structures the study proposed the following sub questions:

- Sub Question 1: How is organisation X dealing with multi social identities of different subgroups in the informal structure?

- Sub Question 2: How is organisation X managing the influence of the social context on both employees and corporate strategy?

- Sub Question 3: How far have social and organisation theories addressed the issue of corporate informal structures in the African context?

1.3.2 Ethical consideration

UCT guidelines on ethical consideration were always adhered to. Ethical considerations regarding the study considered: secrecy, confidentiality, non-disclosure and respect of personal opinions of research participants. The principle of objectivity and integrity was observed. The research was non-subversive to persons interviewed and those managing the organisation in question. Apart from the UCT guidelines on ethics the study was guided by the writings of Mohd and Siti (2018) .

1.3.3 Delineation and limitation of the study

The study is a single case study of a large mining company in the Northern Cape. The thrust of the research is to investigate the influence of informal power structures on corporate strategy. The study abstracted information through interviews based on heterogeneous purposive sampling. Similar studies can be carried out in more companies or different sectors. The study only covered thirty detailed interviews because of reaching saturation point. The study was carried out in a closed industry that cannot be easily penetrated. The study was also confined by language proficiency of interviewees who were limited to Afrikaans and Tswana.

1.4 Thesis outline

The thesis outline presents the development and linkage of ideas as presented in the thesis. The outline gives a conceptual and concise picture of the thought process that underpins the study. The thesis is structured as follows:

Chapter one - Introduction

The first chapter is an introductory chapter, which provided the background of the study, the purpose and scope of the research, problem statement and research questions. From the background the study defines the context of study through conceptualising the organisational formal and informal structures. Through problem conceptualisation research questions are established to guide the context of the argument. Research objectives are driven by research questions and the purpose of the study is further discussed. The chapter concludes by giving an outline of the thesis.

Chapter Two – Literature Review

The chapter provides an evolutionary development of the problem through critical analysis of literature on management theories. The study establishes a contextual gap in literature and based on it justifies the need to carry out an empirical study. Furthermore,

the study reviews theoretical models to establish a basis upon which new knowledge can be created based on the weaknesses of the existing models.

Chapter Three – Conceptual Framework

Drawing from the gaps articulated in chapter two, this chapter provides a conceptual framework which functions as the mind map of the thesis. The conceptual framework provides clarity and context which demarcates the parameters of inquiry which offers guidance in terms of data collection instruments and methods used by the study. The context as explained in the chapter provides the framework upon which the theoretical lens is construed. The dual theoretical lens is drawn from structuration and social identity theory and the chapter also justifies the need to use the two complementary theories

Chapter four - Research approach and methodology

This chapter provides the methodologies and approaches of collecting data in line with the research assumptions. The research assumptions are namely epistemology, ontology and axiology. Data was collected through heterogeneous purposive sampling. A subjective epistemological and relativist ontological framework is established since the research is primarily anchored on individual experiences of agents.

Chapter Five- Data presentation

The chapter drawing from transcribed data presents and categorises data gathered. The chapter provides the context in which the data was collected and discusses the influence of the context on the development of data patterns. The chapter provides data description through presenting different data collection cycles and discusses the themes that emerged through the progression of different data collection cycles.

Chapter Six – Interpretation and analysis

The chapter through thematic analysis develops interpretations of data presented in the previous chapter based on critical analysis of literature, theoretical context and

assumptions of the researcher. The chapter concludes by proposing a model that may be used to increase a deeper appreciation of informal structures and more importantly create capacity to manage informal structures within organisations.

Chapter Seven – Conclusion

This chapter makes conclusions and recommendations based on findings. The chapter also addresses assumptions of the study prior to collecting data and comments on the extent of how the gaps identified in literature, theory and practice were addressed. The chapter also alludes to the limitations of the study and suggests areas for future studies

CHAPTER TWO: SURVEY OF RELEVANT SCHOLARSHIP

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter gave a brief introduction, background, insight into the gap in literature, summary of contribution to the body of knowledge, research questions, research objectives and limitations of the study. This chapter discusses the arguments advanced by prior literature and models of managing informal structures. This chapter further discusses current trends of managing informal structures according to current literature, this enables the study to discuss what was done, what is known according to literature and why it is not enough. Figure 2.1 below projects the mind map of literature review as mentioned above.
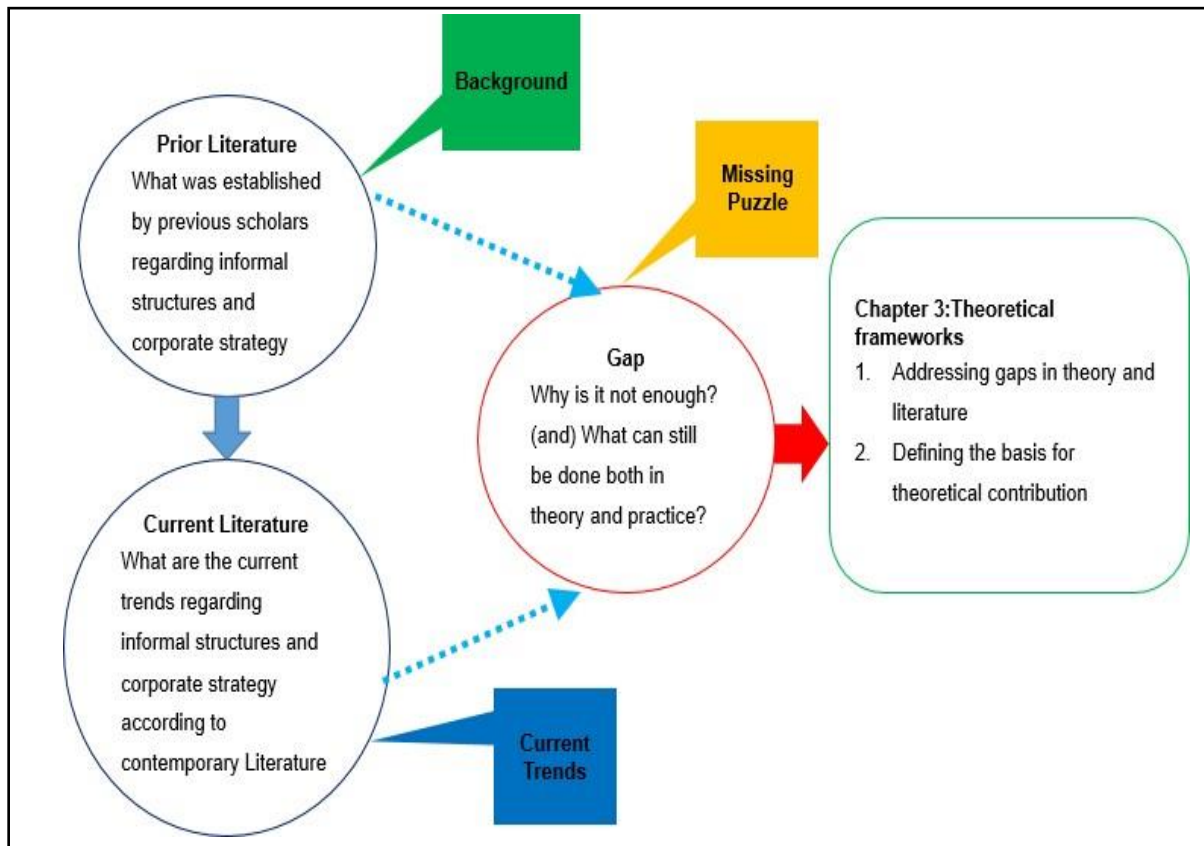
Figure 2.1: Literature review mind map

The subsequent sections discuss and draws perspectives from prior and current literature.

2.1.1 Prior Literature on Informal structures

(a) Classical school of thought

Sridhar (2017) Cited in Hussain, Haque & Baloch (2019) argue that Classical theorists have been heavily criticised for establishing an authoritarian paternalistic system that does not consider the informal or social ties of employees. While the prior position is widely accepted Nadrifar, Bandani and Shahryari (2013) are of the view that classical thinkers through the scientific, administration and bureaucratic theories laid down a foundation for systematic management through division of labour, scalar and functional processes. In addition to the afore mentioned Ferdous (2016); Serpa and Ferreira (2019) contend that Classical theory pioneered a broad context of a formal organisation through its emphasis on chain of command, productivity and efficiency. While it can be accepted that classical theories brought order and structure into organisational theory, Feldman (2020) argues that classical theories failed to account for intra organisational relationships which are critical to the success of corporate strategy. Classical theories mostly pursued a mechanistic and physiological thrust that totally ignored the behavioural perspective of employees. Most scholars have criticised classical theories for being rigid and insensitive to informal structures yet classical theories established critical formal institutional frameworks for setting objectives and goals (Nadrifar, Bandani & Shahryari, 2013). It is also imperative to appreciate that the lack of focus on social ties by classical theories is attributed to management paradigm development which at that time greatly focused on productivity, efficiency, division of labour and chain of command. Drawing from the argument by Günbayi and Sorm (2019) it can be established that time, setting and current trends of a particular dispensation may shape the thinking patterns of scholars and influence their thought process. Due to the increased clashes between management and general employees and increased exposure for the strategic need to recognise social ties

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or informal structures, Neo classical theorists engaged in academic writings that emphasised the importance of a humanised organisation.

Ferdous (2017) citing Maheshwari (2003) articulates that Classical theorist are mainly criticised for postulating that employees are a reflexive tool, that can be controlled by the owner or management. Secondly for positing that organisations are closed systems which are not affected by the external environment. Thirdly, for the fact that the theorists disregard the informal organization through their emphasis and focus on formal organograms and official procedure. A brief review of literature indicates that the classical theories heavily focused on corporate strategy but failed to integrate the formal institutional frameworks with the dynamic unpredictable function of the informal structures. This failure led to a series of constant clashes between management and employees, these clashes then laid a basis for neo classical theorists to poke holes into the classical theories. The section below briefly discusses informal structures and corporate strategy from the perspective of Neo-Classical theory.

(b) Neo-Classical school of thought

Pursuant to the rigid and inflexible boundaries advanced by classical theories which ignored the socio-psychological needs of employees, Elton Mayo through his experiments known as the Hawthorne effect studies established the existence and fundamental role of informal structures within organisations (Őnday, 2016b:Grobler, Grobler & Mathafena, 2020). Elton Mayo who is referred to as the father of the human relations school of thought carried out Hawthorne experiments to determine the reason for the constant clashes that were prevalent between management and employees. The results of the experiments established that classical theories approach dehumanised the organisation thereby underplaying the role of informal ties and connections (Yang, Liu and Wang, 2013: as cited in Oyibo & Gabriel, 2020). Subsequently Mayo's studies revealed that employees are more than economic creatures that are motivated by monetary benefits only. In total agreement to the views expressed by Mayo (1933), Kashyap (2015) states that informal structures meet sociological and psychological needs of employees which enables them

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to achieve greater personal fulfilment. Personal fulfilment is a fundamental part of sociological needs which motivates employees to achieve productivity and efficiency. Yang, Liu and Wang (2013) commenting on the findings by Mayo (1933) concur that the studies gave rise to a new perspective that viewed the organisation as a humanised organisation. The study notes that the conclusion established by Mayo (1933) provides a divergent perspective from the economic grounded perspective which views employees as actors that are motivated by financial rewards only.

Recognition of informal structures is imperative because according to Halima and Adam (2018) psychological and sociological needs of employees are cardinal to productivity and efficiency. This prior position indicates a clear departure from the view that entrenchment of formal institutional frameworks leads to efficiency and productivity. Neo classical theorists criticised the classical theorists for championing bureaucratic and administrative procedures that mechanised the organisation and curtailed innovation through red tape.

Though the neo classical theorists opposed the classical theorists for ignoring informal structures the latter can be viewed as an extension of the former (Sarker & Khan, 2013). The informal structures cannot exist in the absence of formal structures which provide guidance through chain of command, goals and organisational objectives. Though classical theories are production centric it can also be argued that informal structures should operate within legitimate drawn boundaries to enable a shared vision within the organisation. Neo classical theories adopted the behavioural science perspective of management, however Abdelkarim (2016) is of the view that this school of thought classifies human behaviour as homogeneous, yet human behaviour is divergent and complex. The modern management theorists found fault in the oversimplification of behavioural tendencies of informal groupings by neo classical theorists. Kopsov (2019) in his argument against hierarchical and homogeneous needs of individuals argues that human needs are diverse and should be construed from an ethnic perspective since origin of employees is affected by different variables. Furthermore, the study drawing from the two schools of thought (Classical and neo classical) notes that corporate strategy is much

more inclined to the classical school of thought and informal structures are well represented in neoclassical school of thought. Contemporary management theories attempt to combine the economic grounded perspective of the classical management with management of social needs of human actors which is expressed in the neoclassical theories. However, the contemporary school of thought deconstructs the socio-psychological needs of employees and then argues that human needs are not homogeneous but complex and diverse. The contemporary management theories established a premise that combined the financial, physiological, behavioural and structural variables as it viewed the organisation as a system. The below section discusses informal structures from the perspective of contemporary management theory.

(c) Contemporary Management theory

Modern theories can be subdivided into two main continuums which are the systems theories and contingency theories. The two main perspectives acknowledge the existence of the informal structure as a subsystem which is propelled by divergent psychological and sociological needs (Ferdous, 2017).

Informal structures from a systems theory lens can be viewed as a complex network structure composed of diverse individuals with divergent needs that can be forfeited for corporate strategic objectives in return for economic benefits (Lamieri & Mangalagiu, 2009). Consistent with the systems theory Lamieri and Mangalagiu (2009) contend that the informal structure is decomposable, meaning that it can be broken into several different units because the needs of employees ae not homogeneous.

The contingence theories view the informal structures as a complex and unpredictable social structure therefore contingence approaches advocate for situational management which deals with the contextual terrain of human behaviour at any given moment (Vidal, Campdesuñe, Rodrígue & Vivar, 2017). The premise is founded on the fact that there is no best way to manage the diverse needs of employees. The informal structure is

regarded as an autonomous sub system that is driven by diverse unpredictable sociological and psychological needs.

The contemporary school of thought does not provide a framework that regulates the diverse and complex needs of the informal structures. Furthermore, the contemporary school of thought does not address the relationship between informal structures and corporate strategy. The section below discusses current literature on informal structures.

2.1.2 Current Literature on informal structures

According to Parker and Cross (2014) as cited in Daniel (2018) institutional charts do not expose covert activities of social networks that may potentially act against corporate strategy. Van, et al (2011) as cited in Daniel (2018) further argue that management of informal structures adds an additional managerial burden since other managers may not have the competencies to deal with intransigent informal groups. The need to understand and manage informal structures is informed by a clear call made by scholars and managers regarding the inherent complex attempt to try and formalise divergent social needs. While informal structures may be seen as potential impediments to corporate strategy, Lamieri and Mangalagiu (2009) concur with Huning, Bryant and Holt (2015) that informal structures play a strategic role in information gathering and distribution.

Eisenberg, Johnson and Pieterson (2015) citing Mishra, Boynton and Mishra, (2014) argue that there has been an exponential growth in the body of knowledge that deals with social networks within the organisation. The trio further state that organisational effectiveness is measured by the degree of social networks and informal communication. The study therefore argues that informal structures provide credible information that can be used to modify or improve policies and strategies within the organisation. The study further argues that there are scant studies that provide elaborate literature on the strategic function played by informal structures in influencing corporate strategy.

Interestingly Whetsell, Kroll and DeHart-Davis (2021) argue that the transactional role of informal structures in transmitting information is overvalued, the trio maintains that formal

bureaucratic structures should not be neglected since they have the capacity to manage and regulate information through policy. Literature clearly shows a strong willingness to depart from all bureaucratic structures and regulatory frameworks that manage the flow of information within an organisational context. This ideological transition makes informal structures and its potential influence on corporate strategy a critical area that needs to be understood more.

Informal structures and their subsequent influence on corporate strategy presents a complex matrix because according to Krackhardt and Hanson (2000) managers are often frustrated by drawing and redrawing corporate structures. The dynamic and perpetual evolution of society often leads to new social needs that are disruptive of the status quo. In terms of scholarship on informal structures, McEvily, Soda and Tortoriello (2014) argue that the fragmented approach of scholars in addressing formal and informal structures has created a gap or disconnect between formal institutional frameworks and informal structures. The failure by scholars to provide extensive insight on the intersection between formal and informal structures has created discomposure which this study seeks to reduce. A concerted effort by the study to draw the causative relationship between formal and informal structures underscores the primary objective of the study which is set to expose the influence of social ties on corporate strategy.

Furthermore, Banerjee and Singh (2015) argues that due to smart devices and internet access, informal structures also discuss corporate affairs online. The duo argues that these online platforms like YouTube, Facebook and what's app provide anonymity to rumour mongers who have deliberately or unwittingly damaged the name of various organisations. Due to these frequent damaging messages and information placed by untraceable organisational informal groups, a new theory called antecedents of online grapevine communication has emerged. These online platforms have interfered with corporate strategy since it has emerged that corporate issues often leak through these platforms. Aşçı, Çemberci, Civelek and Günel (2015) concur with the notion that corporate strategy gives policy direction on paper yet in actual fact the overbearing influence of

informal structures has emerged as a vital research subject. Drawing from the above position the study posits that technology has extended the boundaries of informal structures which traditional had influence at a micro level of the company, the influence now transcends into the macro level which is more detrimental if messages from the informal structures are negative.

Blunt (1983) and Mom (2018) concur that organisational theory is foreign to African contexts and research subjects like informal structures are dominated by western specific contexts. The absence of elaborate literature that covers the African sociological ambience has created a contextual vacuum regarding the role and implication of informal structures within organisations. Horak *et al* (2020) citing Berger *et al* (2019) notes that multinational organisations are faced with a socio-cultural complex due to the diverse social contexts in which their business operate in. This study is an attempt to develop an indigenous based framework that may be used to conceptualise and better understand informal structures in a localised setting. Arguing on the issue of the social context, Poulis, Poulis and Plakoyiannaki (2013) state that most qualitative studies are arbitrary and over rely on convenience logic. This study aims to address this criticism through a subsequent argument that factors in the psychological, sociological, cultural and historical context of South Africa. These social antecedents enable the study to clearly show how issues of anthropology, ethnic orientation, political landscape, cultural environment, social and historical context affect social ties within an organisation. An in-depth study of these social factors may provide a grounded basis for the development of a corporate strategy that is sensitive to the diverse and complex social needs of employees.

Foster, Borgatti and Jones (2011) further explain that informal structures are formed by actors (employees) that are connected through common values, norms and beliefs. The conversations and connections that sustain informal structures usually do not champion corporate strategy. These are connections based on the need to belong, acceptance and recognition among other social needs (Celik, Sebahattin & Ulukapi, 2016).

The section below discusses what current models on informal structures have achieved and the need to develop a new model based on gaps identified in these models.

2.1.3 Current models of informal structures

(a) Fu *et al* (2019) Informal structure conceptual framework

Through a grounded theory approach Fu *et al* (2019) Initially gathered 25 subcategories that were subsequently reduced to 5 coded types. These types are geography, kinship, hobby, friendship, and interest respectively. These types are indicated in figure 2.2 below and thereafter the characteristics are discussed in detail.
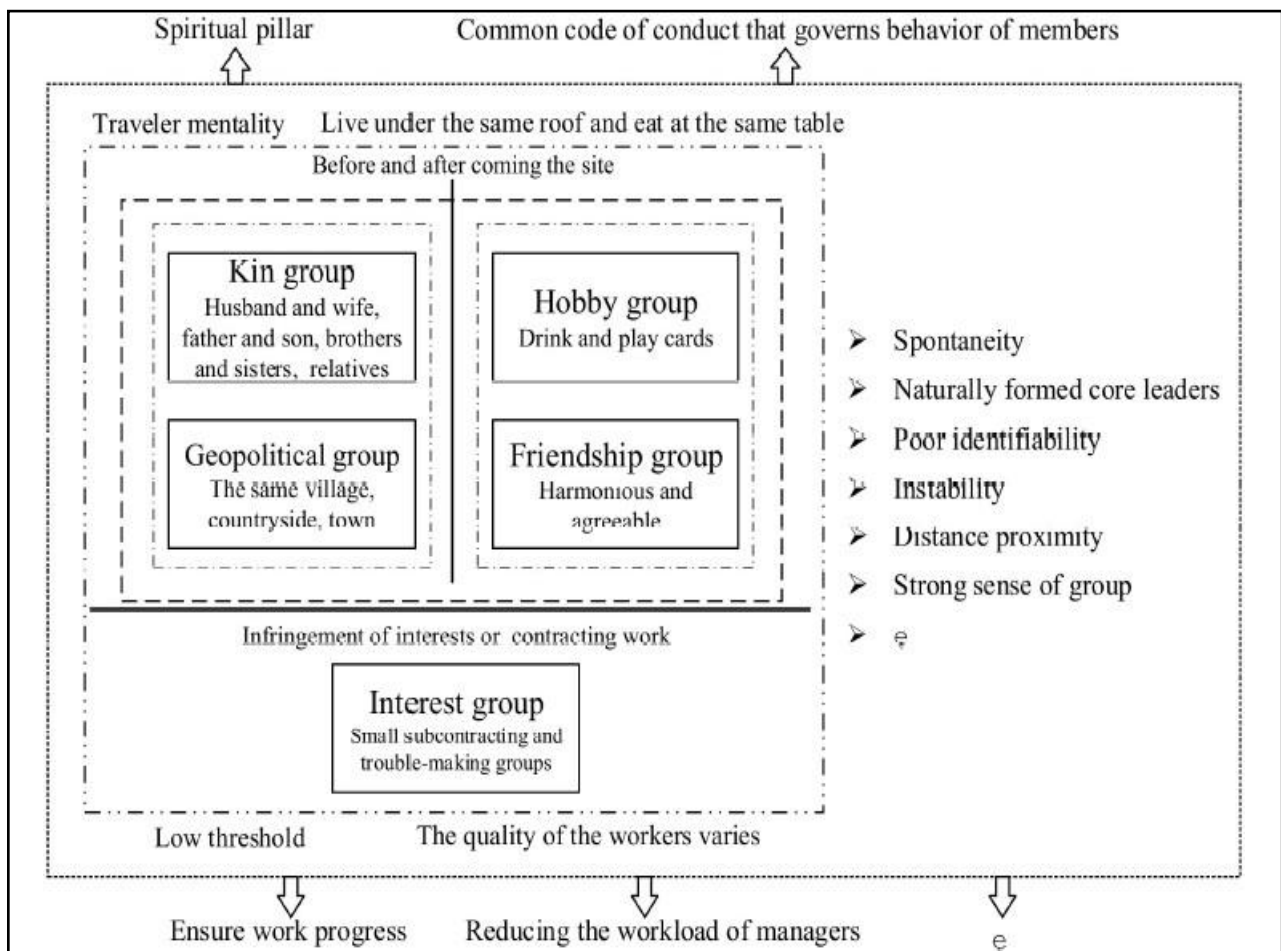
Figure 2.2: Informal structures conceptualisation: Source: Fu et al (2019)

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(i) Kin group and Geopolitical group

Fu *et al* (2019) posit that blood relations draws employees together to form informal sanctioned groups that are not regulated by corporate policy. Stets and Burke (2000) citing Hogg and Abrams (1988) points out that people are born into structured relationships of which family is one of these inevitable informal groups. This group is spontaneously and naturally formed due to the blood relations. These groups are not driven by any structured objectives but rather they are steered by emotions. Within these groups natural leaders emerge and they employ strategies that may advantage the family or geopolitical group and inversely affect the organisation. Based on the literature above the study argues that the Kin and Geopolitical groups are bound more by loyalty rather than reason and logic. While Kin and Geopolitical groups may be biased towards the social needs of group members, Ding, Li, Yuan and Chen (2006) cited by Fu *et al.* (2019) argue that these groups contribute to work ease and smooth communication which may positively affect corporate strategy. Furthermore, informal leaders in the Kin and Geopolitical groups have the ability to resolve conflict and issues much faster which allows group members to concentrate more on corporate issues than personal clashes and differences. D'hont, Doern and Delgado-García (2016) posit that family groups are not based on choices but are determined by destiny whereas in friendship groups, employees have choices. Drawing from the above the study argues that family and geopolitical groups may pair incompatible people in terms of strategy implementation because these ties are not determined through natural choices.

(ii) Hobby and Friendship group

Fu *et al.* (2019) citing Reeves (1987) argues that hobby and friendship groups gains prominence due to the inadequacies of formal institutional structures. These groups emerge due to shortage of recreational facilities which may be used to meet most of the social needs of employees. Wakefield *et al* (2017) notes that friendship groups enable greater job satisfaction. This job satisfaction contributes to the wellbeing of the employees and as such enables them to better execute given tasks and strategies. However Morrison

and Nolan (2007) argue that friendship may affect institutional rules through compromise of boundaries, the need to devote time to the friendship and distraction from normal routines and duties. Drawing from the argument advanced by the duo the study observes that friendships may create huge impediments and may subsequently constrain natural decision-making processes of individuals. Furthermore, Morrison and Nolan (2007) also argue that organisations are expected to practise fairness and equity yet due to friendship ties, office bearers may be forced to give special treatment to their friends which may affect strategic procedures of the organisation.

(iii) Interest Group

Fu *et al* (2019) basing on their study of the construction industry in China define interest groups as employees that are subcontracted to accomplish a given task. These groups are formed by friends and family members; such groups can also cause trouble e.g. these groups can be formed to rectify non-payment of salaries. However, Schoenefeld (2021) argues that a bibliometric analysis of 780 articles demonstrates that interest groups are usually found in political science literature. The study therefore observes that Fu *et al* (2019) used this phrase to denote the notion of organisational politics caused by informal structures. The study further argues that organisational politics may have negative effect on corporate strategy since agendas pushed by interest groups are bound by social ties and associations which are not constrained by corporate policy.

(b) Limitations of the Fu *et al* (2019) conceptual model

According to Wenger (1998) cited in Keikotlhaile, Ekambaram, Halvorsen and Klakegg (2015) community of interest or a geographical community cannot be regarded as an informal structure. Wegner argues that informal structures are based on mutual engagements and on what employees learn from these shared experiences. Furthermore, the IGCW model is an environment specific study because it deals with the social context of China and therefore the premise of this model is strongly entrenched in a cultural complex that is unique to China. Following this lead the study is an attempt to

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produce a similar framework that is derived from analysis of data of a specific mining organisation in South Africa. Furthermore, the IGCW model does not elaborately show the influence of informal structures on corporate strategy which the study seeks to achieve. The study further analyses another informal structure conceptual model to gain more insight into informal structures.

2.1.4 de Toni and Nonino (2010a) Informal structure conceptual framework

(a) A framework for an in-depth informal structure analysis based on social network analysis (SNA)

In total agreement with the literature review of prior studies done by the study de Toni and Nonino (2010) states that informal structure studies are embedded in the studies of Elton Mayo (1933). The duo further cites Simon (1976) who revised the concept of informal structures through stressing the relationship of formal and informal structures with a particular focus on emerging roles within the organisation. Drawing from the work of Simon (1976) the duo further contend that informal ties have an influence on the operations of the organisation, decision making and generation or sharing of knowledge within the organisation. de Toni and Nonino (2010) adopted a social network analysis network lens to conceptualise informal structures. This stance is backed by Tabassum, Pereira, Fernandes and Gama (2018) who posit that modern studies view research subjects as a network of interconnected objects. Tabassum *et al* (2018) further explains that one of the major data classes are social networks that can be construed from relational data and also be regarded as a set of social entities. de Toni and Nonino (2010) have suggested figure 2.3 which is based on the social network analysis.

| | Objectives of the analysis | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Analysis of the relationships within groups/departments | | | Analysis of the relationships among groups/departments | | | | Identifying key roles | | | |
Object of analysis / Informal networks	Distribution of non-working relationships	Distribution of working relationships	Distribution of knowledge	Distribution of non-working relationships	Distribution of working relationships	Collaboration among departments/business units	Identifying homogeneous informal groups	Boundary spanner	Central connector	Information broker	Peripheral specialist
Communication network	Mean centrality degree + network centralization			Mean centrality degree + network centralization			Cluster analysis		Betweenness (OPINION LEADER)		
Information network		Mean centrality degree + network centralization and density			Mean centrality degree + network centralization and density	Mean centrality degree	Cluster analysis	Centrality degree (CUT POINT)	Centrality degree "In e out degree" (BOTTLENECK)	Betweenness	Closeness
Know network			Mean centrality degree + network centralization						Centrality degree "In degree" (EXPERT)		
Problem-solving network			Mean centrality degree + network centralization				Cluster analysis		Centrality degree "In degree" (CONSULTANT)		
Access network							Cluster analysis		Centrality degree "In degree" (HELPFUL)		
Problem-solving X access X know network							Cluster analysis		Centrality degree (PILUS PRIOR)		

Figure 2.3: Framework for the informal networks analysis and the identification of key informal roles: Source: de Toni and Nonino (2010)

The above framework is based on five critical objectives of analysis which are Communication network, Information network, Network of knowledge within the organization, Problem solving network and Access network. These five critical objectives are discussed below.

(i) Communication network

de Toni and Nonino (2010) characterise the non-working group as composed of friendship and trust groups, of which similar concepts were raised by reeves (1987) as cited in Fu*et al.* (2019). According to Krackhardt (1992) cited in de Toni and Nonino (2010) opinion leaders in the non-working groups emerge and using their charisma they influence the attitude of workers towards organisational change. These charismatic individuals may act as information brokers and strategic change agents within the organisation. However,

certain key employees may fail to transmit information and hence act as bottle necks of information within the organisation. de Toni and Nonino (2010a) argue that employees who are experienced are often overloaded with responsibilities and this may impede them from disseminating information to other employees.

(ii) Information network

According to Helms, Bosua and Ignatio (2009) citing Grant (997); Grant and Baden-Fuller (1995); von Krogh and Roos (1996), there has been a shift from the strategic management resource-based view to a knowledge sharing perspectives. Drawing from the above scholars the study can conclude that isolated workers who are not networked act as strategy and information bottle necks. Corporate strategy strongly relies on the flexibility of the informal structure for smooth flow of information, this information should ultimately reach employees that will use it to execute strategic objectives of the organisation.

(iii) Network of knowledge

According to de Toni and Nonino (2010) knowledge networks are an attempt to demonstrate how knowledge is utilised and disseminated to establish the most befitting and experienced agents within the organisation. These networks are invisible informal structures that can be visualised using network analysis. Phelps, Heidl and Wadhwa (2012); Pugh and Prusak (2013) concur that a lot of scholars have observed that social relationships and the networks that they form enables the flow of job related information. Phelps, Heidl and Wadhwa (2012) citing Kogut and Zander (1996) contend that strategy scholars have transitioned to a knowledge-based view of the organisation. Drawing from the above scholars the study observes that knowledge networks and network analysis provides a deeper understanding of informal structures and their subsequent influence on corporate strategy. Corporate strategy is knowledge based therefore analysis of knowledge distribution, the actors and their relational attachment to other actors clearly simplifies the discussion of the influence of informal structures on corporate strategy.

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(iv) Problem solving network, Access network

According to de Toni and Nonino (2010) organisations have 'informal consultants' that solve internal problems based on trust and approval by colleagues. While qualified and experienced problem solvers can be traced within the organisation, they are not always available therefore it is important to conduct analysis of the access network which represents the availability of various actors. However, Ujwary-Gil (2020) in a separate study established the existence of weak connections between problem solving and the network within a given organisation. The weak connections have negative effect on the flow of knowledge which corporate strategy strongly relies on. Drawing from the scholars above the study notes that for efficient problem solving to take place the problem solvers (actors) need to be well connected to all the other actors to disseminate information.

(v) The pilus prior key informal role

de Toni and Nonino (2010) basing on the premise of their conceptual framework of informal structures suggests a new phrase in this field '*The pilus prior key informal role'.* The duo argue that the new term refers to experienced and competent problem solvers that are available because those that are not available cannot influence the informal networks. Furthermore, the duo also argues that if one is experienced and competent and they are not able to solve problems they are not described by this emerging phrase (*The pilus prior key informal role')*.

(b) Limitations of the model

While contribution made by informal network studies is undeniable, Horak *et al* (2020) are of the view that sometimes informal networks may degenerate into collusion, cliques and corrupt relationship. The model in figure 2.3 is premised on western social ties and context yet Horak *et al.* (2020) citing North (1990) argues that the contextual environment differs from country to country and location to location. Drawing from North (1990) the study concludes that the sociological framework of a given country or environment shapes the informal networks and the interpretation of social ties thereof. North (1990) gives an

example of a village setting where people are densely populated and an urban setting where people are distantly placed. In the village setting the social ties are bound to be closely neat because they are densely located and in the urban setup the opposite is true because they are sparsely populated. Furthermore, the study argues that the village is strongly governed by communalism yet the urban set up is dominated by radical individualism. Based on the scholarly views above the study notes that the social context has direct influence on informal networks which subsequently also affects the flow of information and knowledge. The flow of knowledge affects the dissemination of corporate strategy.

2.1.5 The difference between informal structures, informal networks, informal groups & social ties.

A bibliometric analysis of 10 sources used in this study (Zenger, Lazzarini and Poppo, 2005; Tziner and Chernyak-Hai, 2012; Aşçı *et al.*, 2015; Daniel, 2018; Fu *et al.*, 2019; Halevy and Cohen, 2019; Li and Xie, 2019; Horak *et al.*, 2020; Horak, Klein and Svirina, 2021; Whetsell, Kroll and DeHart-Davis, 2021) reveal that the above terms are used interchangeably. Scholars apply these terms to mean the same thing, however informal networks are a demonstration of the level of connectedness of various agents within social structures. Presented differently informal networks are the relationships that are formed across functions and departments to accomplish tasks fast. These informal networks can operate outside of the reporting protocol and red tape to meet extra ordinary deadlines (Krackhardt & Hanson, 2000). While informal networks fall under informal structures the aspect of networks serves to depict the level of connections of employees within the organisation. Literature that often refers to informal networks mostly uses social network analysis to determine the level of connections of various social structures within the organisation. The analysis of social networks entails statistical inference of nodes or data trees that are connected through pointers (Tabassum, Pereira, Fernandes & Gama 2018). In chapter 3, the study justifies why it did not employ the use of social network analysis, yet it seems to be an emerging approach used to analyse informal structures. Figure 2.4 demonstrates that informal structures are defined by a myriad of different terms

that address various perspectives of informal structures. The dimension of network analysis is based on the analysis of the level of connectedness of agents within informal structure. The diagram further shows that the analysis of the informal structures using network analysis emanates from the network and graphs theory.
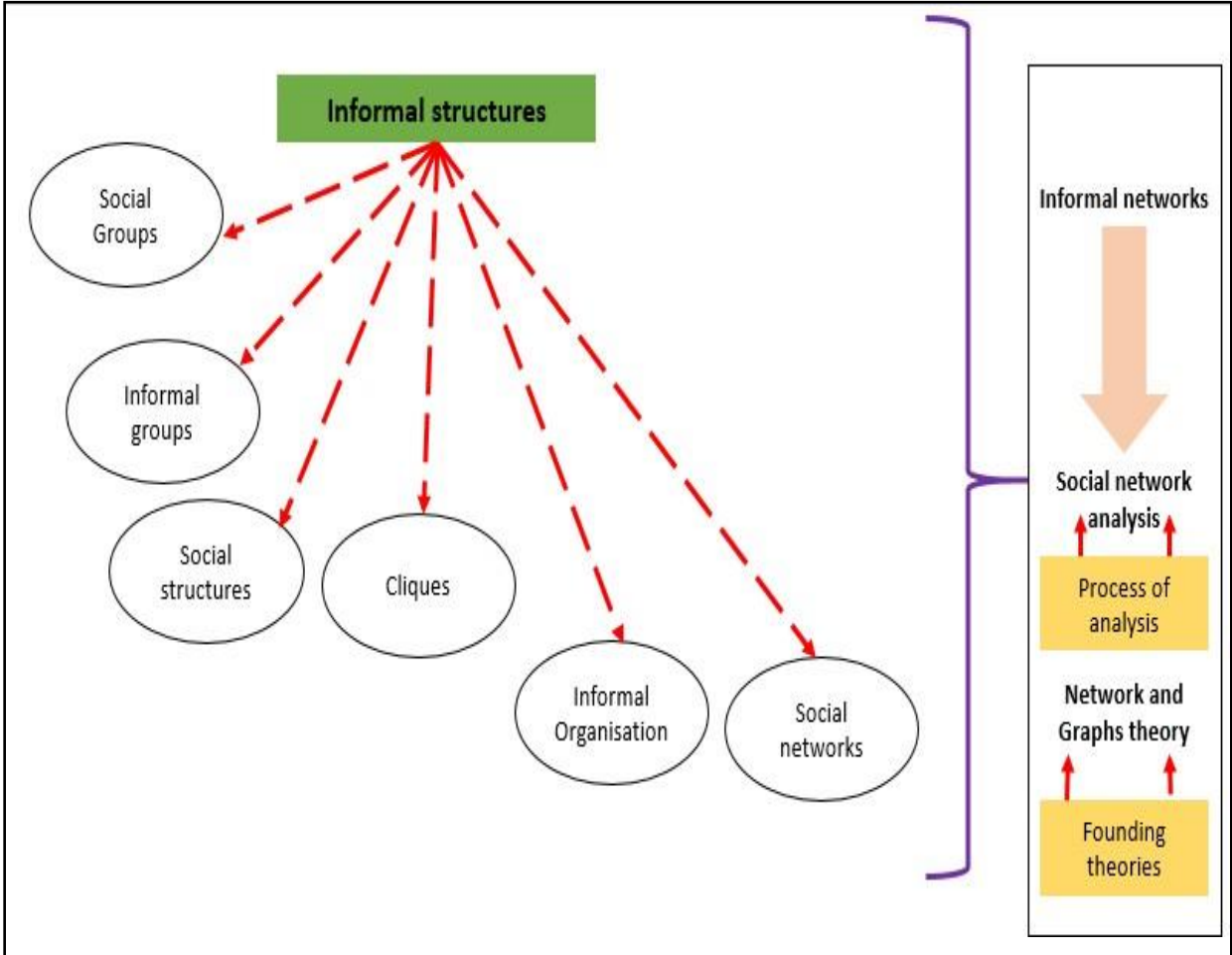
Figure 2.4: Informal structure synonyms

According to Whetsell, Kroll and DeHart-Davis (2021) these networks differ and can range from networks like advice, information seekers and departmental membership. Figure 2.5 below is an example of the analysis of informal networks.
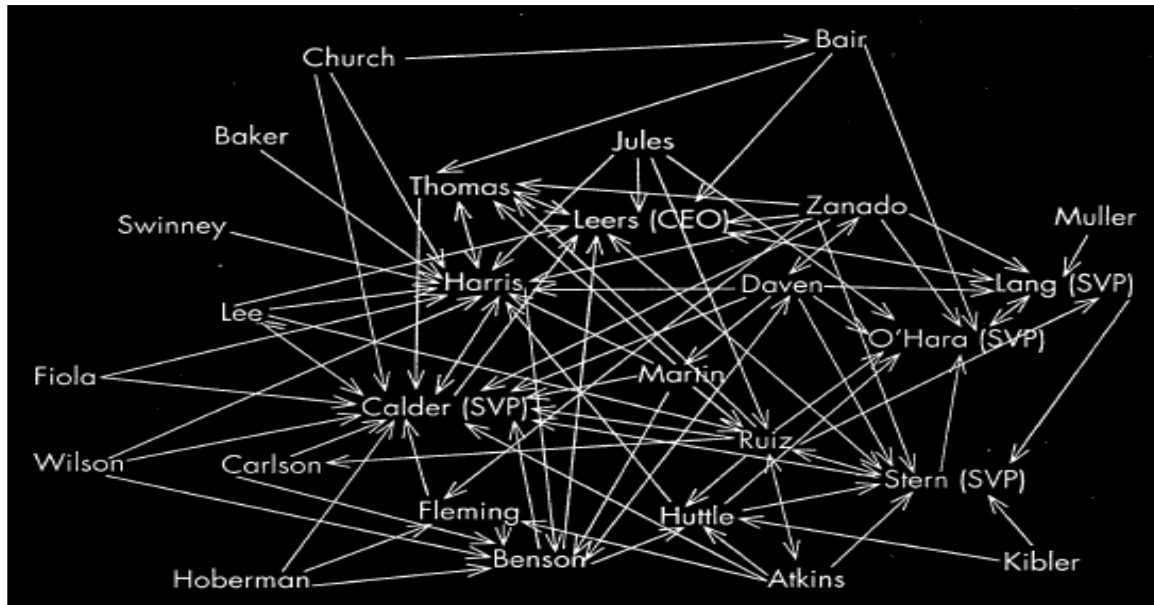
Figure 2.5: Advice network analysis (Source: Krackhardt & Hanson, 2000)

2.1.6 Why the study did not use Social Network Analysis (SNA) as a lens

The object of the study is not to analyse a set of networks and to draw conclusions on the relationships formed by these networks using numerical inference and then attribute it to some consequent behaviour. Many scholars have criticised social network analysis including Salancik (1995) who is cited in Borgatti, Brass and Halgin (2014), he asserts that SNA is mainly descriptive and rarely theoretical. Drawing from this assertion it can be argued that SNA lacks theoretical basis and therefore can be considered as a subjective lens which tries to give a logical perspective. The study used social theory (See chapter 3) to establish a deeper insight into the underlying sociological antecedents that influence informal structures. The study therefore argues that it is the covert sociological dynamics that allow the study to suggest meaningful contribution to the body of knowledge as opposed to analysis of relationships which are symptoms of deeper social foundations. Having looked at informal structures the study proceeds to discuss formal structures which contain corporate strategy.

2.2 Formal Structures and the emergence of informal structures

According to Ahmady, Mehrpour and Nikooravesh (2012) a formal structure refers to the channels of internal relations, power, reporting protocol, delegation, decision making and communication channels of an organization. In addition to the previous assertion Ajagbe and Bih (2016) drawing from Ibrahim et al. (2012) define formal structure as a mechanism that enables division and grouping of roles and provides a framework for decision making and coordination. Drawing from Monavarian, Asgari and Ashena (2007) cited in Ahmady, Mehrpour and Nikooravesh (2012), a formal structure is responsible for managing conflicts within its units in order to maintain internal harmony.

Given this background it can be argued that what is set in the formal institutional framework is subject to conflict that may arise from the social relationships within the organisation. Echoing similar sentiments Hunter, Bentzen and Taug (2020) argue that the formal structure which entails the chain of command may permit the emergence of informal structure through chain of command distance. The previous assertion is also supported by Salimbahrami, Ahmadi, Hajikolae, Mirzajan, Asheghan and Sahebi (2015) who appreciate that formal structures have clearly laid out charts that show departments and reporting lines. However, Salimbahrami *et al.*(2015) drawing from Robbins (2008) mentions that formal structures limit employees to exercise their mind because they are confined to rigid rules and regulations. Based on the previous position it can be argued that an informal structure has elaborate flexibility and enables employees to be innovative. Furthermore, according to Ajagbe and Bih (2016) corporate strategy follows structure and according to empirical evidence formal structures confine corporate strategy while informal structures allow elaborate flexibility and greater chances for the success of corporate strategy.

According to Morand (1995) both formal and informal structures influence certain behavioural tendencies of employees that in turn directly affect corporate strategy. He further enumerates how external environmental contingencies and internal structural dynamics affect formal and informal tendencies. These external and internal elements expressed in figure 2.6 are discussed below.
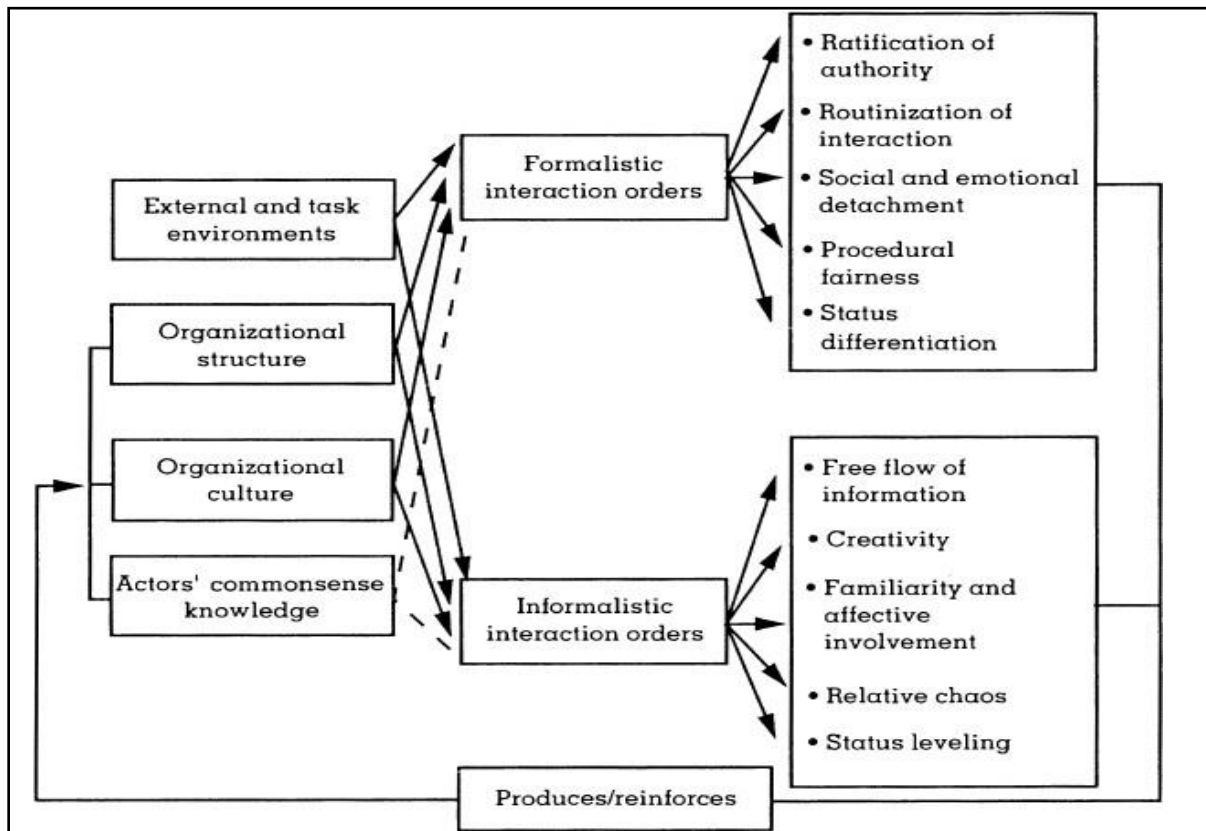
Figure 2.6: Interaction of formal and informal structures: (Source: Morand, 1995)

(a) External and Task environment- Technology

Cascio and Montealegre (2016) argues that the disruptive nature of technology affects the organisational structure. Morand (1995) explains that nonlinear task that are technology related influences a culture of informality because complex non routine tasks require a lot of engagement which is not formalised. This communication can be spontaneous and can be driven by a problem-solving initiative. Morand (1995) further

state that in an environment like the banking sector because of the nature of its business certain preordained routines are observed thus inclining the organisation to formality. While an advertising agency would be inclined towards informality because of the need to share ideas and at certain instances the need for humour. Drawing from the premise articulated by these two scholars the study can conclude that internal and external elements have an influence in the emergence of an organisational structure. Further to external and internal elements the organisational structure plays a pivotal role in corporate strategy, and more is discussed in the next section.

(b) Organisational structure

According to Yakubovich and Burg (2019) the way an organisation is structured influences the emergence of informal structures. This premise is informed by empirical evidence based on experimental observation that proved that job assignments create social ties and sustain their existence. Furthermore, Yakubovich and Burg (2019) observed from the field experiments that when managers were paired they would develop strong social ties that would subsequently lead to the emergence of informal structures. While social ties (informal structures) contribute to work ease, Serpa and Ferreira (2019) are of the view that bureaucratic (formal structures) are imperative in rationalising the behaviour of employees. Drawing from the premise of the previous scholar the study can establish that formal structures give strong guidance to corporate strategy. In other words, the observation made by the study clearly indicates the importance of concurrently operating the two structures (formal and informal). Drawing from Koontz (1994), Rishipal (2014) organisational structure can be defined as the establishment of coordinated authority relationships from a horizontal and vertical dimension. The way employees interact at horizontal or vertical level has a bearing to formality or informality. These two perspectives are discussed below.

(i) Horizontal division of labour

A horizontal organisational structure is a flat structure that has few managers and that enables employees to make decisions with minimum management intervention. According to Johanson (2000) horizontal division of labour entails establishing large project teams to accomplish various related tasks and it is characterised by symmetric ties between the units. These units are highly interactional and are interdependent. The relatedness of tasks leads to a situation where different networks emerge due to task driven interactions e.g advice network, information seekers and motivators. These networks function under an informal institutional framework and they enjoy quality decisions through diversity of opinions and these decisions are made in a relaxed non formal environment with hard and fast deadlines. The horizontal structure enjoys a great deal of autonomy which motivates employees and encourages collaboration amongst the units. However, Krackhardt (1990) as cited in Johanson (2000) argues that in the horizontal divisional units, it's only a few of the employees that have access to the liaison role because most of the employees in these groups are task bound. Based on the position of Krackhardt (1990) horizontal divisional units may also fragment employees and increase the social distance between them. It is this fragmentation that has negative effect to corporate strategy. The organisation may operate according to a vertical organisational dispensation, the same is discussed below.

(ii) Vertical division of labour

According to Ikeda, Ito and Sakamoto (2010) vertical structure is a conventional organizational structure which entails structures according to specialisation and the sectoral structure. A vertical structure often refers to the formal, prescribed hierarchy of authority, or the administrative structure of an organisation. The vertical structure which has a pyramid structure containing senior managers, middle level managers and then regular employees. Rishipal (2014) contends that employees operating under a vertical structure may end up feeling frustrated because of the limited space to make contributions and may subsequently become antagonistic against management. Drawing from the

premise of Rishipal (2014) the study notes that the structural frame of an organisation may influence resentment of corporate strategy especially if employees feel that the structure excludes them from the decision-making process. Apart from structural aspects of the organisation there are other social antecedents that have a direct influence on the organisation and corporate strategy which are discussed below.

(C) Organisational Culture

Morand (1995) drawing from Berger and Luckman (1966); Martin (1992); Trice and Beyer (1992) define organisational culture as socially construed set of values, beliefs and meanings which consequently influence behaviour. Further drawing from Meyer and Rowan (1977), Morand (1995) argues that these cultural beliefs derive from sustained institutionalised understandings. Drawing from Desson and Clouthier (2010), Cera and Kusaku (2020) define organisational culture as the personality of an organisation; which has the ability of guiding the thought and actions of employees. Based on the given definitions the study notes that organisational culture is the mind set of any organisation and employees draw their moral campus from the values and beliefs espoused by the organisational culture. In addition to that, the influence which is derived from organisational culture models behaviour of employees and this behaviour may have negative or positive consequences on corporate strategy.

(d) Actors Common sense knowledge

Morand (1995) posit that employees as free moral agents have the capacity to construe which behaviour to exhibit in any given environment, they can elect to act formally and informally commensurate with the environment. This position further reinforces an earlier assertion which holds that the formal and informal structures are intertwined. In other words, the same person that participates in a formal meeting may after the meeting brief some friends of the contents of the meeting through social or unofficial interaction. The model therefore shows four different perspectives of looking at the relationship between formal and informal structures.

(e) Limitations of the model

The model clearly shows the link between structure and formality or informality. However, the model does not make a direct attempt to conceptualise a clear implication of the structure to corporate strategy. The model only shows the different aspects of the structures but there is no attempt to link that to strategy. The study discusses corporate strategy in the following section.

2.3 Corporate Strategy

There is a huge exponential interest in the subject of corporate strategy, a web of science analysis in the Strategic Management Journal (SMJ), figure 10 below demonstrates the sustained interest in the subject which justifies the relevance of this research area.
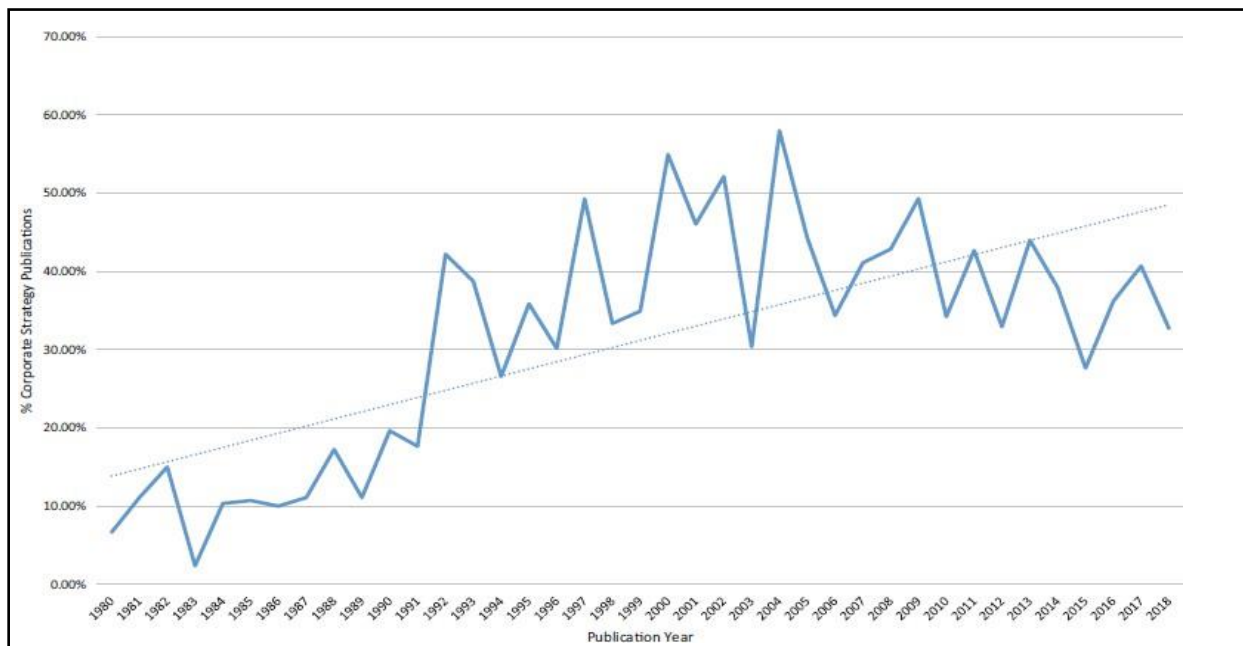
Figure 2.7: % Publications on corporate strategy in the SMJ (Source: Feldman, 2020)

Corporate strategy articles in the journal in the period 1980-1989 were 10 % which changed to a range above 40 % since then.

(a) What is corporate strategy?

Corporate strategy is a broad subject that encompasses two critical perspectives that is the industrial organisation (IO) economics and resource-based view (RBV) as argued by Feldman (2020). He (Feldman,2020) further articulates that the IO tradition is premised on Bain's structure-conduct-performance paradigm that holds the view that industry structure and firm's position determine the performance of the organisation. The RBV tradition is based on the premise that the performance of an organisation is based on its idiosyncratic, unique resources and capabilities that the organisation has. Suffice to say the study adopted the RBV construct since the management of employees is deemed as management of human resources. Feldman (2020) drawing from Gavetti and Levinthal (2000); Tripsas and Gavetti, (2000); Kaplan and Henderson, (2005); Gavetti et al., (2005); Menon and Yao (2017); Menon (2018); Posen et al. (2018); Csaszar (2018), underscores the importance of focusing on behavioural strategy. The emergence of behavioural strategy as an important dimension of corporate strategy is informed by the diversity of cultures, groups, individuals, backgrounds and orientations that characterise employees that must be managed as inert resources. In total agreement with the previous assertion Piórkowska (2016) contends that behavioural strategy is an imperative component of corporate strategy because it is a combination of social psychology and strategic management. This merge provides a platform to elaborately construe the behaviour of employees and further enables the analysis of how to manage dissenting behaviour especially if it impedes corporate strategy.

(i) Definition of Corporate strategy adopted by the study

Hax and Majluf (1984) defines corporate strategy as the framework in which a company reveals its objectives, goals, mission, policies, purposes, principles and plans. Echoing the same sentiments Abdulwase, Ahmed, Nasr, Abdulwase, Alyousofi and Yan (2021) mention that a good corporate strategy should demonstrate how the resources and competencies of a company will be utilised in line with corporate goals, vision, mission

and adopted strategies. The afore mentioned conceptual aspects provide a blueprint of where the organisation is coming from and where it's going. The study drawing from Taylor (2018) notes that the organisation is a group of people pursuing common goals but driven by diverse social needs. Considering this definition, the study can be premised as an attempt to investigate the social relations in the mining organisation under study and with the subsequent intention of defining the influence of these social ties on corporate strategy. The enduring focus of the study is to explore what was done, to carry out an analysis of current studies and models with the view of arguing why it's not enough and thereby defining the critical contribution of this study. Consequently, the study explores models in corporate strategy to establish congruency of thought and to discuss the subsequent gaps thereof.

2.3.1 Models of Corporate strategy

This section reviews two corporate strategy models to create a broader view and discussion of how corporate strategy is affected by informal structures.

(a) McKinsey 7s model

According to Kocaoglu and Demir (2019) the Mckinsey 7s model was postulated by Robert H. Waterman, Jr. and Tom Peters in the 1980's who were two consultants assigned to craft a corporate strategy tool that would monitor change within the organisation. Kocaoglu and Demir (2019) drawing from Şalvarlı and Doğu (2018) assert that this model is widely used by organisations. Commenting on the McKinsey 7s model Awino, (2017) argues that while many scholars have addressed corporate strategy few have dared to comment on implementation of strategy which this model (Mckinsey 7s model) seeks to achieve. Given this background the study will utilise this model to critic the role and function of the informal structures on corporate strategy implementation Table 1 below explains the 7 elements in the model. The key components of this model are systematically explained with a brief reference to theories and ideas used in this study.

Table 1: The McKinsey 7s model elements

Element	Description	Comments
Strategy	Allocation of resources in line with identified goals, vision, mission, customers & Competition	If resources are not well managed this may expose the organisation to rivals and create contention in social groupings
Structure	Matrix, Geographic, Flat, Wide, Horizontal and vertical relationships	Structure and strategy are intertwined. Organisational charts do not mirror the social structures that arise due to the organisational structure
Systems	procedures, processes and routines at the workplace	These systems according to structuration theory create structures that are stored in the memory traces as signification, domination and legitimation. See 3.2.3
Skills	Core competencies of individuals/Organisation	Gives competitive advantage to the firm
Staff	Number and type of people in an organisation	This shows the dimension of diversity in the organisation. Employees have individual and group differences- Social Identity theory.
Style	That is the organisational culture in terms of how managers attempt to manage employees	Management style e.g., autocratic style may motivate a lot of informal groups to be hostile against management and the organisation
Shared Value	This is the interconnecting centre which defines what the organisation stands for and its central beliefs	This is the core of corporate strategy because it speaks of the mission, vision, goals and how these should be widely shared by employees.

The seven components of this model and how the individual components relate to each other are shown in figure 2.8 below.
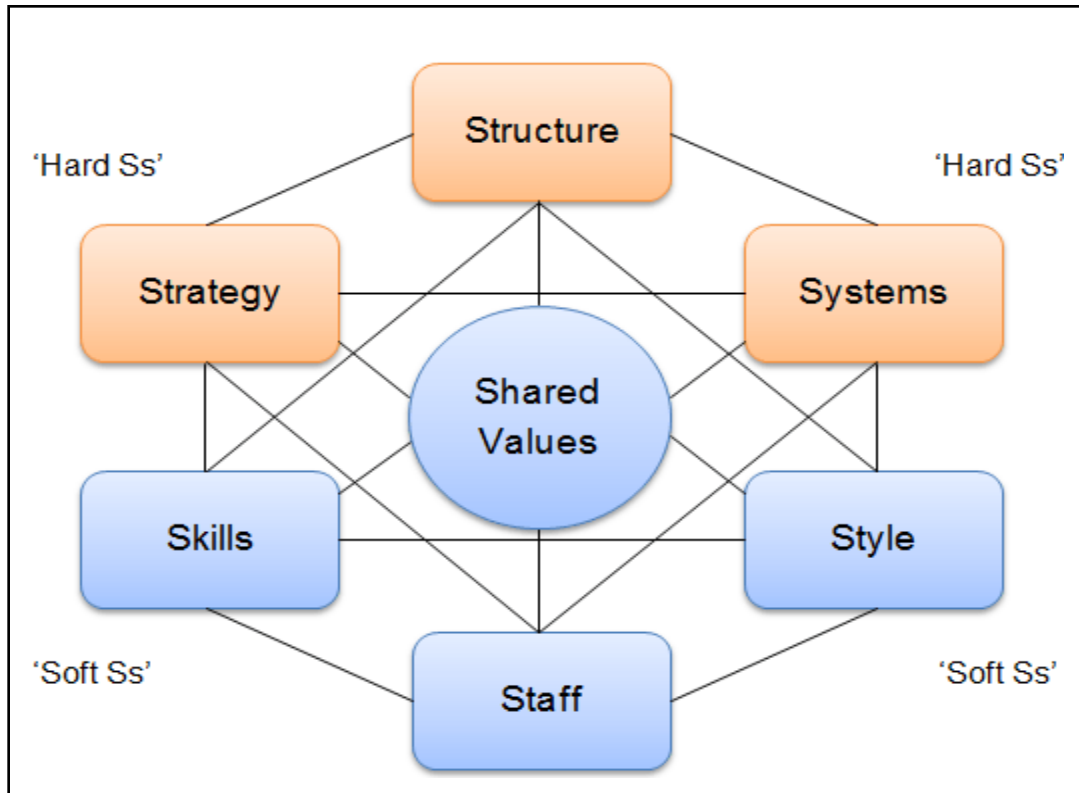
Figure 2.8: The McKinsey 7s model: (Waterman & Peters, 1980)

(II) Key component of the model: Shared Values

Shared values among general employees, management and shareholders have proven to be key to the success of most corporate strategies as argued by Okafor (2008). Drawing from this premise (Okafor, 2008) the study notes that the organisation must create these shared values amidst values that are espoused by different social groups. The model clearly shows that without shared values it will be difficult to draw organisational commitment and to implement corporate strategy. The study argues that investigation of the influence of informal structure on corporate strategy is critical to establishing a basis for the establishment of shared values. The below section discusses a corporate strategy model that combines sociology, psychology and strategic management.

(b) Behavioural strategy

Piórkowska (2016) through a multi-level perspective that combines sociology, psychology and strategic management, posits that context is critical in shaping the behaviour of employees from individual, team and Organisational level. Drawing from the model the study argues that comprehensive corporate strategy should be based on elaborate appreciation of sociological dynamics that affect the individual, team and organisation. Aşçı *et al.*, (2015) assert that the individuals are social creatures who survive in a group that enjoys formal and informal relations that are created for various goals and these groups may have a negative effect on corporate strategy. Recent studies in behavioural strategy a subdivision of corporate strategy have tried to use a sociological lens in defining corporate behaviour. However, Ring and van de Ven, (1992) Cited in Gibbons, Scott & Fhionnlaoich (2015) acknowledge that most scholars have migrated to economics grounded perspectives of corporate strategy. Drawing from the insight given by the below model, the study builds upon a multi-level approach (Individual, teams and organisation) to investigate the influence of informal structures on corporate strategy. Figure 2.9 below is a behavioural strategy model that demonstrates the influence of context on all the three dimensions of the organisation.
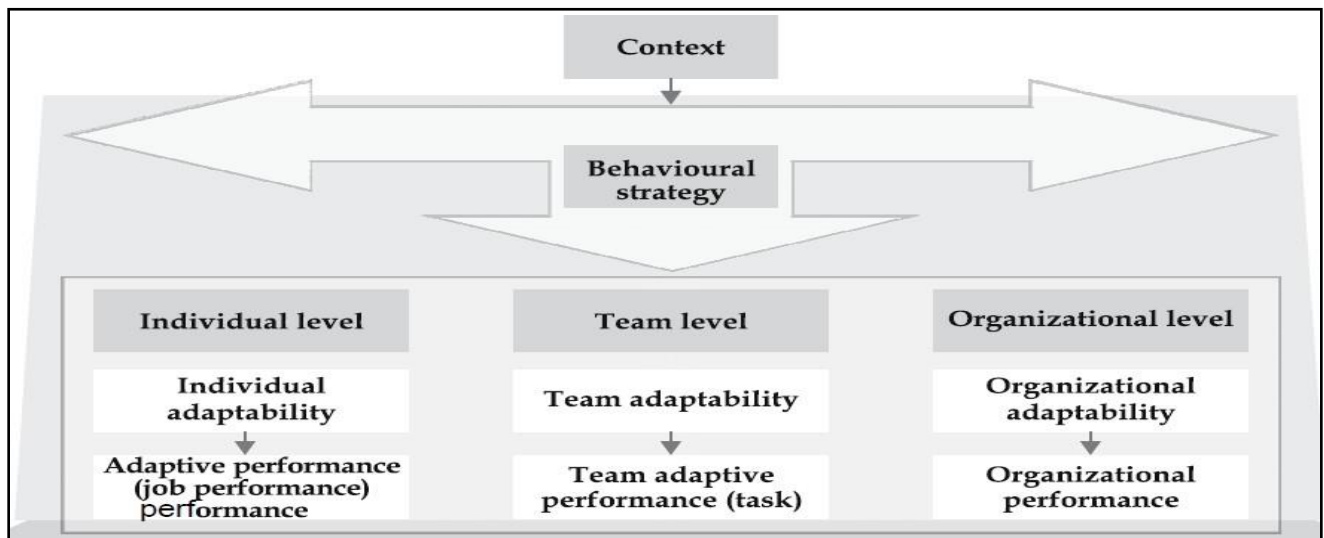
Figure 2.9: Behavioural Strategy: (Source: Piórkowska, 2016)

2.3.2 The link between corporate strategy and informal structures

Corporate strategy relies on buy in of employees based on communication which is usually transmitted through official channels. However, according to Macdonald (1992) informal structures through informal communication may destabilise corporate strategy. Drawing from the afore mentioned the study argues that the internal collaboration is key in ensuring the success of corporate strategy. The internal environment is dominated by informal structures that rely on social relationships to discuss the acceptance of corporate strategy or rejection thereof. It is against this background that the study has taken a keen interest in literature on informal structures.

2.4 Conceptualisation of Literature review

There is great acceptance amongst the scholars that social variables embedded in the social context gives an elaborate view of the social ties, social relationships and social networks within the organisation. This in-depth appreciation of informal structures enables the study to investigate the underlying social antecedents that underpin the influence of informal structures on corporate strategy. Drawing from literature discussed this far figure 2.10 below shows the interplay between informal structures and corporate strategy to establish a broad understanding of informal structures.
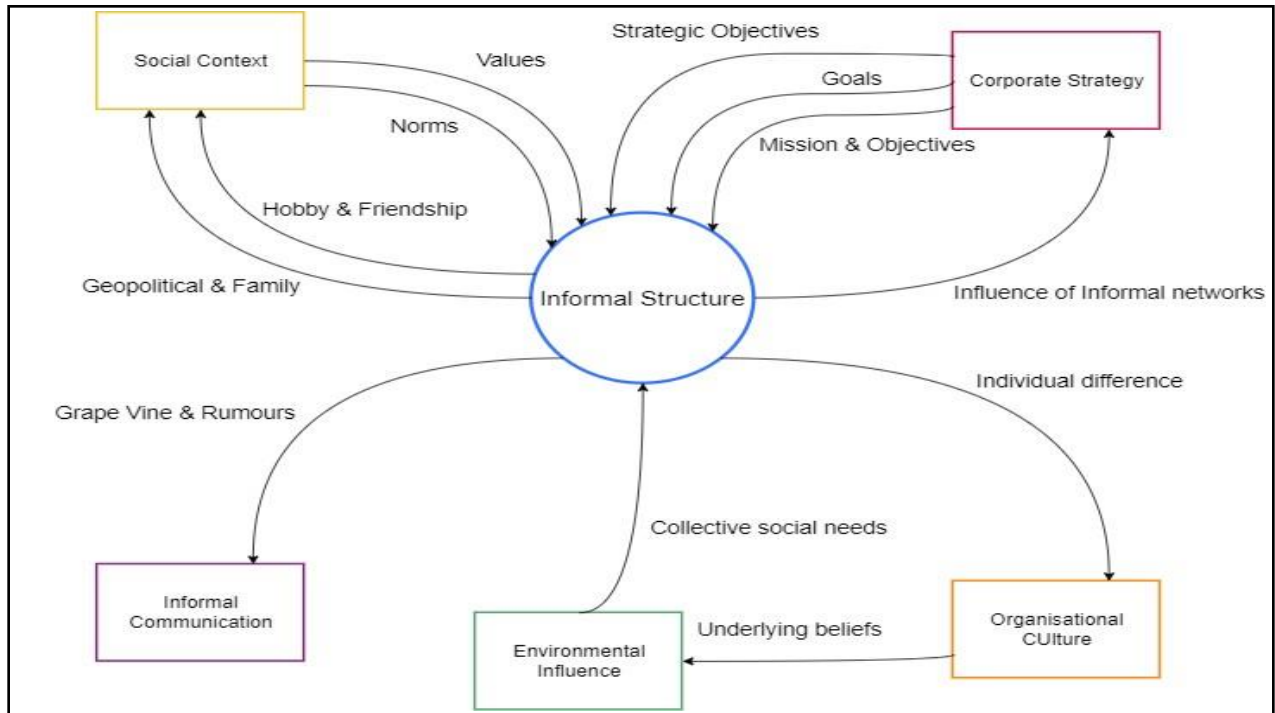
Figure 2.10: Literature review conceptualisation

Figure 2.10 clearly shows that the social context has underlying social and psychological antecedents that underpin the interplay between informal structures and corporate strategy. According to literature different locations have unique social variables that affect social ties, social networks, which in turn affect how employees in various informal groups perceive and interpret corporate strategy. The conceptual issues like social context, organisational culture and environmental influence in figure 2.10 are discussed in chapter three (conceptual frameworks).

2.5 Summary

The chapter commenced with a critical analysis of classical theories, neo classical theories and contemporary management theories. The chapter established that neo classical theories which are inclined to informal structure management were established in direct response to the limitations of classical theories. The premise of classical theories created a bloodless organisation that had a lot of inflexible boundaries marked by rules,

procedures and strict production targets. The classical theories did not consider the social dimension of labour and this gap gave rise to the neo classical theories. The neo classical theories considers human factors as intervening elements to management of informal structures. The neo classical theories was limited in that it bunched the needs of employees into one block. The modern management theories addressed the notion of homogenous needs assumed by the human relations theory by arguing that the needs of employees are divergent. The modern management theory also taps from the scientific school of thought by borrowing mathematical and scientific concepts to explain the complexity of the organisation. The study also critically analysed organisational culture which is because of ongoing behavioural trends set by both formal and informal structures. The study summarised management theory and indicated its relevance to the topic under study.

CHAPTER THREE: Contextual Framework and Theoretical Lens

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed prior literature, current literature and contemporary models of conceptualising informal structures. The previous chapter also discussed limitations of both literature and models reviewed. The study in its attempt to build on the existing reality of informal structures suggests a conceptual framework that addresses all the gaps identified. The conceptual framework functions as the mind map of the study and the theoretical lens provides a theoretical reasoning that underpins the philosophical assumptions of the study. Adom, Hussain and Joe, (2018) citing Peshkin, (1993) and Camp (2001) argue that a conceptual framework provides a visual picture of the progression of how the phenomenon will be studied. Adom, Hussain and Joe (2018) further state that the progression should vividly show the linkage of concepts, empirical research and theories used to conceptualise the phenomenon. Jozkowski (2017) citing Ravitch and Riggan (2016) is of the view that a conceptual framework provides the basis for generalisability, accomplished framework for data collection and the subsequent analysis of data. More importantly the conceptual framework avoids the oversimplification of the academic inquiry and therefore leads to academic rigor in the analysis of concepts and theories that are relevant to the study. The choice of the theories used to construct the theoretical lens are informed by the conceptual framework. Drawing from the previous chapter the conceptual framework entails the social context, cultural context, Geopolitical groups, historical context and technological context.

3.1.1 Social context

Burke, Joseph, Pasick and Barker (2009) articulate that social, cultural, organisational, historical and political influences are perceived to be background variables that inform beliefs which are theorised to be the dominant influence of individuals and group behaviour. To gain a deeper insight into the influence of social ties on corporate strategy it is important for the study to explore background variables to establish a social context specific study of the social ties within the organisation. South Africa has several social

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aspects that are briefly and systematically reviewed with a focus of gaining deeper understanding into the dynamics of the prevailing social context.

(a) Apartheid influence of the social context

South Africa is relatively confronted with a social ecological setting that is derived from 1948 when apartheid was made an official policy of the government. The afore mentioned policy mainly separated people along racial lines. However, De la Sablonnière, Auger, Taylor, Crush and Mcdonald (2013) state that there has been increased willingness to unite mainly the two major races (Whites and blacks) in South Africa, of which this has been achieved with partial success. Furthermore, De la Sablonnière *et al.* (2013) state that the divisions also extend to the different tribes within the black communities. The dimensional division of tribes and races accounts for the problematic inter relations within the organisational setups in South Africa. Rehbein (2018) further argues that the apartheid hierarchical classes established in 1948 has fragmented the society by establishing entrenched social classes. These social classes affect social ties within the informal structures and this has downstream effects on corporate strategy which relies on synergy. There is an emerging social philosophy that attempts to contain the historical events in South Africa, this philosophy will be contrasted to the western interactional philosophy to justify the contextual gap pursued by the study.

(b) Ubuntu and the western social philosophy

The African social context is vastly different from western social context which form the basis for organisational theory development. Commenting on the issue of social coherence Bolden (2014) cited in Coghlan and Brydon-Miller (2014) alludes to the social philosophy of 'Ubuntu', the premise of his argument is based on the disparity between European and African social philosophies. Bolden (2014) argues that the European interactional philosophy is based on radical individualism (I am because I am) yet the Southern African born social philosophy of 'Ubuntu' is based on moderate individualism and communalism (I am because we are). While the study acknowledges the 'Ubuntu'

concept it is, however, very evident that this philosophy has not worked as a panacea in ridding the curse of violence and contention in South Africa. The intention of the study is therefore to develop a context specific framework that applies to the unique setting of Africa and South Africa in particular.

(c) Social impact of unemployment

de Witte, Rothmann and Jackson (2012) commenting on the social and psychological impact of unemployment in South Africa cite Dollard and Winefield (2002); Kingdon and Knight (2004), point out that unemployment results in anxiety, depression and low self-esteem. Interestingly Nichols, Mitchell and Lindner (2013) posit that these effects are long term and may manifest even when one eventually gets a job. The study therefore maintains that these negative social consequences affect corporate strategy because they result in increased hostility, confusion and contention in the workplace. de Witte et al, (2012) further points out that the effects of unemployment in Africa are dire because of the absence of elaborate social security systems that are found in western countries. The study further argues that this dichotomy between the impact of unemployment in African and Western countries is self-explanatory of the vast difference of the social context of these continents. Given the above position it is therefore justified for the study to explore informal structures in the unique context of South Africa because this unique context has not been elaborately exposed in literature. The position of the study is further supported by Mom and Omoyele (2019) who argue that organisational theory has greatly been developed according to western based social contexts.

Cowan and Murdoch (2006) citing Honadle 1999; Grimble & Wellard 1997; Johnson et al. 2005; Howden 2006 expose that the social context presents a myriad of interrelated layers of social aspects that affect various stake holders in different ways. The study explores the social context because corporate strategy requires an integrated approach that harmonise the divergent social aspects of all concerned stakeholders. To this end the study explores other social aspects to gain insight into the dynamics of social ties and the subsequent influence of the same on corporate strategy.

3.1.2 Cultural Context

(a) Communication and Culture

Ntuli (2012) citing Steinberg (1994) exposes that communication takes place within the confines of culture and sometimes due to cultural differences miscommunication often occurs. South Africa has a cultural diversity which is mirrored by 11 official languages however, Scheepers (2010) asserts that South Africa is still greatly fragmented along tribal and racial lines. It is important for the study to explore the cultural context since corporate strategy heavily relies on communication and social harmony within the organisation. Miscommunication that occurs due to cultural divergences may result in corporate strategy dissonance.

(b) Cultural divergence and Separation of races

Commenting on the group areas Act of 1950 which separated people according to race, Cochrane and Chellan (2017) argue that this separation entrenched fault lines that are visibly evident in the South African context. The polarisation that has been a result of this separation may present challenges regarding the concept of social cohesion within the organisation, of which corporate strategy strongly relies on it. Further commenting on the volatile situation in South Africa and in particular xenophobia, Choane, Shulika and Mthombeni (2011) citing Nell (2009) mention that cultural factors like identity and nationalism accounts for the repulsive behaviour of South Africans. Choane, Shulika and Mthombeni (2011) further state that this repulsive behaviour is caused by unemployment and scarcity of opportunities. The anger and agitation are usually carried over to the workplace where corporate strategy is meant to be a mediating framework that is driven by cohesion and smooth flow of information.

(c) Concept of xenophobia and cultural context

According to Mamabolo, (2015) the repulsive behaviour to foreigners is best described as Afro phobia since the action is mostly directed to black (African) foreigners. The

premise of targeting fellow Africans is predicated on the fact that immigrants from Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia and neighbouring countries readily accept low wages and that they also exploit the little business opportunities available for locals. However, Mubangizi (2021) commenting on xenophobia in the workplace and in business refutes that xenophobia has its roots in the socio-cultural, political and economic matrix. He (Mubangizi, 2021) argues that xenophobia has its roots in the pre-1994 divide and rule strategy of the apartheid regime. The social aspects and historical factors discussed so far clearly demonstrates that South Africa has a unique context which requires an in-depth qualitative study.

(d) Language and cultural context

Thobejane (2017) asserts that language in South Africa is still dominated by inflections of patriarchy and hegemonic gender discrimination against females. Further to the issue of discrimination embedded in language, Sinden (2017) points out that despite the excellent anti gender discrimination policies, South Africa still has challenges in accepting female leadership. The study notes that the gap and contention between male and females presents a social order that may affect corporate strategy since some of the managers championing strategy may be females.

3.1.3 Geopolitical & Kin groups

Fu *et* al (2019) postulated the above term (Geopolitical/ Kin groups) to denote family friends and employees that originate from the same home area. Joubert (2017) asserts that there is now lot of various ethnic groups employed in different South African organisations due to the institution of inclusive labour laws. However, geopolitical groups may be distracted from corporate strategy because of time needed to indulge in social engagements and biased decisions in favour of group members. On the other hand, Ding, Li, Yuan and Chen (2006) cited by Fu *et al.* (2019) argue that Geopolitical and kin groups contribute to corporate strategy through work ease and shared understanding.

3.1.4 Historical and Political context of South Africa

According to Mhlauli, Salani and Mokotedi (2015) apartheid was instituted in 1948 and reforms to end it where propagated post 1994. However, the trio points out that apartheid never died in 1994 bust it metamorphosed to subtle racism that cannot be immediately noticed. Webster and Omar (2003) citing von Holdt (2002) echo the same sentiments by coining a term that he calls 'apartheid workplace regime'. The ANC led government laid a blueprint of labour relations based reforms in 1994, however, Anseeuw and Pons-vignon (2009) assert that the continued strikes and violence in the mining sector is indicative of frustration of employees to the slow transformational transition. The study notes that the behaviour of employees is not only shaped by current corporate policies but is also influenced by past experiences and overwhelming expectation for change. These past experiences and expectation influence the social behaviour of employees and may lead to direct impact on corporate strategy. Anseeuw and Pons-vignon (2009) further states that several publications that have analysed the evolution of South Africa as a nation have majored on broad generalisations drawn from huge data sets that have overlooked the qualitative aspects of post-apartheid effects and politics in the workplace.

3.1.5 The role of technology in informal structures

Banerjee and Singh (2015) citing Imundo (1991) notes that the influx of online gossip driven by untraceable rumour mongers within corporate social structures poses a serious threat to formal communication because informal communication is preferred more by the external communities. Banerjee and Singh (2015) further citing Blake (2008); Goroshko & Samoilenko (2011) also points out that most organisations are concerned because of the bulk of uncensored messages concerning their organisations which are posted online. According to McAndrew, Bell, and Garcia (2007) cited in Kuo *et al.* (2015) gossip facilitates information transmission and the behaviour of employees is also connected to the quality of gossip regarding the organisation. The study notes that the social behaviour of employees and the value they place on corporate strategy may be influenced positively or negatively depending on the unfiltered gossip posted on social platforms. According to Ben-Ze'ev

(1994) cited in Kuo *et al.* (2015) gossip fulfils natural social human needs and especially the need to belong. The study notes that human beings have a natural affinity for gossip hence online platforms that advance gossip are increasingly becoming popular. Different informal groups that discuss corporate affairs online may have their own interest that does not support the organisational vision or corporate strategy. According to Kuo, Chang, Quinton, Lu and Lee (2015) online gossip has the advantage of immediacy, can be personalised and can be presented in a variety of forms. The study notes that if detrimental information or corporate secrets that apply to corporate strategy are leaked through these platforms this may have negative consequences on the organisation. Furthermore, online gossip creates a trend that leads to a normative reasoning frame of which the norms espoused on the platform may be in sharp contrast to corporate strategy. The conceptual frames discussed can thus be demonstrated as shown in figure 3.1 below.

3.1.6 Conceptual Framework
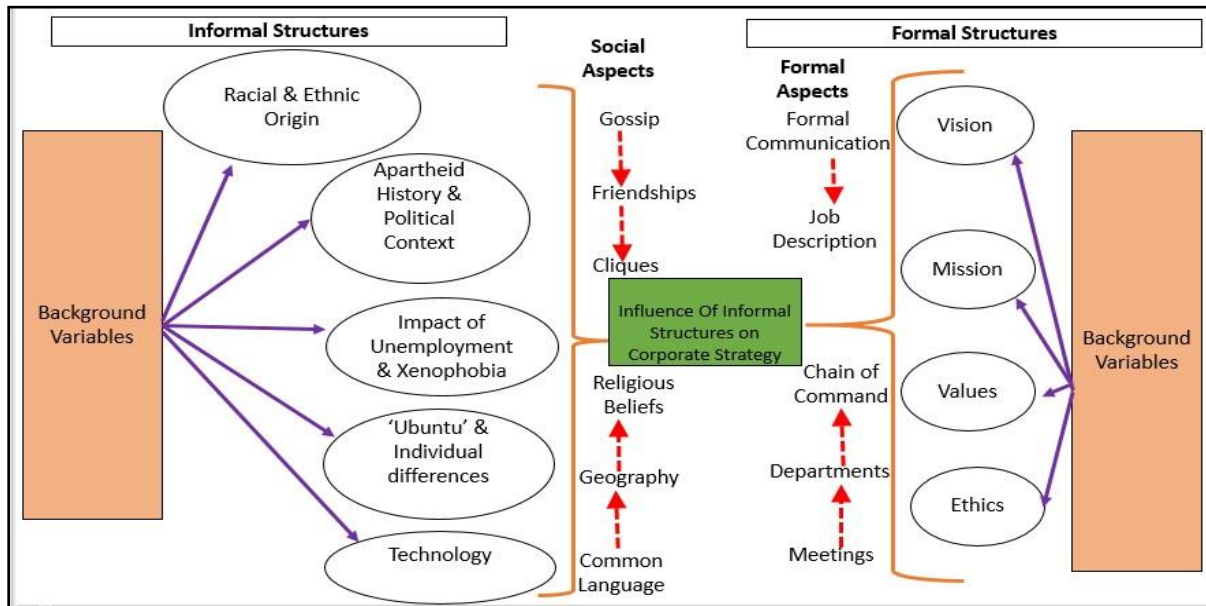
Figure 3.1: Influence of informal structure on corporate strategy Conceptual framework

Figure 3.1 above conceptualises social antecedents and perceptual consequences of employees and how these affects corporate strategy. The framework enables the study to gain deeper insight into the social behaviour of employees and the determinants that shape those behaviours. The insight gained thereof allows the study to systematically appreciate or understand the responses of employees to corporate strategy.

3.2 Theoretical framework

3.2.1 Importance of theoretical frameworks to the study

Grant and Osanloo (2014) points out that theoretical frameworks provide a grounding base for literature review, methods, theoretical lens and analysis of data. Adom, Hussain and Joe (2018) further argue that without a theoretical framework the study would lack clarity of precision and structure. Kivunja (2018) is of the view that theory allows the study to pursue a structured context in investigating a phenomenon because it enables the researcher to draw from established concepts, knowledge and debates by scholars in the relevant field. It is against this background that the study discusses several social frames which are best represented by Structuration and social identity theories. The relevance of these two theories that form a theoretical lens to conceptualise the phenomenon are also discussed in the below sections.

3.2.2 Why a theoretical lens was used in the study

A theoretical lens was used to guide the precision of the research. Theoretical frameworks provide foundation to the rationale, research questions, data collections methods and research instruments of the study (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). The dual theoretical lens (Structuration and Social Identity theories) used in the study enabled the study to investigate underlying and covert dimensions of the phenomenon under study (Yilmaz, 2013).

Given the above background the study employed social theory in order to achieve three critical outcomes: (i) accomplished framework of analysis (ii) basis for field development

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and (iii) a world perspective (Wacker, 1998). The three critical outcomes are discussed below.

(i) Accomplished framework of analysis

The study would lack direction and parameters of inquiry if theory was not used in order to provide guidance of the material argument to pursue (Haugh, 2012). The lack of theory would reduce the report to a lay report that does not make substantive contribution to the body of knowledge.

(ii) Basis for field development

The research using theory was able to question the relevance of theories in contextualising the influence of informal structures on corporate strategy. The use of theory and theoretical analysis enabled the study to establish gaps in the body of knowledge. The gap identified in organisational theory enabled the study to make both practical and theoretical contribution to the body of knowledge

(iii) World perspective

Theory provides a context of reasoning and appreciation of a phenomenon in order to provide a systematic analysis of a research problem. Adom, Hussain and Joe (2018) posit that theory provides guidelines of inquiry and provide a basis for determination of research methods, data collection and analysis. The section below proceeds to give an overview of the theories used in the study.

3.2.3 OVERVIEW OF STRUCTURATION THEORY: DUALITY OF STRUCTURE

In defining Structuration theory Misir (2015) explains that this theory was developed by Giddens (1984) in response to two opposing principles or questions of determinism (orthodox Marxism) and volunteerism (functionalism). Misir (2015) further contends that failure of scholars to conflate the two opposing principles created a dualism that fragmented the physical and the mental. The study notes that Giddens (1984) posit that

agents are aware of social structures around them and the interaction between them and social structures which recursively creates or modifies structures. The notion of recursive creation of structure emerged the concept of duality of structure. Modalities are the means by which agents draw from structure to inform their decisions e.g., interpretive schemes (McGarry, 2016). Informal structures operate through unofficial rules, procedures, and strategies. The unofficial rules and procedures influence the way agents perceive corporate strategy and accounts for the influence informal structures has on corporate strategy. According to Mess (2016) determinism is the process through which employees adhere to norms, values and through time and space they alter the same values. The mutual relationship between the social structures and rules is defined as the duality of structure. Ashley (2010) defines duality of structure as structure and agency being mutually constitutive. This means that social structure is reproduced by ongoing human action. Van Veenstra, Melin and Axelsson (2014) mentions that the relationship between agency and structure is dialectic, meaning to say the interface between the two progressively creates structure. Time-space relations refer to the notion that social activities are situated in a specific time and space, and they cannot easily be disconnected from their context and placed into another situation. This means the context of the Northern Cape cannot be imposed on the Gauteng Province, since societal influences of the two places are different. It is for this reason that the study has elaborately discussed the social context in the conceptual framework. Structuration theory is diagrammatically shown in figure 3.2 below.
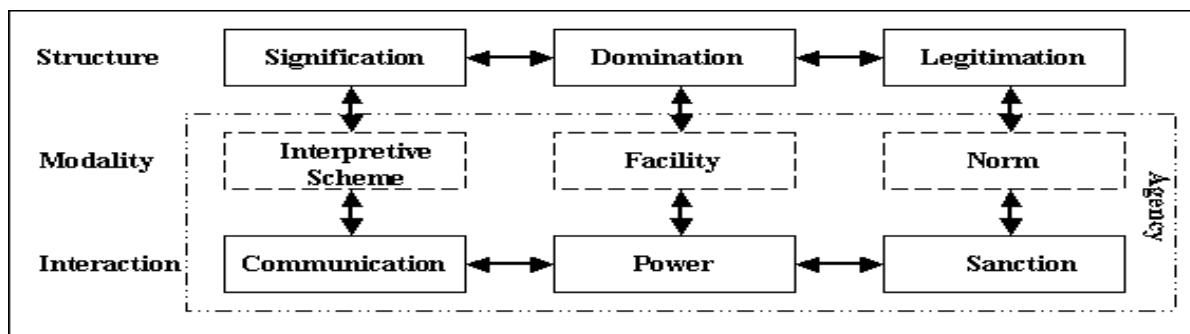
Figure 3.2: Structuration theory (Source: Giddens, 1984)

Although Thi Pham (2019) acknowledges that there have been few studies that have focused on the applicability of structuration theory to organisational contexts, the theory has been widely accepted in organisational studies. Scholars have used the theory mainly to analyse the relationship between structure and agents. Whittington (2010) explains that agency is the ability of agents to exercise freewill. The notion of freewill aligns with volunteerism where an agent has freedom of choices. Interestingly Bratton, Callinan, Forshaw and Sawchuk (2007) cited in Oppong (2014) articulates the complex conflation of volunteerism and determinism because while an agent is free to make choices their behaviour is also constrained by social structures. The two epistemic concepts (volunteerism and determinism) create what is termed as the duality of structure. Iyamu (2017) defines duality of structure as structural properties of social systems that function as both mediums and outcomes of the practices that constitute those structures. Put differently these social systems partially constrain and enable behaviour. The study notes that the background variables or social aspects discussed in literature model behaviour of informal structures though agents can choose to act outside of the influence of social structures. The concept of choices also brings in a psychological concept of individual difference.

Commenting on modelling of behaviour stones (2012) as cited in Kennedy, O'Gorman and Lee (2021) states that structure has potential to influence behaviour through enduring codes of moral values. Structure is produced by ongoing human action and this is called the duality of structure. As employees interact enduring patterns of behaviour or moral codes are formed which directs the individuals in that group. The study explored the enduring patterns of behaviour in the informal structure with the aim of determining the influence of social ties on corporate strategy.

Ndiweni, Haque and Hassan (2018) citing Giddens (1984) assert that agents are not docile, but they have the capacity to reflect and monitor their behaviour and that of others and they also rationalise their actions by drawing from tacit knowledge and norms embedded in their society. This means that the behaviour of employees is affected by

their background surroundings and behaviour of fellow acquaintances in the organisation which aligns with the concept of the social context discussed in the previous sections. This enabled the study to consider the influence of the setting on the agent's behaviour and this aids the study to address the contextual gap discussed in literature. In agreement with the literature review of the study which underscore the contextual gap, Kennedy, O'Gorman and Lee (2021) citing Tsui (2004) and Johns (2006) expose that there is increased need to produce contextual knowledge in organisational studies.

Van Rooyen (2013) argues that the social context is fundamental in translation of meaning since people who share common origin also largely share the same understanding. Different settings of events might mean different things to different cultural or religious groups and as such structuration and social identity theory enabled an enquiry into the subjective experiences of agents. Omerzel and Jurdana (2016) cite the argument by Lunenburg (2012) that Structure transmits strategy through policy, rules and regulations. Informal structures then respond to the policies, rules and strategies subsequently creating either a positive or negative influence on corporate strategy. Orlikowski (2000) cited in Heracleous (2013) explains that interpretation of events and behaviour is done through 'Interpretative schemes' which are standardized, shared stocks of knowledge that humans draw on to interpret behaviour and events. Interpretive schemes are modalities that enable meaningful interaction of agents. Facilities are the means e.g., material, financial or human resources through which intentions and power is exercised. Veenstra, Melin and Axelsson (2014) further concur that allocative resources denotes the power to distribute resources and authoritative refers to the power to control people. It is the need for power to control resources and people that creates hostile informal structures. Since the thought processes of agents are covert, structuration theory was used to explore the influence of individual thought processes on corporate strategy (Nejad, Abbaszadeh & Hassani, 2016). Legros and Cislaghi (2020) cites Boytsun et al., (2011) in defining norms that they are the rules governing sanctioned or appropriated conduct, and they define the legitimacy of interaction, these rules and norms can either be formal or informal. The study investigates how social interaction builds stocks of knowledge which influence

the perception of employees either to support or sabotage corporate strategy.

The study through literature reviews notes that subjective meaning occurs through repetitive actions which then become embodiment of structure. This structure then influences human behaviour and contribute to the construction of meaning within the organisation. The other individuals that are influenced by these social structures can also in turn alter these social structures. The bidirectional relationship between agents and structure is thus defined as duality of structure (Rigby, Woulfin & März, 2016).

For Giddens (1984) as well as for Canary and Tarin (2017), organizational structures need to be enacted by people in order to be in existence. Agents through formal policies can enact formal structures through formal rules. The same agents can enact informal structures through informal rules. Structuration theory enables the study to explore the behaviour of agents towards corporate strategy as influenced by structure. Kort and Gharbi (2013) contend that the continuous rationalisation of behaviour according to structuration theory is defined as legitimation and once behaviour is legitimised it is accepted as norms and values that ultimately determine behaviour. The study notes that Giddens (1984) saw his theory as 'a general ontology of human agency in the world. Structuralism the basis of the theory of structuration entails the identification of the relationship between the individuals and the social forces like norms, values and principles. Structuration is an attempt to balance the role that actors play with their limited choice of position in history and in the social fabric they find themselves in (Ashley, 2010).

Behaviour and structure are intertwined and with regards to informal structures people go through a socialisation process and become dependent on the existing social structures. Initially agents are dependent on structure but alter structure as they progressively acquire new stocks of knowledge through social interaction (Rigby, Woulfin & März, 2016). This usually happens as employees are joined by new employees with diverse backgrounds and orientation who offer alternative perspectives from the status quo.

The core of structuration theory is the relationship of an agent with social structures, the agent draws from unconscious component which is stored in the memory traces. These

memory traces have structural properties called signification, domination and legitimation. The agent draws from past experiences and recurrent patterns in the unconscious to construe meaning through signification and draws authority to manage people and resources. The unconscious information stored by agents then constitutes knowledgeability stored as stocks of information that function as interpretive schemes in making decisions. The stocks of information define the norms and resources the employee can use to meet corporate strategy (Veenstra, Melin & Axelsson, 2014). Drawing from the argument by Veenstra, Melin and Axelsson (2014) it can be established that there is a mutual relationship between structure and corporate strategy. It can further be argued that if the structure or system of doing things stored in the memory traces is largely contrary to corporate strategy then the agent will draw from these stocks of knowledge and act aggressively to corporate strategy. If this occurs management would be persuaded to reconfigure their strategy and these changes may subsequently affect behaviour. This notion of mutual dependence between the structure and strategy allude to the notion of social identity which is discussed below.

3.3 Social identity theory

Islam (2014) asserts that social identity theory was postulated by Tajfel (1978); Tajfel and Turner (1979) and he further explains that social identity is built on social categorization, social identification, and social comparison. Commenting on social identity theory Korostelina (2014) explains that. Self-categorisation is when individuals assign themselves to groups based on homogenous beliefs, behaviour and attitudes. Social identification is self-definition that is influenced by the composition of group members. Social comparison is where one compares themselves with others and defines their traits as similar or different from theirs (Mckinley, Mastro & Warber, 2014). The comparison leads to group identity which is founded on the comparison of the in group and the out group. The in group embodies the preference that an agent strongly identifies with while

the out group represents limited common preferences and similarity in personality traits. Once an employee identifies perceived similar personality traits in a group of employees, they will proceed to join that group. The employee will then embrace the norms and values of the group based on the homogeneous interests. The groups formed lead to stereotypical thinking patterns where group members only support institutional decisions that identify with their group norms and values (Mckinley, Mastro & Warber, 2014). The in-group notion has strong potential of interfering with corporate strategy and institutional vision. Gagnon and Bourhis (1996) commenting on the minimal group paradigm which underpins the concept of in and out group, assert that the in and out group discrimination occur automatically. The discrimination is linked to completion of self-identity, satisfaction and resources and based on this understanding the study notes that these intergroup conflicts pose a potential threat to corporate strategy.

The study applied social identity theory to determine how social influence affects behaviour in relation to corporate strategy. Social identity theory has been regarded as one of the fundamental constructs in establishing a grounded understanding of intergroup relations. Social identity deals with self-definition of individuals based on the personality traits of fellow group members. Ashforth and Mael (1989) further explains that employees may define themselves according to salient demographic variables like race, age, gender, nationality and religious faith. These various groups disseminate values, norms, beliefs and common stereotype thinking patterns. More importantly Ashforth and Mael (1989) contend that that an organisation is a social group that employees can identify with or disapprove of. It is important that the values and beliefs that are held within an organisation identity and support all the aspects of corporate strategy. Basing on the social identity theory the study argues that leaders who deviate from group norms are deemed as ineffective by group members. The fear of being alienated by fellow group members forces leaders in the social groups to adhere to group norms even though the norms undermine corporate strategy. Group norms and values create a common thinking pattern of individuals (Funder & Fast, 2010). It is against this background that there is a possibility that judgement and perception of policy could be affected by group think. It can

be argued that perception of individuals can be modified by associates, context, setting and time. Self-categorization theory builds upon social identity theory, which posit that a group has stereotype-consistent thoughts, which strongly models feelings and behaviour of group incumbents (Hitlin, 2011).

Stets and Burke (2000) assert that Identity is established when an individual attributes their personality traits to similar individuals. Employees are often attracted to individuals that possess personality traits that they are striving towards. Social identity theory posits that if there is greater psychological connection among group members then there will be greater adherence to group content. This connection has potential to unite employees around corporate goals or build a fence of resistance to corporate strategy. Feitosa et al. (2012) argue that a lot of contemporary literature has indicated that social identity theory is a perfect way of integrating different frames that deal with group dynamics across various disciplines. Fault lines are formed when individual exercise bias in favour of their subgroups, this creates division and has potential to create sustained tension amongst the groups. Halevy and Cohen (2019) mention that intergroup conflict is bound to be rife especially if there is multi association of groups and if the majority group has divergent traits from the minority groups. Social identity theory is composed of several background social variables which have been discussed in previous sections are indicated in figure 3.3.
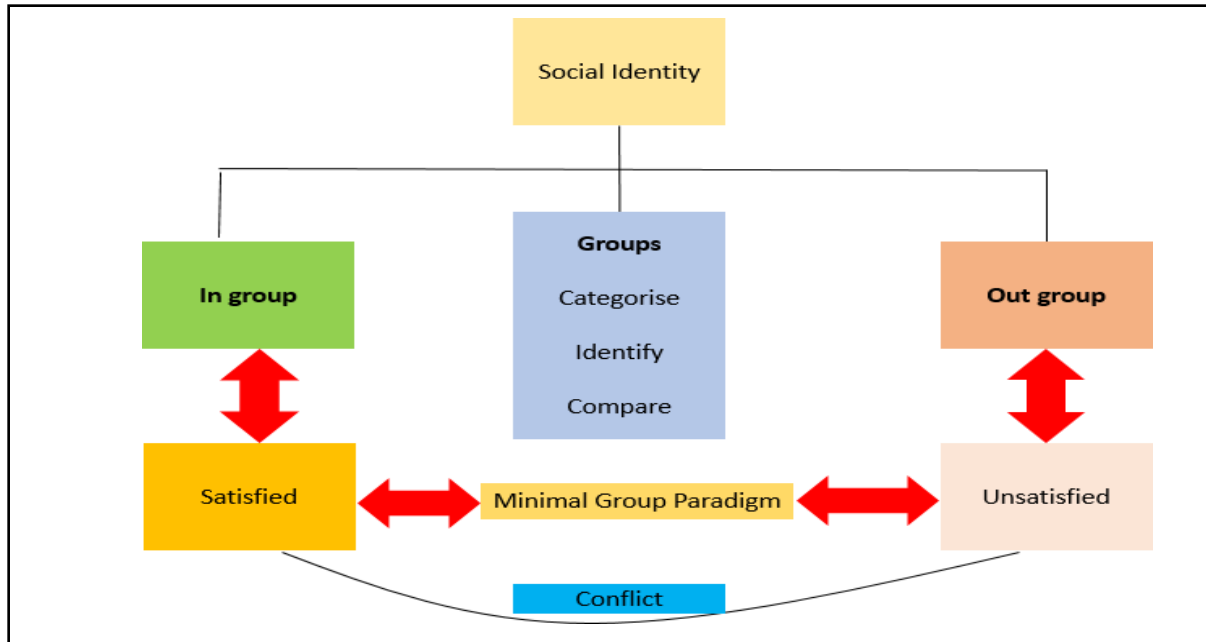
Figure 3.3: Social Identity Conceptualisation (Adapted from: LePage, 2020; Tajfel & Turner,1979)

Social identity is not static because through space and time one's identity can be modified to meet the current context of existence. Different challenges, experiences and settings shapes the identity of individuals and this makes them respond differently to corporate strategy. Hopkins and Reicher (2011) argue that social identity shapes behaviour of group members and influence their thought processes. The potential loss of status of an ethnic or racial group might create tension against other organisational subgroups. This tension might affect organisational strategy since a lot of bickering and posturing is bound to take place.

Social interaction of agents from different social groupings leads to group formation based on similarity of personality traits, ethnic origin and common interests. Based on the in-group notion it can be argued that the needs and preferences of groups within the informal structures are fragmented. These divergent views and preferences may become critical dynamics in the acceptance of corporate strategy by employees. The social self is the nature of an agent's social profile e.g., introvert or extrovert and Mishra (2016) asserts that Self-concept is critical in defining the behaviour of an agent including their relational

conduct. Regarding the issue of self-concept and its role in the organisation. Beheshtifar and Rahimi-Nezhad (2012) notes that positive self-concept leads to job satisfaction and the opposite leads to poor delivery and job dissatisfaction. The study notes that a positive self-concept leads to an employee who has good social relations and readily accepts corporate strategy while an employee with dissatisfaction suffers from poor social relations and subsequently has challenges with corporate strategy. The premise established by the study is informed by the fact that corporate strategy depends on good social ties and synergy which are vehicles for communication and collaboration which happen to be the core of corporate strategy. Due to the divisions caused by different social groups that emerge in the organisation owing to self-concept, corporate strategy might be affected since cohesion is critical in the execution of corporate strategy. Figure 3.4 is a demonstration of the self-concept.
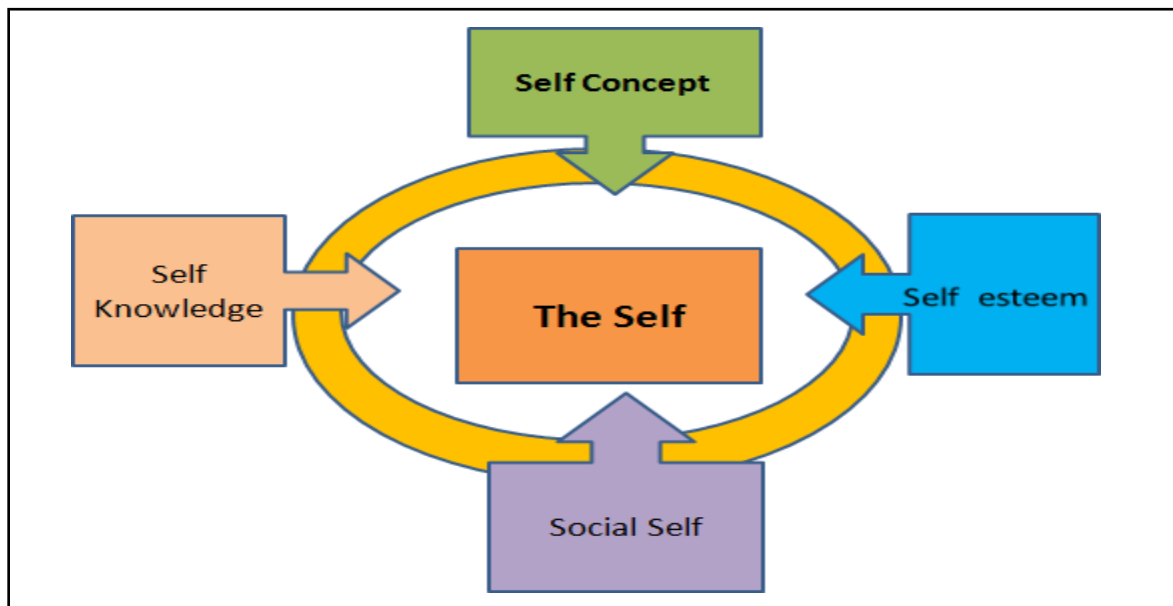
Figure 3.4: The Self-Concept (Source: Nathalya Cubas, 2013)

Collective behaviour is the norm in organisations because when agents are interacting in one place for a sustained period social networks are established. The social networks or groups become the basis upon which individuals define themselves and this collective definition defines the confidence of individuals. Hopkins and Reicher (2011) further argue that the agent learns more of themselves in these social groups leading to self-

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knowledge. Haslam *et al.* (2017) further argue that organisational studies have focused more on the dynamics of mob psychology that operates in social groups and have ignored the notion of self-concept. Groups are driven by ideological prototypes that function as interpretive schemes for agents in decision making processes. It is therefore imperative for organisational studies to deconstruct the notion of social identity to define ways of managing group behaviour in the context of divergence. The section below through figure 3.5 illustrates and explains the concept of the dual theoretical lens used in the study.

3.4 Dual theoretical lens
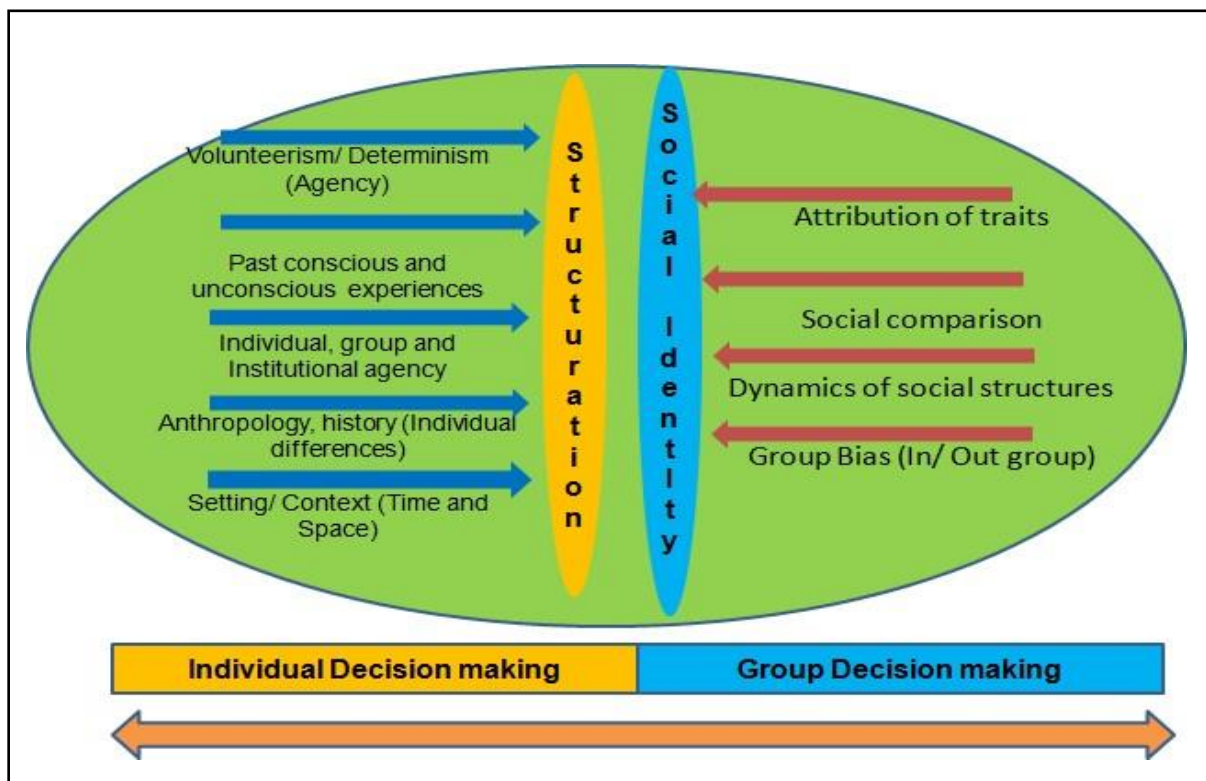
Figure 3.5: Dual theoretical lens

Figure 3.5 above demonstrates that an individual is either influenced by their own unique experiences or are driven by social interaction. The study uses the dual lens to prove where human behaviour has been influenced by individual agency or informal structures. The study will also prove where both individual and informal structure influence behaviour

of individuals. The influence that the individual or group has on an individual will unearth the underlying and covert influence of informal structure on corporate strategy.

3.5 Chapter Summary

The chapter commenced by discussing the ecological contextual frameworks that underpin the South African context and how they influence behaviour of groups within the organisation. Further to defining the contextual frameworks the chapter discussed the dual theoretical lens and demonstrated how the combined theories enables the study to achieve methodological holism using the combined social theories. The chapter concluded by discussing how the two theories were utilised to adequately explain the thought processes and subsequent response to corporate strategy of individuals and groups.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the ecological contextual perspectives that underpin the behaviour of employees within a South African setting. The chapter utilised a dual theoretical lens to provide structured focus on the examination of the research phenomenon. The chapter justified the use of the two theories and discussed broadly the intended outcome of juxta positioning the two social theories.

This chapter deals with the research philosophy, research instruments and research techniques. The study employs a descriptive singular case study method. Mariotto, Zanni and de Moraes (2014) drawing from Stake (2000) posit that a descriptive singular case study is more precise in exploring a phenomenon and establishing a new theory. Furthermore, Boblin, Ireland, Kirkpatrick and Robertson (2013) argue that comparing multi cases leads to data distortion since the contexts of multi cases are divergent. After defining the research philosophy which is qualitative the study defines the research perspectives (assumptions) which underpin the study. The study is driven by a relativist ontology and transactional or subjectivist epistemology since human behaviour is based on subjective reality (Soini & Kronqvist, 2011). This means that there is no absolute truth, truth is circumstantial and subjective. This means that individuals have unique experiences due to sociological differences like cultural upbringing, racial, tribal and many other biographic differences (Furnham, Richards & Paulhus, 2013). The epistemological and ontological framework aided in determining the data sources, research instruments, research design, sample size and sampling techniques. The chapter concludes by determining the validity of research instruments. Figure 4.1 is a diagrammatic representation of the research philosophy and perspectives of the study.
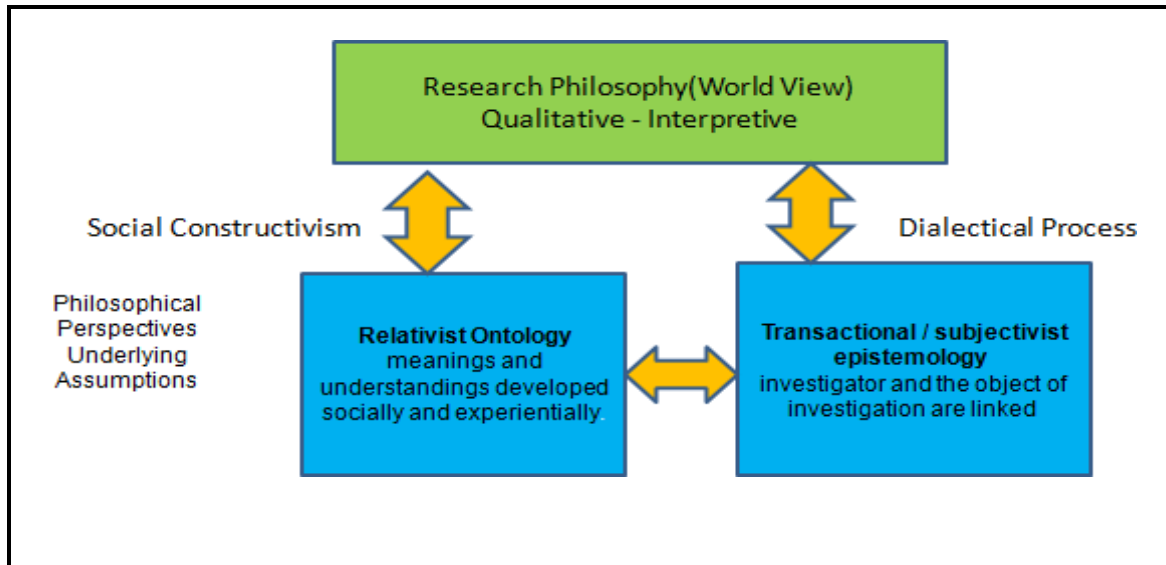
Figure 4.1: Interpretive Research

4.2 Research philosophy

Research philosophy is founded on a set of beliefs and assumption about how knowledge is abstracted. Burrell and Morgan (2016) as cited in Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019) argue that these assumptions and beliefs form a critical voice of the research and provide the guiding compass of the research direction. The natures of the phenomenon, research objectives and research questions have fundamental influence on the research philosophy to be pursued. A research philosophy is a belief that guides research instrument formulation, data collection about a phenomenon and how the data gathered should be critically analysed (Tomaszewski, Zarestky & Gonzalez, 2020). The motivation of adopting a qualitative study and using interpretive approach is outlined in the next section.

4.2.1 Interpretive research

According to Aguirre and Bolton (2014) Interpretive researchers assume that access to reality is abstracted in two forms, it's either given or socially construed. Interpretive studies usually focus on meaning and may employ multiple methods to reflect different aspects of the issue. The study uses relativist ontology because Aguirre and Bolton

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(2014) argue that this approach perceives reality as a product of individual construction. This assertion is congruent with the objective of the study which sought to establish meanings and understandings based on individual experiential levels. The study pursued transactional or subjectivist epistemology because according to Al-Ababneh (2020) people cannot be separated from their lived experiences because knowledge is context bound. The interviews were done at the mining site to avoid placing interviewees in a unique environment that did not identify with their lived experiences. The study abstracted information through semi structured interviews to contain beliefs, values and to elicit a subjective narrative of human experience. The semi structured questions enabled the study to investigate people's view to be person centred or case sensitive (Sandvik & McCormack, 2018)

The interpretive research approach led to a multi-dimensional view of the phenomenon arising from the divergent subjective perspectives of agents. This enables the study to gather and analyse in depth intrinsic dispositions of employees in the mining sector. In addition, this enables the study to critically explore the world of the participants through their own eyes, backgrounds, beliefs, and experiences. According to Creswell (2013) qualitative study leads to the abstraction of elaborate appreciation of how the agent or actor conceptualise and interpret a phenomenon. The study drawing from reviewed literature can posit that an interpretive study usually seeks to contextually define the core beliefs of actors in each setting since the construction of meaning of a given phenomenon cannot be imposed to another setting. The study focuses on a mine in the Northern Cape Province, this approach allows the study to critically analyse the belief, values and interpretation of informal structures from actors in the Northern Cape.

4.2.2 The influence of Transactional / Subjectivist epistemology

According to Mkansi and Acheampong (2012) epistemology, as a technical term in philosophy, which refers to how we know and the relationship between the knower and the known. Furthermore, subjectivist epistemology which is employed by the study is concerned with how people know what they know, including underlying assumptions that

underpin their construction of reality (Iphofen & Tolich, 2019). This enables the study to clearly explain the underlying assumptions of the researcher and to explain how these assumptions help them to understand the participant and interpret the information thereof. According to this approach, people cannot be separated from their knowledge; therefore, there is a clear link between the researcher and research subject. Congruent to transactional epistemology a field journal was maintained to demonstrate the reflective building blocks that were generated from the study. The study gained insights from the responses that were given by the participants which underpins transactional epistemology that reality is construed through social constructivism (Detel, 2015). The philosophical framing for this thesis inquiry combines constructivism with elements of structuration, organisational culture and social identity theories in conceptualising the actor's behaviour in the mining organisation. This approach arises from the background that there are a multiple of realities owing to diverse backgrounds of the research subjects. Drawing from the articulated philosophical assumptions the study pursued an interactive, qualitative, field-based approach (Denzin *et al.*, 2011; Chatterjee, 2013). The study used interviews as a method of inquiry because the epistemological stance adopted is congruent with a social and experiential construction of meaning.

4.2.3 The influence of Relativist epistemology

Guarino, Oberle and Staab (2009): Dai and He (2017) concur that there are two types of divergent ontology, namely realism and relativism. Dieronitou (2014) drawing from the work of Smith (1983) contends that relativist ontology is predicated on the premise that there is no absolute truth because multiple versions of reality exist. The study uses interviews to contain the subjective experiences and dispositions of participants since there are multiple versions of reality. Reality is not static, it develops according to the experiences of an agent (Crotty, 1998; Irene, 2014). The study based on the views of reviewed scholars posits that relativist ontology is based on the notion that reality is context-bound, it cannot be generalised or super imposed, but it can only be applied to other similar contexts and settings. Given this background the data gathered in Northern

Cape cannot be generalised to different settings. Dieronitou (2014) defines Ontology as a specification of a conceptualisation of a phenomenon by an agent. The semi structured interviews allowed the research participants to contribute meaningfully to the research by providing their own conceptualisation of the informal structure. The subsequent influence of the informal structure was also according to their individual judgement based on bounded rationality. This provides the study a multi-dimensional analysis of reality as construed through divergent circumstantial experiences. This enables the study to avoid a one dimensional and limited perspective of the phenomenon. Giordano, Rossi and Benedikter (2013) drawing from Parsons and Shils (1951); Grinker (1956); Morris (1964); Engel (1977) assert that relativist ontology is a catalogue of phenomenon that exists or may be assumed to exist. Relativist ontology allows the study to explore concrete dimensions of reality in contrast to abstract phenomenon.

Without ontology the study would lack the conceptual framework of ideas, relationships of concepts and structure of thought processes that underpin the conceptualisation of a phenomenon. Ontology allows shared meaning and bold pronouncement of knowledge (Bardon & Josserand, 2011).

4.2.4 The influence of Axiology

According to Al-Ababneh (2020) axiology is the branch of philosophy that critically assesses the role of researcher's own value on all stages of the research process. The study based on positionality presents the underlying assumptions of the researcher and briefly shows how they are connected to the research topic. The research is based on the adoption of interpretive study that sees value in a multi-dimensional analysis of unique narratives by interviewees. Axiological approach deals with positioning the research paradigm and subjecting it to critical analysis to justify the methods, instruments and methodology used in the study. Furthermore, the axiology defines the value of the research process and output to the researcher. The study is critical in that it is an attempt to contribute to organisational theory and to propose a new dual theoretical lens of analysing human behaviour within the organisation. The study also greatly fulfilled a

desire to establish answers to questions that were imposed by a daunting experience within the mining sector.

4.2.5 Positionality and personal narrative

According to Holmes (2020) in qualitative research the assumptions of the researcher are important since the researcher will directly contribute through interpretation and processing of data. Past experiences, values and norms of the researcher have an influence on the thought process of the researcher. To create a clear picture of the mental framework of the researcher regarding the topic the section below presents the personal narrative of the researcher.

(i) Personal narrative

Soon after completing high school I took a gap year and worked in a gold mine as technical assistant in a gold processing plant. At first the experience was so exciting before I encountered the radical and entrenched bickering in the organisation. Cultural divergence, unionism and ethnic diversity governed social interaction. Managers who had risen through the ranks and did not possess qualifications for their professions were largely divisive and felt insecure. The insecurity of these managers made them rely on rumours, gossip which led to bickering and politicking in the organisation. The tension and strife within the oragnisation subsequently led to the resignation of a lot of young and talented new entrants as they found the terrain and heat unbearable. The different camps that were formed in the process were aligned to managers based on tribal lines. The tribal divisions were also evident in union activities as unions mainly represented employees on tribal lines.

A class system was clear through accommodation that was categorised on one's level within the organisation. The low-level workers were situated in densely populated and poorly resourced houses that would result in a family of

ten living in a one bed roomed apartment. This kind of setting mostly led to dysfunctional families that would be translated to poor productivity, accidents in the workplace and moral decadence of employees. Amidst all this paranoia was a young man that had just finished high school and had no idea of the brutal and relentless unmasked environment of a mining organisation. Managers struggled to manage the unpredictable and hegemonic undercutting that covertly took place outside the confines of corporate structure. History of forced labour made employees view management as an instrument of oppression and hence labour movements capitalised on the apartheid rhetoric.

The apartheid rhetoric created a strong feeling of agitation in the previously disadvantaged groups which at certain times led to misdirected propensity to oppose management. The axiological stance of this research was not taken in ignorance of the limitation or researcher solipsism the personal narrative might produce but it clearly locates the researcher as a reflective situated scholar. The perilous and militarised atmosphere in the mining environment left an indelible affinity and inquisitive urge in me to make sense of the volatile setting prevalent in the mining sector. My personal narrative mentions critical issues like hegemony, corporate structure, management, unions and groups which are fundamental intervening factors in corporate management.

4.2.6 Relationship between interpretive paradigm and research methodology

Given the epistemological and ontological framework underpinning the study, the research methodology is defined through underlying philosophical assumptions. The study is interpretive and hence it analyses the different perspectives of agents which lead to a collective construction of meaning. The study uses singular case study approach to understand the phenomenon from the perspective of the interviewees. The concepts discussed above are demonstrated below in figure 4.2.
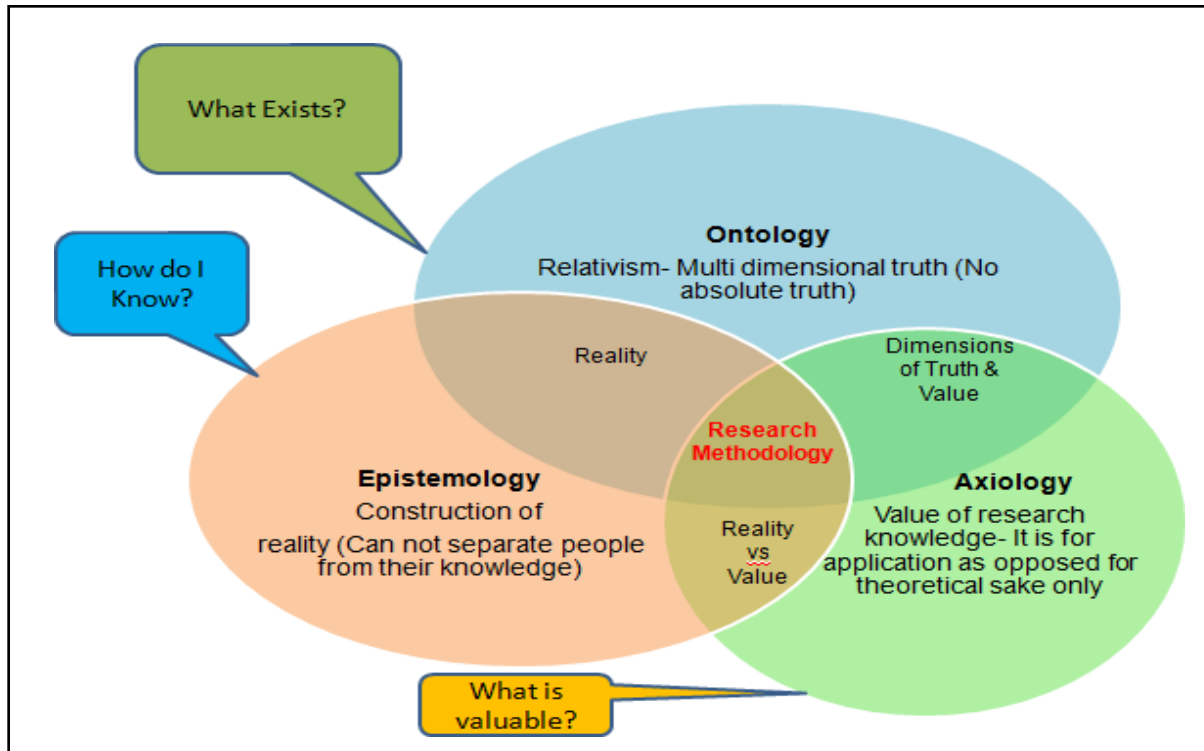
Figure 4.2: Interpretive paradigm & research methodology (Adapted from: Law, 2005)

4.2.7 Linking Ontology, Epistemology and Research Methodology

According to Al-Ababneh (2020) the link that ties ontology, epistemology and methodology is consequential. Put differently the ontological framework defines the theory of knowledge that informs the research which is the epistemological framework and how that knowledge may be gained is defined as the methodology. Put in simple terms Gounder (2012) defines methodology as the study of methods that can be used to carry out research and methods as the actual methods used to gather data. Furthermore, research methods are an attempt to find solutions to research problems. While research methodology is driven by the need to employ correct methods to find solutions to research problems. Al- Ababneh (2020) drawing from Crotty (1998) presents in figure 4.3 the research process based on the four elements of research.
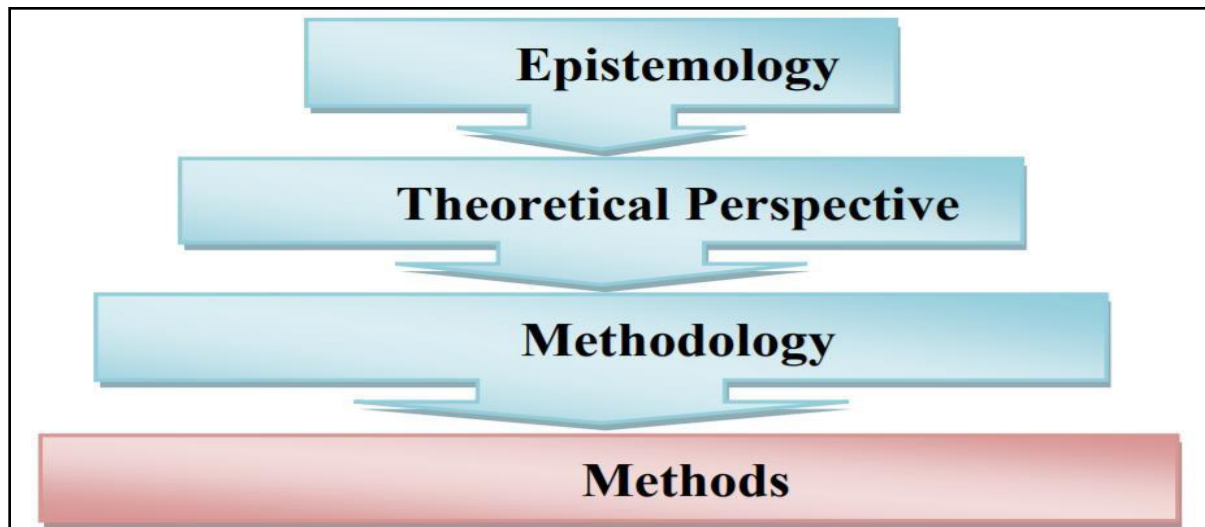
Figure 4.3: Basic elements of research process: (Source: Crotty,1998)

Crotty (1998) as cited in Al-Ababneh (2020) briefly discusses the four elements of research as shown below.

(a) Epistemology: "The theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective and thereby in the methodology"

(b) Theoretical perspectives: "The philosophical stance informing the methodology and thus providing a context for the process and grounding its logic and criteria".

(c) Methodology: "The strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods and linking the choice and use of methods to the desired outcomes".

(d) Methods: "The techniques or procedures used to gather and analyse data related to some research question or hypothesis".

4.2.8 Qualitative case study methodology

The qualitative approach to research is typically used to answer questions about the nature of phenomena with the purpose of describing and understanding them from the participants' point of view (Ponelis, 2015). Furthermore Creswell (2014) defined descriptive qualitative study as a process of inquiry that seeks to understand a social or human problem, based on deconstructing a complex situation in order to create a holistic picture. According to Harrison *et al.*(2017) case studies are conceptualised differently by many scholars, others define it as a methodology while others conceptualise it as a

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method. For the purposes of this study, case studies are defined as a methodology which is underpinned by various techniques of data collection and analysis.

Drawing from literature reviewed qualitative case study can be defined as a strategy for methodological exploration of a phenomenon. Case studies have been previously used extensively in qualitative research. Contemporary case study research which is often used in subjective studies is said to have its origins in qualitative approaches and disciplines like anthropology, history, psychology, and sociology (Mills, Eurepos & Wiebe, 2010). In relation to the study the case study approach is used to establish subjective perspectives of employees concerning the influence of informal structures on corporate strategy. The case study approach sought to comprehend the influence of social, anthropological disposition, culture and organisational environment on thought processes of individual employees. Case study approach allows the study to pursue in depth insights into the conceptualisation of the phenomenon by employees (Harrison *et al.*, 2017).

4.2.9 Singular descriptive case study

According to Lee *et al.*, (2007); Willis (2014) and Gustafsson (2017) there is great reluctance amongst the scholars to accept the merits of a singular descriptive case study. The reluctance is premised on the belief held by most scholars that single case studies do not compare data across cases and therefore are superficial. Lee *et al.*(2007) and Gustafsson (2017) concur that sub units within the case can be compared and contrasted to produce elaborate insight into a phenomenon. Furthermore Willis (2014) argues that multi case studies may confine the researcher from spending time with participants and this may lead to forced generalisations synonymous with quantitative research which analyses large data sets. It is imperative to appreciate that case studies are in two forms in that they seek to address the characteristics of a case or the significance and sense of a case. A case study that seeks to address characteristics (What is this?) of a situation can easily analyse multiple cases yet a case study that seeks to establish sense or significance (What's going on?) of a case will use a single case study (Lee *et al.*, 2007). The study utilised a single case study to establish what was going on within a given

context with the hope of eliciting follow up studies from the academic community since academic writing is a conversation.

4.2.10 Research methodology

According to Retolaza and San-Jose (2017) the sequence and logic in which a study addresses the research questions, research objectives and populates the data for the study is defined as the methodological design. Research methodology constitute: the literature review, the research philosophy, research design, procedures, data-collection methods and data analysis used in the study. The main aim of qualitative research methodology is to interrogate the processes of a research phenomenon as opposed to producing a scientific research product (Mohajan, 2018). Qualitative research is process driven since qualitative research deals with how as opposed to quantities. It is against this background that the study concentrated on the processes that underpin the behaviour of the informal structure and the subsequent influence informal structures have on corporate strategy. The processes help the study to analyse why certain groups within the informal structure behave the way they do and therefore enabling the study to make targeted recommendations.

4.3 Research design

According to Tomaszewski, Zarestky and Gonzalez (2020) a research design is a systematic way of conducting a study with full control of intervening factors that might interfere with the validity of the research. The research design for this study is a descriptive and interpretive case study that abstract data through interviews. The research design critically aligns the research questions to research objectives and theoretical frameworks. The research design also shows how, where, when data was collected and analysed. Alignment of goals, conceptual framework, research questions, methods, and validity checks were done through an interactive model adopted from (Guntur, 2019). The research design shown below in figure 4.4 shows a conceptual view of the research design.
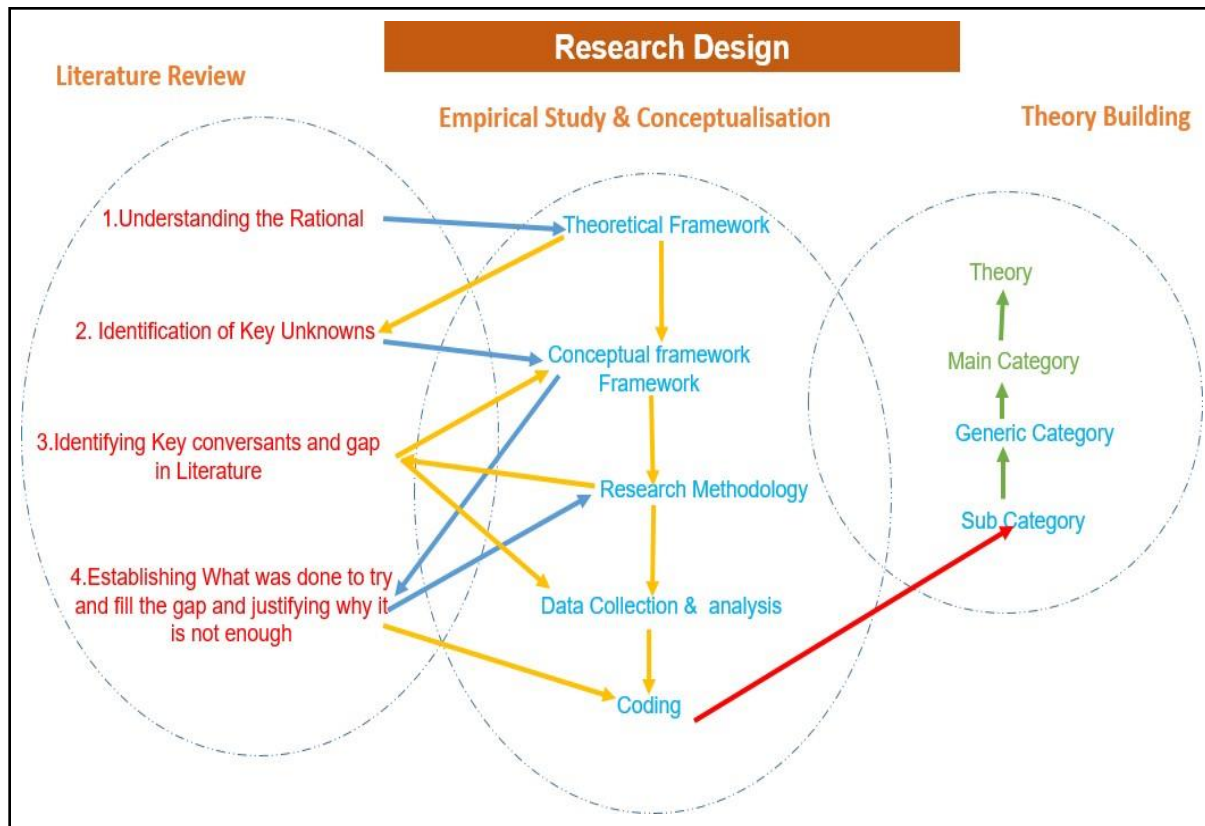
Figure 4.4: Research Design

The interactive model presents the inter connectedness of research goals, methods, research problem and validity of the research. The model provides a reflexive approach which mirrors the active role of the researcher in aligning the research to the topic and goals.

4.4 In depth Interviews

The study used in depth interviews because they elicit more responses from participants and is usually befitting when dealing with a small sample size as argued by Allmark *et al.* (2009). The questions were semi structured and open ended to allow the participants to express themselves freely on the questions asked. In depth interviews give rise to rich sources of data that can be utilised in the crafting of theory. Literature review should precede the in-depth interviews in order for immersion in multiple contexts of divergent

cases so as to capture preliminary tacit knowledge that will be used to frame the scope of the interview questions (Côté-Boileau *et al.*, 2020). Drawing from Cruz and Higginbottom (2013), Côté-Boileau *et al.* (2020) exploration of literature and the in-depth interviews leads to methodological holism where the researcher can precisely compare the findings against literature. The act of combining multiple methods (e.g Literature review, observation, interviews) has the effect of triangulation as information is drawn or created from diverse sources. The in-depth interview used semi structured questions which are discussed in the below section

4.4.1 Research Instrument: Semi structured interview guide

The study is subjective and thus it uses semi structured interviews to contain the individual experiences of employees. According to Moser and Korstjens (2018) semi structured interviews enable the researcher to rephrase or expand on existing scheduled questions depending on the experiences of the interviewee. This leverage ensured flexibility of the interview process and covered the issue of individual differences since participants had diverse experiences. Furthermore, since the study is interpretive it abstracted data by using interviews to establish the world view of the research participants concerning the phenomenon. The divergent conceptualisation of the phenomenon by the research participants made the study capture the relative truth of the phenomenon. The semi structured interviews elicited narrative data that enable the study to analyse in greater depth the views of employees (Kvale, 2006). Semi structured interviews enable the study to establish the process with which employees (agents) construed the influence of informal structure on corporate strategy. The advantage of interviews is the fact that employees could speak with a unique voice and from their work environment (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017). The research participants were not removed from their workplace, and this gave them comfort to respond to all questions with accomplished ease.

Interviews enable the study to investigate the influence of embedded social processes in the organisation and the subsequent influence that these social processes had on the thinking patterns of employees (Moser and Korstjens, 2018). The enduring focus of using

qualitative approach was to increase and to develop new understandings of human lived experience, based on the responses of participants. Interviews provided holistic communication feedback as the study also captured the gestures and body language as part of the conversation. Interviews created a platform whereby participants could provide descriptive information around the phenomenon. Semi-structured interviews are more of conversations that allowed the research participant to seek clarity from the interviewer thereby eliciting elaborate and precise responses (Johnson, Adkins & Chauvin, 2020).

4.4.2 Application of Sampling Technique: Purposive sampling

Sampling technique relates to the guiding principles that determine how a sample is established from the population (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). The study uses heterogeneous purposive sampling mainly to establish rich sources that provide in-depth information. The Northern Cape is dominated by Afrikaans and Tswana speaking people; therefore, it was strategic for the study to consider participants that could proficiently speak English and had knowledge of the subject. Purposive sampling was employed in the study since the data and insights gathered contributed to a theoretical model. Purposive sampling circumvents a situation where inconclusive data and insights are gathered by selecting participants that are not conversant with the subject matter (Anthony J Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Data which is not properly gathered would be extremely difficult to analyse rendering the research of low quality. Purposive sampling also allowed the study to identify participants that had an interest in the phenomenon and were willing to actively engage in a conversation regarding the subject (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). This approach affords the study quality information which was given by participants that had knowledge of the area under study. This approach also had to be used since in the mining sector a considerable number of employees are semi-skilled who got their training on the job and have limited knowledge on strategic management issues. These semi-skilled employees have limited academic exposure and generally they struggle to engage on key issues that require some form of academic foundation.

4.4.3 Sample size

The total population of the mining organisation under study at the time of research was 800 and the sample size was 50 and 30 became the default sample size owing to saturation point. The research reached a point of saturation after 30 interviews because research participants began to give recurrent responses. Fu *et al.* (2019) after reviewing 560 qualitative studies established that the mean sample size was 31 and therefore based on this analysis 30 interviews of this study should be acceptable. The study will on the below section discuss how the study eventually arrived at the 30 interviews.

(a) Unit of analysis and Unit of Observation

The study presents the unit of analysis as the organisation and the unit of observation as the various individuals within the organisation. The study drawing from its qualitative approach concentrates on the subjective lived experiences of individuals to better understand the phenomenon as opposed to a quantitative approach that relies on huge data sets to make broad generalisations. Hence the study does not utilise group or departmental comparisons which are greatly inclined to a quotative approach. The enduring focus of the study is to draw from the dyadic relationship between informal structures and corporate strategy to create a clear understanding of the influence of informal structures on corporate strategy.

4.4.4 Factors influencing saturation point

The sample size of qualitative research might be relatively small as compared to quantitative because qualitative is labour intensive and a large sample could lead to a superficial analysis (Mason, 2010). Qualitative research is driven by the object of construing meaning rather than generalisation that can be abstracted from large quantitative samples. Mason (2010) drawing from the work of Crouch and Mckenzie, (2006) argues that Saturation point is determined by the heterogeneity of the population, the number of subgroups that need intensive study and the budget to fund the studies. All these factors mentioned above influenced the determination of the saturation point.

Saturation point is also determined by the scope of the study, nature of the topic, quality of the data and the research design (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008).

The study was predicated on the premise that the unique lived experiences of participants provide great insight into the phenomenon. It is against this background that the study concentrated on research participants that could explicitly express themselves in the interviews. The knowledge and expertise of interview participants were critical intervening factors in determining saturation point of data. In this case research participants started to give recurrent responses after 30 interviews. Furthermore, since the study is qualitative it does not provide a group analysis of social identity theory but uses social identity and structuration theory to establish deeper understanding of the phenomenon based on the subjective experiences of individuals.

4.4.5 Field Observation

The study employed observation as a method to complement the above discussed methods. Observation of the field allows one to pick up unbiased facts about a phenomenon especially if the participants are unaware that there are being observed (Smit & Onwuegbuzie, 2018). Furthermore, Smit and Onwuegbuzie (2018) drawing from Lincoln and Guba (1985) posit that observations in the field coupled with interviews enables the study to gain elaborate insight into the research phenomenon but however observations need more time. In addition, Smit and Onwuegbuzie (2018) citing Guba and Lincoln (1989) asserts that there are three types of observation which are as follows:

a. descriptive observation: the researcher assumes a passive role and assumes no knowledge of the subject area and taking nothing for granted

b. focused observation: this is when the researcher deems other entities to be irrelevant and thus ignores them

c. selective observation: the researcher may choose to concentrate on a few general entities.

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The study used the descriptive observation because it enables the study to gain more insight and knowledge regarding the phenomenon.

4.5 Validity

Qualitative research has several options that can be used to determine validity. Qualitative study can use dependability, credibility, Confirmability, and transferability (Surucu & Maslakci, 2020). These elements enable the study to ensure consistency, acceptance and application of the study. A comparative analysis of quantitative and qualitative approach in terms of validity is demonstrated below in figure 4.5.
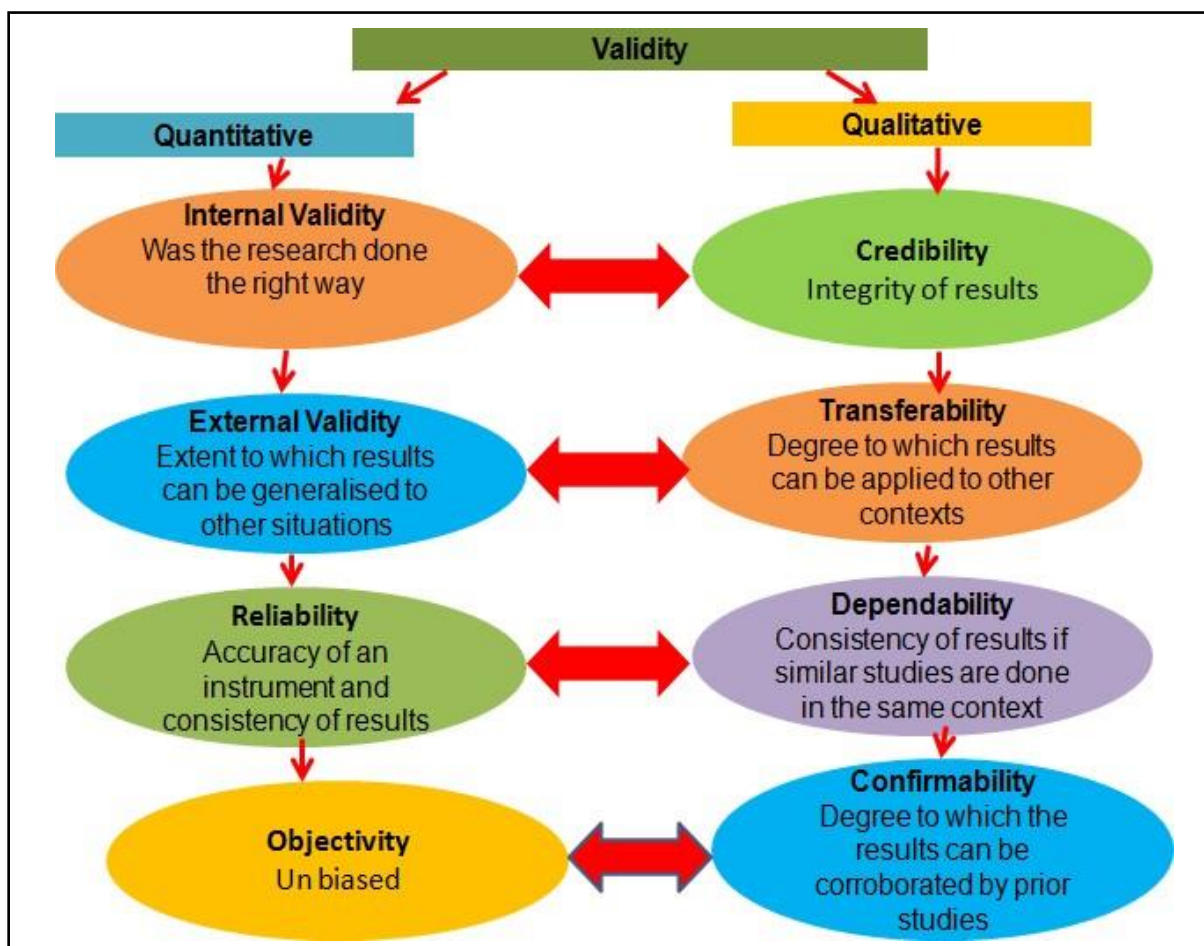
Figure 4.5: Quantitative & qualitative validity (Adopted from Anney, 2014)

(i) Credibility

Credibility is the proof that the research output presents plausible results that were drawn from research participants and interpreted in a concise manner (Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012). Chapter five elaborately exposes the way data was coded, processed into subcategories, augmented into generic categories and eventually synthesised into core categories. The study observed several credibility strategies that ensured credibility. The studies employed credibility strategies like prolonged field experience, use of peer debriefing, meta ethnographic synthesis and persistent observation.

(ii) Transferability

According to Gheondea-eladi (2014) the goal of qualitative studies is to establish a deeper appreciation of a phenomenon, whereas quantitative studies generalise drawing from huge data sets and statistical inference. Qualitative studies seek to examine a phenomenon within a specific context because of subjective experiences of research participants in a particular location or setting. It should be noted that consistent to this argument chapter three provides an elaborate discussion on the importance of context and in chapter one the issue of a context specific study is exhaustively addressed. Furthermore, Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2009) cited in Gheondea-eladi (2014) argue that qualitative research usually replaces 'statistical generalisability' with 'analytic generalisability' which refers to transferability of theory to divergent contexts.

(iii) Dependability

 This notion applies to the consistency of results if a similar study is replicated with the same research subjects (respondents) and similar or same settings (Houghton *et al.*, 2013). Dependability enables academic rigour which creates a clear exposition of the collection of data, interpretation and recommendations advanced by a study. This clear research path provides an opportunity for other scholars to critic and review the research output for consistence (Korstjens and Moser, 2018). In pursuance of dependability the study clearly presented its research methods, methodology, research philosophy and

research design. These research fundamentals provide an elaborate framework upon which the research output can be evaluated (Bradshaw & Stratford, 2010). The research report was written in third person narrative and therefore creating a free indirect discourse. A free indirect discourse enabled the study to vigorously present the subjective inner thoughts of the research subject (Salem, Weskott & Holler, 2017). This approach prevented the study from pursuing an overbearing subjective stance through failure of separating the study from the research subject. The clarity of the research subject voice created an engaged scholarship effect where the voice of the study used theory to interpret the subjective experiences of the research participant.

(iv) Confirmability

This is the degree to which results of qualitative data can be confirmed or corroborated by other results of prior studies on similar research subject (Houghton *et al.*, 2013). According to (Chowdhury, 2015) confirmability also refers to consistency, uniformity and ensure trustworthiness of results. To circumvent bias the assumptions of the researcher have been exposed together with the limitation of the study as argued by Chowdhury (2015). He further mentions that the study should have an in-depth description of its methodological approach of which the study has already provided a detailed description of the methodology. The issues mentioned above provides a basis upon which assessment for trustworthiness of the research may be drawn from.

4.6 Chapter summary

The chapter discussed the research philosophy, research methodology, data collection, saturation and positionality as key constructs that define the interpretation and processing of data. The linkages connecting the epistemological, ontological and contextual framework was discussed with the view of exposing the underlying assumptions and methodological coherence of the study.

CHAPTER 5: DATA PRESENTATION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses mainly on data presentation before analysing it because according to Bazeley (2009) data presentation enables the observation of emerging patterns. These patterns are critically analysed in chapter 6 using the research questions, research objectives and theoretical lens. This chapter commences by giving a general overview of the data collection, data distribution before analysing 5 data collection sets and the emerging themes that developed in between each data set. The chapter through thematic analysis demonstrate the implications of the emerging themes on the study and how the same also subsequently created more clarity of the research problem. This chapter concludes by providing generic categories that are discussed in chapter 6.

5.1.1 Fieldwork

The fieldwork was conducted in a selected mining organisation in the Northern Cape, South Africa. The unit of analysis constituted one mining company and the object of analysis were thirty-seven employees. The interviews were conducted across three levels of responsibility; that is general workers, middle management and senior managers. The study intended to interview 50 participants but managed to interview 37 participants however saturation point was reached after transcribing 30 interviews. Saturation point is when interviewees start giving recurrent responses (Saunders *et al.*, 2018). The Interviewees were chosen on purposive sampling bases owing to subject matter comprehension and English language proficiency since there was no interpreter. Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016) contends that purposive sampling is befitting in a study that seeks to bring more insight into theory. The mining industry of South Africa is a closed industry and hence coding of interviewees was instituted to protect the identity of the participants (UCT research ethics code, 2012). Table 5.1 illustrates the object of analysis and coding. The subsequent section discusses data sources, data cycles and the emerging themes from data cycles.

Table 5.1: Coding of research participants

Level in organisation	Code	Number of Interviewees	Transcribed Interviews	Average Time of Interview
Senior Human Resources Management	SMH	3	2	60 Minutes
Senior Finance Management	SFM	2	2	45 Minutes
Senior Mine managers	SMM	3	2	30 Minutes
Senior Operations Managers	SOM	4	2	60 Minutes
Senior Engineering Mangers	SEM	3	2	45 Minutes
Human Resources Mid Managers	HRM	2	2	35 Minutes
Finance Mid Management	FMM	3	2	55 Minutes
Mine Mid Management	MMM	2	2	50 Minutes
Operations Mid Managers	OMM	2	2	40 Minutes
Engineering Mid Mangers	EMM	2	2	60 Minutes
Human Resources General employees	HRG	2	2	45 Minutes
Finance General Employees	FGE	3	2	33 Minutes
Mine General Employees	MGE	2	2	58 Minutes
Operations General Employees	OGE	2	2	47 Minutes

Engineering General employees	EGE	2	2	33 Minutes
Total Interviewed		37		696 Minutes
Total Transcribed Scripts			30	

As demonstrated in the above table the study carried interviews in 5 Key departments namely human resources, finance, mining, operations and engineering departments. This chapter mainly presents the data and the initial emerging themes without applying research questions, theory and literature. Research objectives are used to maintain the original scope of the study and to guide the process of data presentation. The study utilises interviews and observations as the two main primary data sources that guide this study. Lowry (2015) identifies both interviews and field observation as critical primary data gathering methods used in empirical research. The study presents a general description of data before presenting the various data sets.

5.1.2 General Description of data

The study gathered data mainly through interviews from a mining organisation that had a total of 800 employees and is situated in Northern Cape Province of South Africa. The original intention of the study was to explore mining operations around the Marikana area in Rustenburg to seek more understanding and clarity on the context of the informal structures given the previous Marikana tragedy. However, due to heightened suspicion and scepticism on the part of management based on past turbulent activities it proved to be difficult to secure permission to collect data in areas around Marikana. Consequently, the study resorted to look for other mining concerns that were more receptive and thus ended up securing permission to collect data from a mining concern based in the Northern Cape. The subsequent paragraphs present the findings of the interviews in general terms. The data reported on is based on the 30 transcribed interviews. The study intended to

carry out 50 interviews but stopped after carrying out 37 interviews due to saturation mentioned above.

Out of the 30 interviewed participants, 8 are immigrants out of the remaining 22 locals, 4 are Zulu, 3 are Afrikaner, 3 are coloured, 4 are Xhosa, 4 are Tswana, 2 are Sotho and 1 is Tsonga. The distribution of the research participants enables the study to present diversified views that emanate from various cultural perspectives and backgrounds.

Responding to the question that required them to define informal structures and their activities, 28 out of 30 responded as indicated below in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2: Definition of Informal structures

Definition of informal structures	Frequency	Codes of participants	Comments
Network of friends	4	SFM1, SFM2, SMM1, HRM1	Formed around common interests
Groups	5	HRM2, SOM1, SOM2, SEM1, SEM2	Usually emerge from work teams
Social ties	3	FMM1, FMM2, MMM2	Formed around common social norms
Unofficial structure	5	MM1, OMM1, OMM2, HRG1, HRG2	Structures that emerge outside of the organisational charts
Shadow structures	4	EMM1, EMM2, FGE1, FGE2	Covert structures that operate discreetly
Informal Organisation	3	OGE1, OGE2, EGE1	Organised around collective rules and

			values of group members
Parallel structure	2	SMH1, SMH2	Structure that operates outside of the vision, mission and objectives of the organisation

The responses given by the 28 participants clearly indicate a diversified appreciation of the key component of the research topic. The definitions of informal structures given by participants are closely related or associated to their level of exposure and level in management. Therefore, the responses given are representative of all the levels within the organisation. The participants gave more structured responses due to purposive sampling. The participants gave 7 different definitions of informal structures which are discussed in detail in chapter 6.

Furthermore, responding to the question that required them to explain the influence of informal structures on corporate strategy 20 out of 30 indicated that informal structures had negative influence on corporate strategy. The remaining 10 participants indicated that informal structures had positive attributes that had potential to assist corporate strategy. The 20 participants who indicated that there was negative influence that emanated from the informal structures indicated the following.

- *Sometimes policies would be changed due to resistance emanating from social groups.*
- *Informal networks often challenge strategies and plans of the company through discussions held by group members either face to face or through social media platforms.*

- *Collective action of groups aligned to a particular trade union often foster a common position that may be contrary to the vision and strategies of the organisation.*
- *Most employees of the same race or ethnic origin would often act contrary to the communicated instructions and strategies as means to register their displeasure for perceived marginalisation.*
- *The disconnection between management and general employees has over the years created sustained impasse and has drawn clear battle lines.*
- *The previously disadvantaged employees especially the non-skilled employees feel that nothing has changed, and they view management as an instrument of oppression. It is because of this critical disposition that these employees are always ready to discredit organisational strategies.*

The 10 remaining participants indicated that there was observable positive influence from informal structures on the corporate strategy of the organisation. The premise of the 10 participants is based on the following.

- *Informal structures provide an avenue for sharing experiences with regards to job related procedures and organisational culture.*
- *Informal structures also supplement management's effort to drive the organisation.*
- *Informal structures also meet the natural sociological and psychological needs especially the need to belong.*
- *Informal structures can function as a conduit for transmitting and evaluating the impact of corporate strategy.*
- *Informal structures promote flexibility and creativity amongst employees.*
- *Informal structures have the potential to transmit information efficiently and effectively.*

Responding to the question which asked them to detail if their racial or ethnic origin had influence on how they perceived or responded to corporate strategy, 24 participants noted that their origin had great influence while 6 denied influences of ethnic origin.

This question is meant to draw from the concept of social identity and self-definition of employees and how the same influence their perceptions or actions towards corporate strategy. The responses of the 24 respondents who acceded to influence of ethnic origin and 6 who denied the same influence are indicated below respectively.

The first responses were as follows

- *Ethnic origin has power and influence over the way employees perceive corporate strategy since commonality of language allows employees to engage and provides a safe zone for expression of ideas and thoughts.*
- *Homogeneous culture and background of employees enables them to connect at a personal level and enables them to view corporate strategy from the same lens.*
- *Common ethnic origin usually translates into cliques that are driven by homogeneous values, objectives and vision which may in most cases be parallel to the espoused mission and vision of the organisation.*
- *Common ethnic origin has potential to sometimes promote blind brotherhood or comradeship, therefore if most of the group members elect to go against corporate strategy the rest will follow without questioning.*

The second responses as indicated by the 6 participants were as follows.

- *Generally, individuals have a choice to choose between supporting corporate strategy or sabotaging it. Human beings are free moral agents besides belonging to an ethnic group.*
- *Common ethnic origin does not guarantee commonality of purpose among group members, but group members may differ in perception due to diverse interests and experiences.*

- *Employees from the same ethnic group may see things differently due to the different management levels and groups they may be operating from. Furthermore, a member of senior management team due to elaborate exposure may see things differently from a general employee though there are from the same ethnic group.*

Responding to the question of what could be done differently to align informal structures to corporate strategy 19 of the participants elaborately responded while 11 of the participants indicated that there were limited options.

The first participants (19) responded as follows:

- *The organisation could establish a strategy planning unit that would incorporate members from potentially problematic informal networks as a way of integrating them into the planning process.*
- *The influence of informal structures can be circumvented by an elaborate consultative engagement where employees are asked to contribute towards formulation of strategy and its subsequent implementation.*
- *The organisation could also consider formulation and implementation of corporate strategy based on research that must explore the preferences of various informal structures*

The second participants (11) responded as indicated below

- *Informal structures are dynamic and constantly change so planning around their preferences may be counter productive*
- *Some of the most critical informal structures or groups operate discreetly and therefore cannot be easily targeted*
- *The constitution of informal structures is not guaranteed because when employees change departments and work teams, they establish new connections and relationships.*

The below section presents the various data sets and the development of themes through thematic analysis.

5.1.3 Presentation of data in detail

This section presents data sets and presents the thematic analysis that was performed during data collection. The thematic analysis enabled the study to redesign and adjust questions to explore emerging themes or line of argument from the data sets (Vaismoradi and Snelgrove, 2019). The study abstracted codes from 4 data sets which were subjected to iterative comparison during data collection and the cumulative process of iteration is indicated in the subsequent sections and the themes derived thereof are discussed in the discussion chapter (Chapter 6). Coding and abstraction of themes is indicated in figure 5.1.
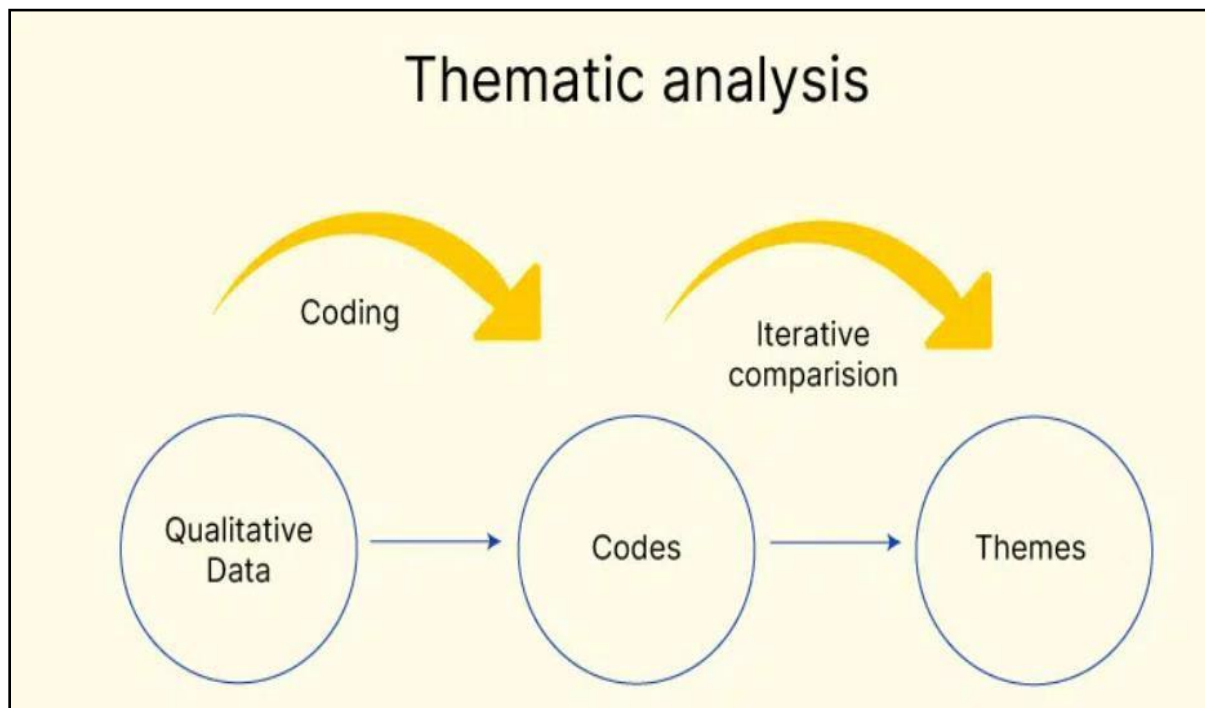
Figure 5.1: Thematic analysis adapted from Maria Rosala, 2019

5.1.4 Coding and thematic analysis

Transcribed data was read and emerging categories were noted (open coding) through thematic analysis (Elliott, 2018). The emerging themes were construed and grouped according to similarity. The main categories are a summary of themes that emerged through open coding hence the original meaning of the transcribed data was not distorted but compressed (Vaismoradi and Snelgrove, 2019). The study had to compress the data gathered into main classes to enable comprehensive analysis of the phenomenon. Analysis of fragmented themes would potentially lead to superficial analysis of the phenomenon (Lester, Cho and Lochmiller, 2020). The precision of coding and abstraction of the main categories is discussed below. Figure 5.2 is an example of the process of coding.
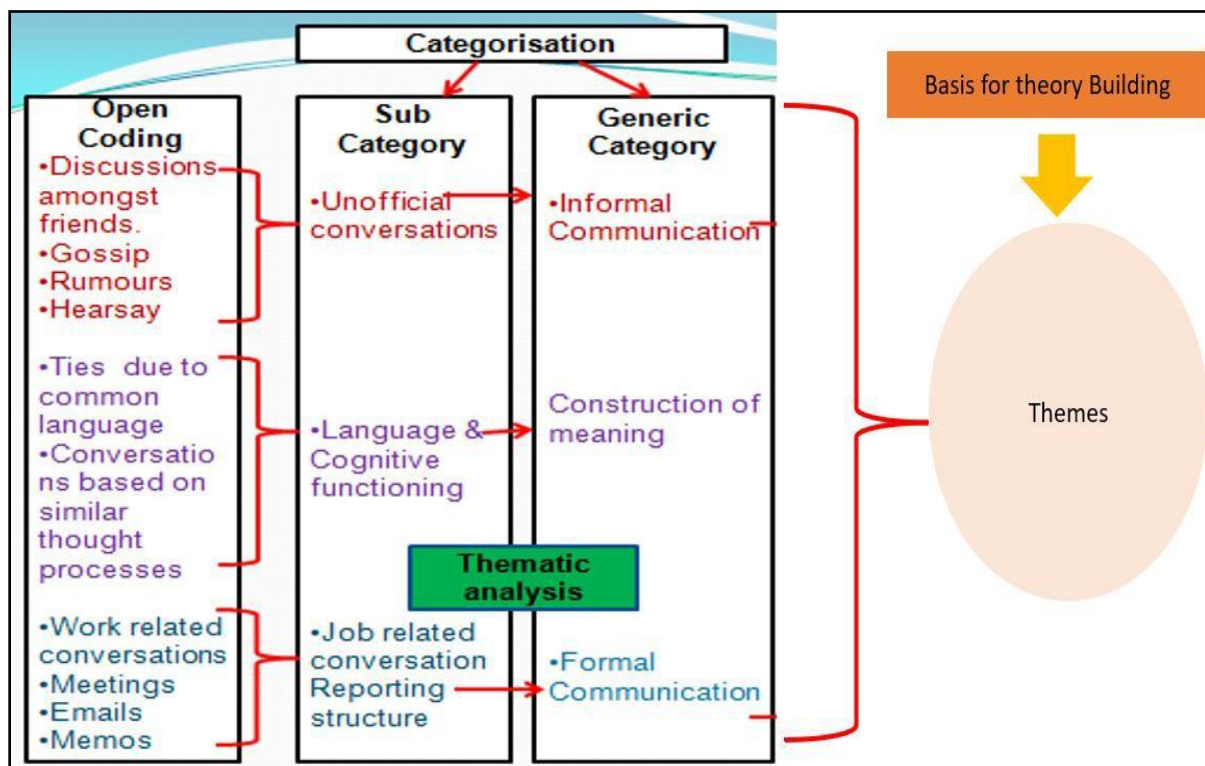
Figure 5.2: Coding process

a) Recorded interviews were transcribed into text, pursuant to that a thorough reading of the transcripts was done which subsequently led to the process of open coding.

b) Open coding involved the process of noting emerging themes from the data which was transcribed on a progressive basis.

5.2 Data Collection cycle 1

The first data cycle comprised of 5 participants (1 Malawian man, 2 Xhosa men, 1 Tswana men and 1 coloured woman). The participants were from diverse cultural, ethnic origin and hence they gave varying accounts of the informal structures and their implication to corporate strategy. The participants gave elaborate responses to questions that have been alluded to in the above section and from the data gathered through a process of coding discussed in chapter 4. The first two interviews broadened the horizon and scope of the interviews as open coding revealed some of the covert issues that were not part of the original interview schedule. The interview schedule was adjusted to contain the developing thought process expressed through codes abstracted from data. The initial codes generated through open codes produced 300 codes that were categorised based on similarity and produced 32 categories. The 32 categories that were produced are as follows.

- Social ties
- Strategy evaluation
- Collective decision making
- Legitimate authority
- Group bias (in/out group)
- Self-definition
- Strategy formulation
- Strategy Implementation
- Official and unofficial communication
- Organisational charts
- Gossip and grapevine
- Official rules

- Buy in

- Shadow structures

- Influence of previous experiences

- Individual differences

- Commonality of language

- Homogeneous culture

- Work team dynamics

- Company philosophy

- The need to belong

- Charismatic leaders

- Legitimate leaders

- Ethnic Origin

- Age difference

- Racial prejudice

- Gender issues

- Strategies

- Stakeholders

- Informal meetings

- Shared vision

- Social environment

Two interviews of two engineers were compared to gain more insight into relationships between the categories and to explore the connections between the themes and the social background of the research participants. The implication of the emerging patterns and the analysis is shown in the below figure 5.3.
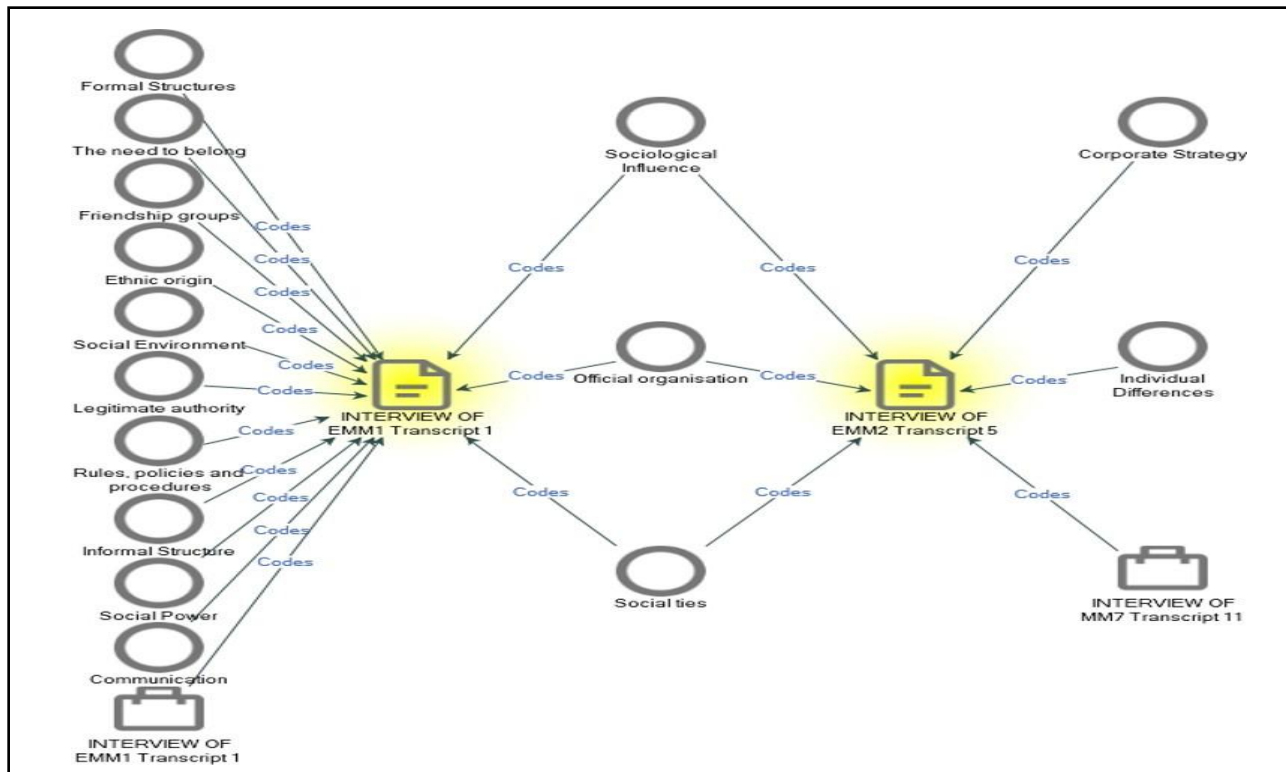
Figure 5.3: Comparison of EMM1 & EMM2 transcript

The study compared interviews scripts of two engineering foremen to establish the relationship between the two regarding the initial codes with the view of establishing the initial emerging patterns from data. The two transcripts had three common codes which are as follows, sociological influence, social ties and official organisation. The divergence in codes of the two interviews clearly indicate the concept of individual differences of participants is critical in establishing the influence of Informal structures on corporate strategy. This notion provides a perspective which informs the study that the influence of informal structures should not only be limited to collective responses by informal groups, but that equal focus should also be placed on individual influence. Therefore, to develop themes from the categories established in the first data cycle the study draws from nominal variables to refine the classifications of emerging themes from data. According to Dey (2003) nominal variables are hinged on two values which are mutually exclusive and exhaustive. Mutually exclusive values are based on the premise that no one piece of data fits into more than one category while exhaustive values are premised on the fact

that no data cannot fit into any category and if it occurs that the data cannot fit into any category a new category should be created. Figure 5.4 demonstrates the importance of nominal variables in thematic analysis.
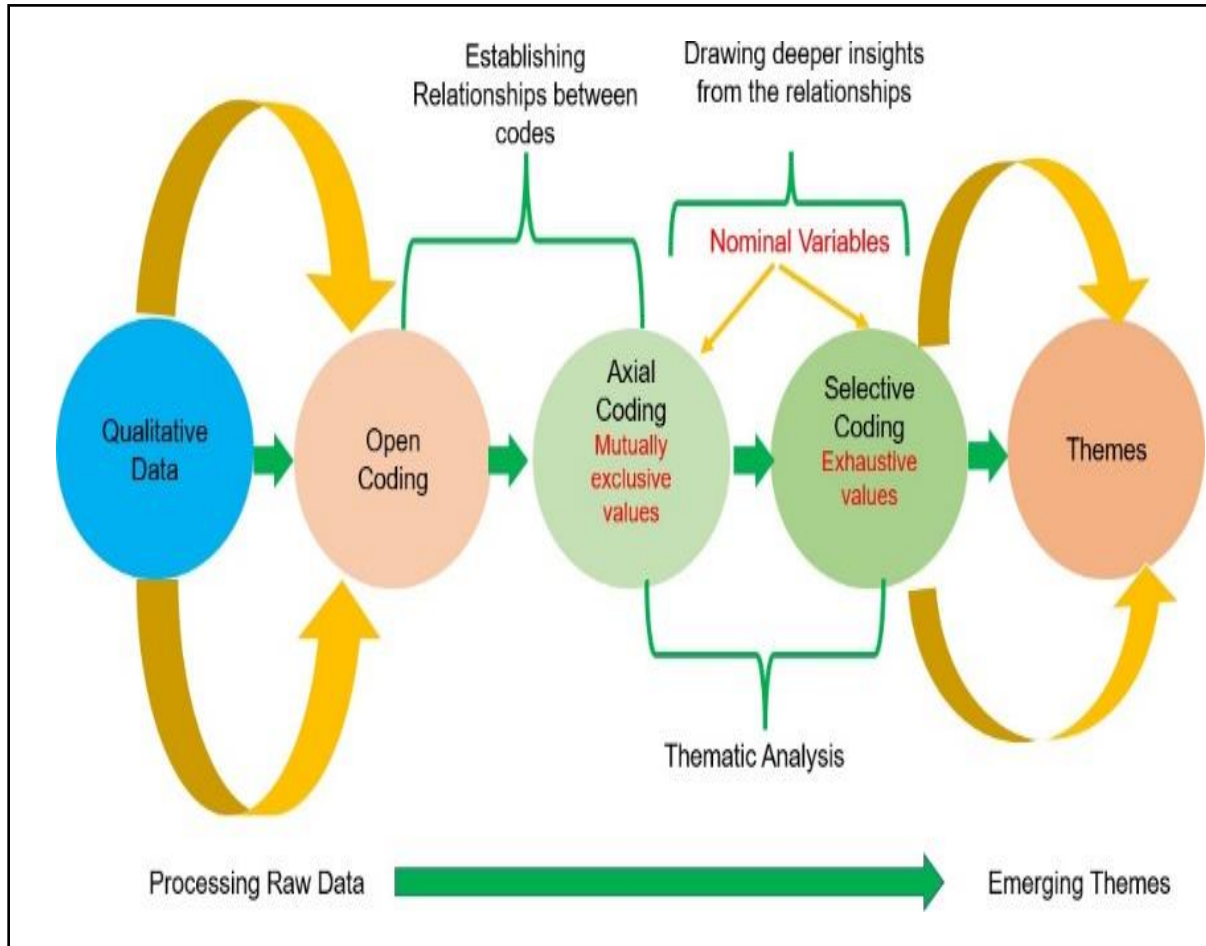
Figure 5.4: Nominal values and thematic analysis

Two transcripts were drawn from the same data set to confirm the developing pattern that was abstracted from the first comparison of interview transcripts. The comparison of interview scripts is shown below in figure 5.5.
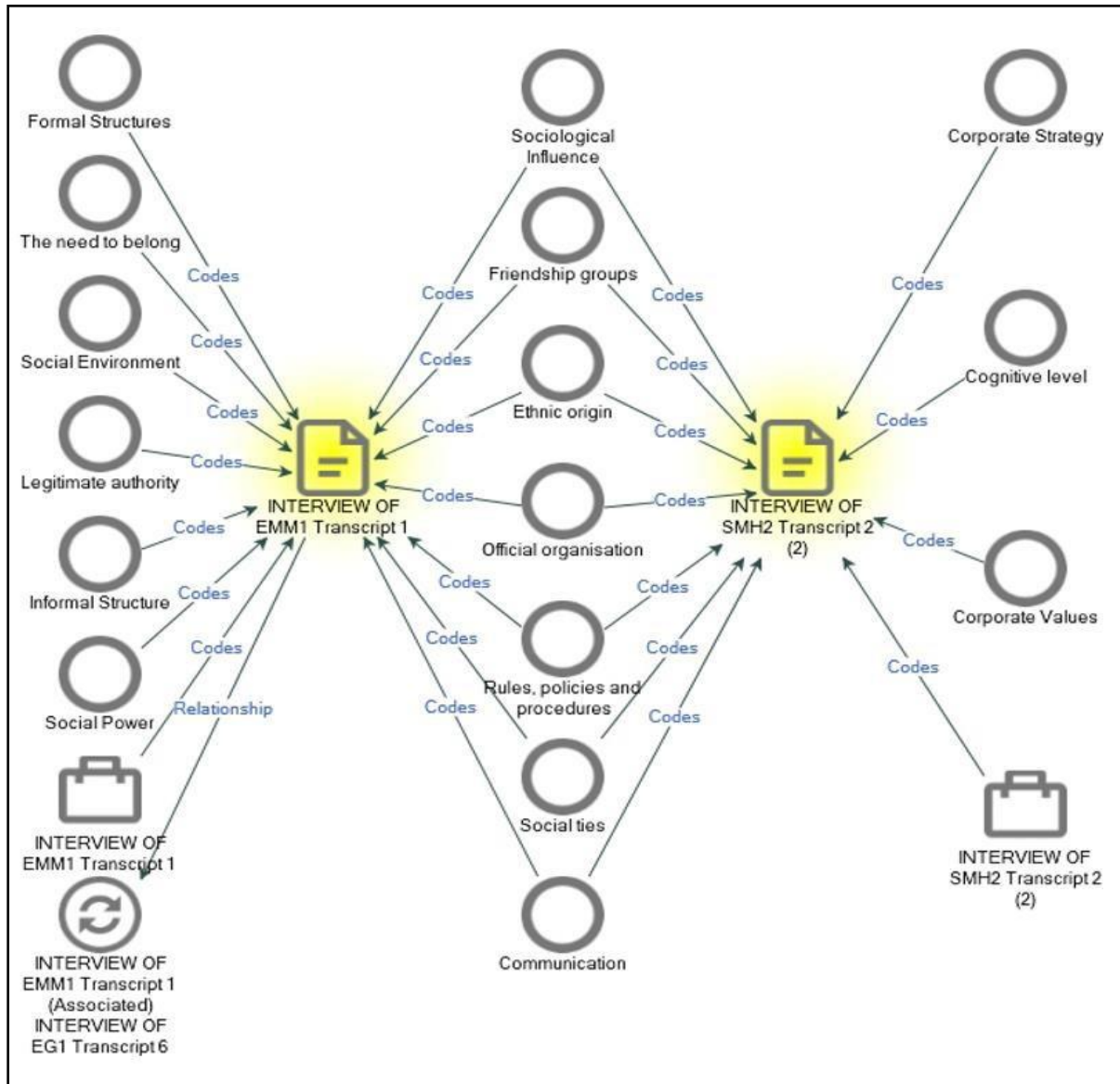
Figure 5.5: Comparison of EMM1 & SMH2 Interview transcript

In the second comparison the study observes that the three common codes resurfaced again with an addition of four other codes to make an aggregate of seven common codes. Out of the 7 common codes 6 were all sociological based codes. The study subjected all the five interviews into an iteration process based on the two values of nominal variables and established common codes that could be combined to form categories. New

categories were added for codes that could not fit into any category. The process of iteration based on nominal variables is indicated below in figure 5.6.
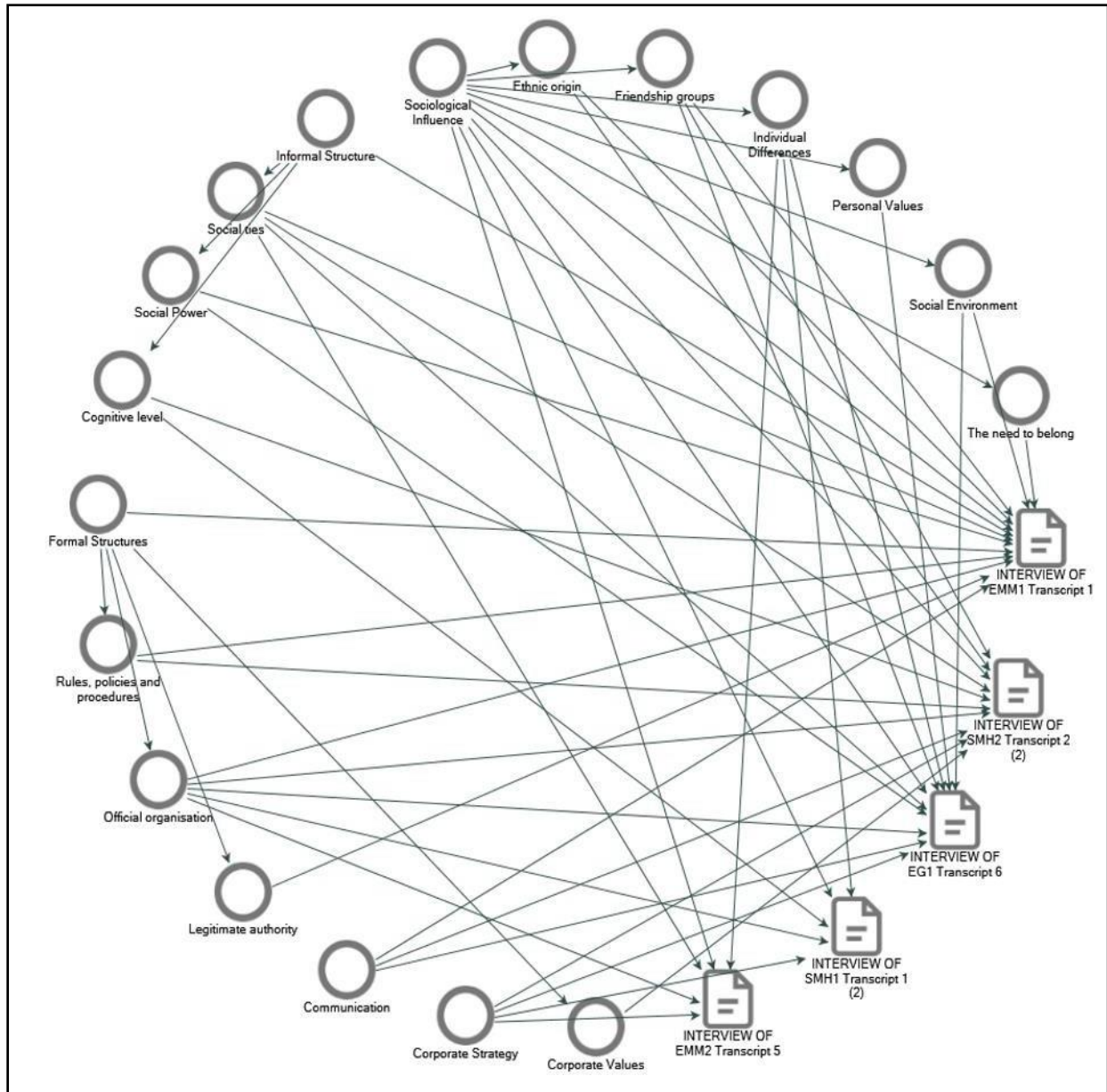
Figure 5.6: Thematic analysis of 5 interview scripts

The analysis of 5 interview transcripts from the first data set indicate that the category of sociological influence was the common category that emerged from data. Codes under this category occurred 17 times in the 5 interview transcripts. EMM1 has a convergence

of 14 codes which represent the highest convergence of codes in this data set. EMM2 and SMH1 have the least convergence in the data set both transcripts had 5 codes each resonating with all the other codes. The variances in convergence of codes clearly demonstrates the unique experiences and exposure of the research participants. The first data set is indicated in the below in table 5.3.

The coded files for data set 1 and the frequency of occurrence of all the codes in data set 1 are shown in the table below. Table 5.3.

Table 5.3: Data Cycle One

Name	Description	Files	References
Communication	Channels of internal communication that includes both formal and informal communication	3	10
Corporate Strategy	This is based on the vision, mission, objectives and strategies of an organisation	4	12
Formal Structures	The participants were asked to narrate their appreciation of formal structures	5	11
Corporate Values	Guiding principles and beliefs that inform the conduct of a company	3	9
Legitimate authority	Delegated power	4	10
Official organisation	This is an organisation that is run according to official rules	5	9
Rules, policies and procedures	These guide the organisation	3	7
Informal Structure	This is a parallel structure to the official structure	5	13
Cognitive level	The ability to remember and analyse given issues. This may also relate to level of intellectual exposure	2	3
Social Power	This is power in numbers	2	4
Social ties	These are ties that emerge in work teams and departments	4	6
Sociological Influence	Conformity of behaviour to meet the environmental standards	5	20
Ethnic origin	Cultural origin	2	8

Friendship groups	Association driven by common interests	3	7
Individual Differences	Variance in characteristics of individuals	3	9
Personal Values	Principles and goals that guide an individual	2	6
Social Environment	This denotes the sociocultural context.	3	10
The need to belong	This is a social need to be part of a group	3	8

Drawing from the comparisons of interview transcripts which established that the notion of sociological influence was the dominant category emerging from the data the study grouped descendant nodes or subcategories under the parent node in order to establish a basis for systematic thematic analysis. Morgan and Nica (2020) suggest that the development of themes is central to qualitative data presentation because it enables the study to build new beliefs through encounters with data. Within the same data set the study carried out iterative processes through comparison of codes generated through various interviews and the iterative process revealed that sociological influence was a key driver underpinning the influence of informal structures on corporate strategy. Figure 5.7 reveals that the sibling nodes of sociological influence can further be divided into group and individual contexts.
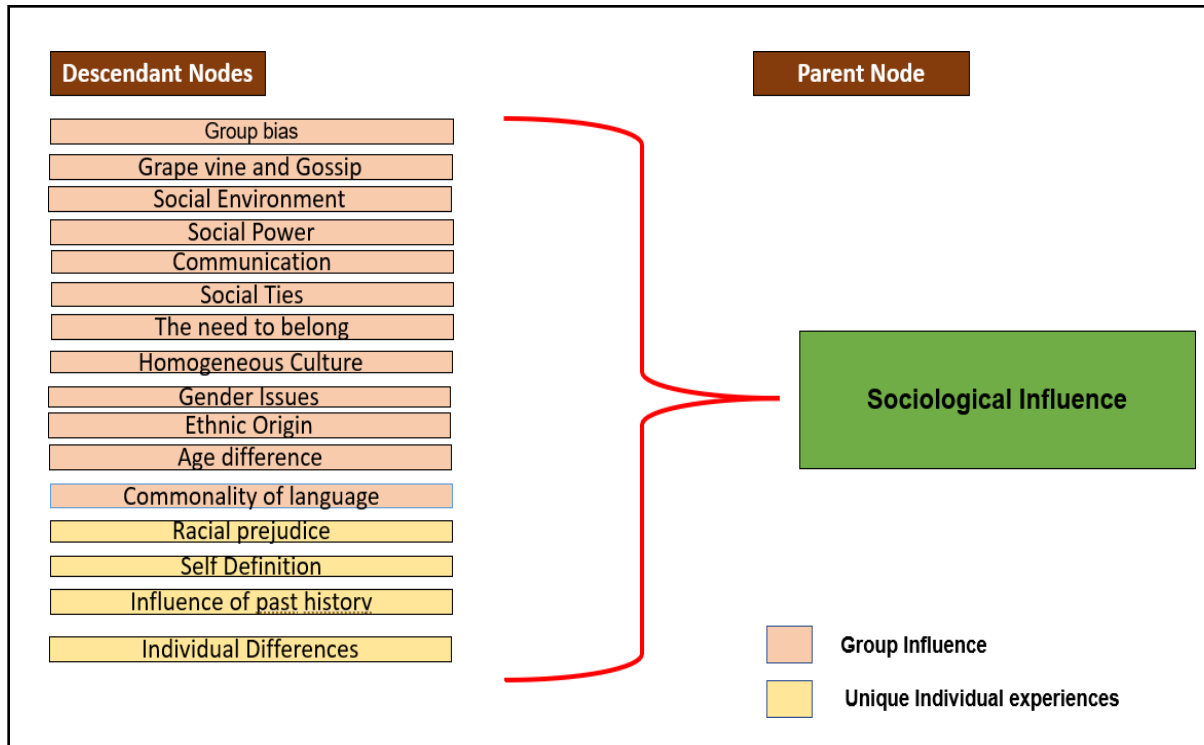
Figure 5.7: Sociological influence within informal structures

After completing the analysis of the first data set the study established that sociological influence and connections were critical in establishing the influence of informal structures on corporate strategy. Consequently, the study proceeded to process the second data set. The study readjusted the questions in the interview schedule to try and seek more clarity on how the company was attempting to deal with this sociological influence since at given times negative influence on corporate strategy would be drawn from sociological influence.

5.3 Data collection cycle 2

The questions in this data set were revised to enable the study to abstract to what extent the organisation had tried to circumvent the negative sociological influence against corporate strategy. In the process new codes that emerged were grouped and combined with similar codes and orphan codes that had no links to existing codes formed new categories. According to Nowell, Norris, White and Moules (2017) thematic analysis is a

qualitative research method that applies to a range of epistemologies and research questions. The method enables the identification, analysis, organisation, description and reporting of emerging themes in a data set. Furthermore, according to Braun and Clarke (2006); King (2004) cited in (Nowell *et al.*, 2017) thematic analysis enable one to analyse divergent perspectives from research participants and to draw similarities and differences that may subsequently create deeper insight into a research topic. Data collection cycle 2 is shown in figure 5.8.
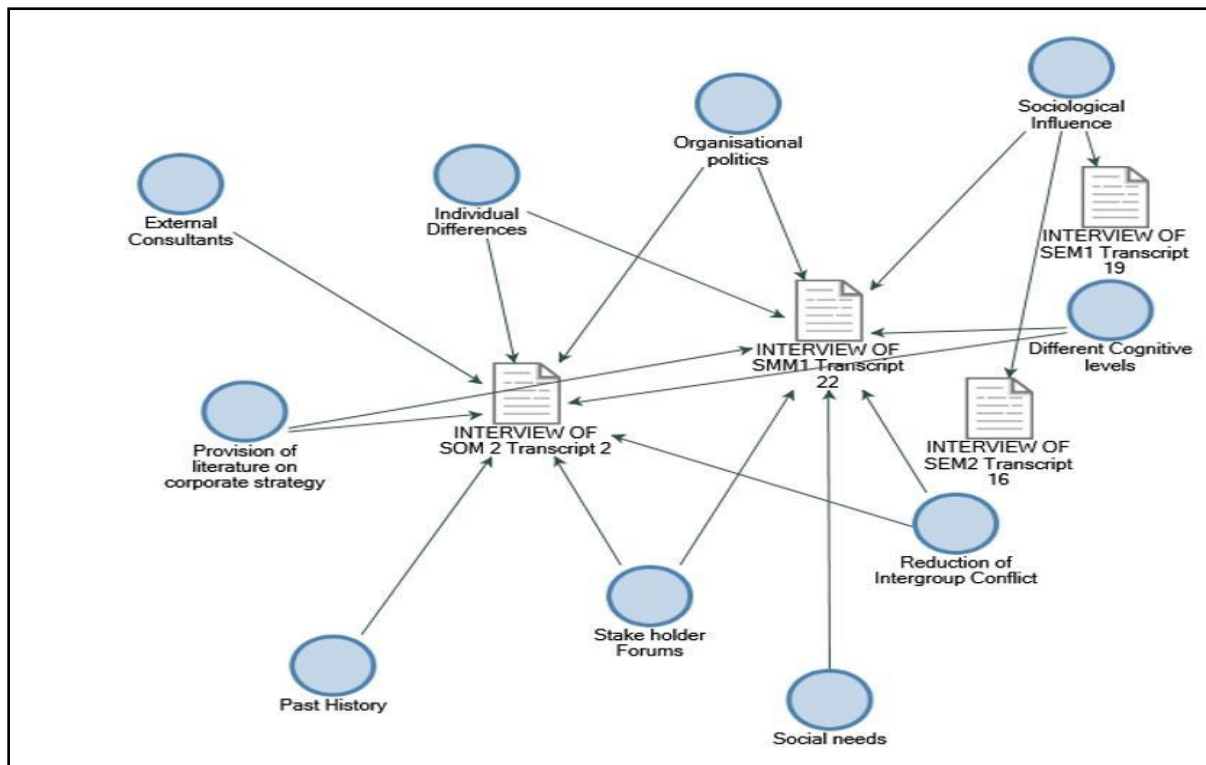
Figure 5.8: Data set 2 codes analysis.

Drawing from the emerging categories in data set 2 the study established that the organisation had employed several interventions to contain the negative sociological influence which was affecting corporate strategy and emanating from the informal structures. The organisations among other interventions had tried to provide literature that addressed the issue of corporate strategy in basic terms. The organisation had also tried to engage consultants, fund sporting and recreational activities to reduce intergroup

conflict. Analysis of the data demonstrated that other psychological antecedents like previous experiences, organisational politics, divergent cognitive levels and individual differences also affected the interventions that were championed by the organisation. The emerging categories were subjected to cogitation and hierarchical classification to draw a pattern from the thematic analysis.

The reclassification of the categories based on similarity and links reduced the codes from 32 to 15 codes as stated below.

- Sociological Influence
- Cognitive levels
- Organisational politics
- Stake holder engagement
- Need for growth and promotion
- Collaboration
- Strategic planning
- Charismatic leadership
- Historical context
- Organisational culture
- Collective values
- Shadow structure
- Social identity
- Legitimate structure
- Policies and rules

The distribution of codes across data set 2 are shown in the table 5.4 below.

Table 5.4: Data set 2 codes distribution

Name	Description	Files	References
Corporate strategy	This is how a company exploits resources and strategies in order to realise the mission, objectives and vision of an organisation	7	22
Strategy Evaluation	Determining whether a strategy has enabled the organisation to succeed in it meeting its set goals.	2	3
Strategy formulation	Crafting the most appropriate course of action to achieve goals	5	8
Strategy implementation	The process of enacting ideas and ways to achieve targets	6	8
Formal Structure	Legitimate organisational structure	7	18
Corporate values	Guiding principles that inform an organisation	5	11
Policies and rules	Set of statements meant to govern the behaviour of employees	3	6
Informal structure	This is a parallel structure from the legitimate structure	6	22
Interest Groups	Employees are brought together by common interests, gender and race	3	4
Social needs	The need to belong	2	2
Sociological Influence	Influence from the environment	4	6
Friendship networks	Influence of acquaintances	2	3
Organisational culture	Shared organisational beliefs	4	5
Social identity	Self-definition based on comparison of traits and characteristics of others	6	9
Social Ties	These are connections used for sharing information, feelings and experiences	4	10
Organisational Politics	Unofficial attempt to influence events within an organisation	6	13
The need for growth	Career advancement and promotion	6	15
Historical Context	Past experiences	5	12
Individual Differences	Variances between the characteristics and traits of individuals	4	11

5.4 Data collection cycle 3

In this data set the study based on the 15 refined categories, the study had to recast the questions to establish how the social antecedents embedded in the informal structure were connected to corporate strategy. According to Alase (2017) a study that is based on an interpretive constructivist paradigm must progressively probe the lived experience of research participants in order to establish the manifest reality of the research phenomenon. Furthermore, Vaismoradi and Snelgrove (2019) argue that data presentation and analysis provide the basis for descriptive interpretation rather than abstract interpretation which is not based on subsequent iteration. The study intentionally redesigned the questions to focus on the emerging pattern because according to Darlington and Scott (2003) cited in Rahman (2016) refining of questions in a qualitative study often persists throughout the study. It is against this background that the questions in this data set were revised to target the various corporate strategies with the view of establishing the influence of informal structures on the former. Organisation X had a total of four broad strategies listed below.

- Operational growth and expansion
- Renewal
- Stability
- Diversity

Questions in this data set sought to establish the direct influence and connections between informal structures and types of corporate strategies employed by the organisation. The connections are shown below in figure 5.9 and subsequently discussed.
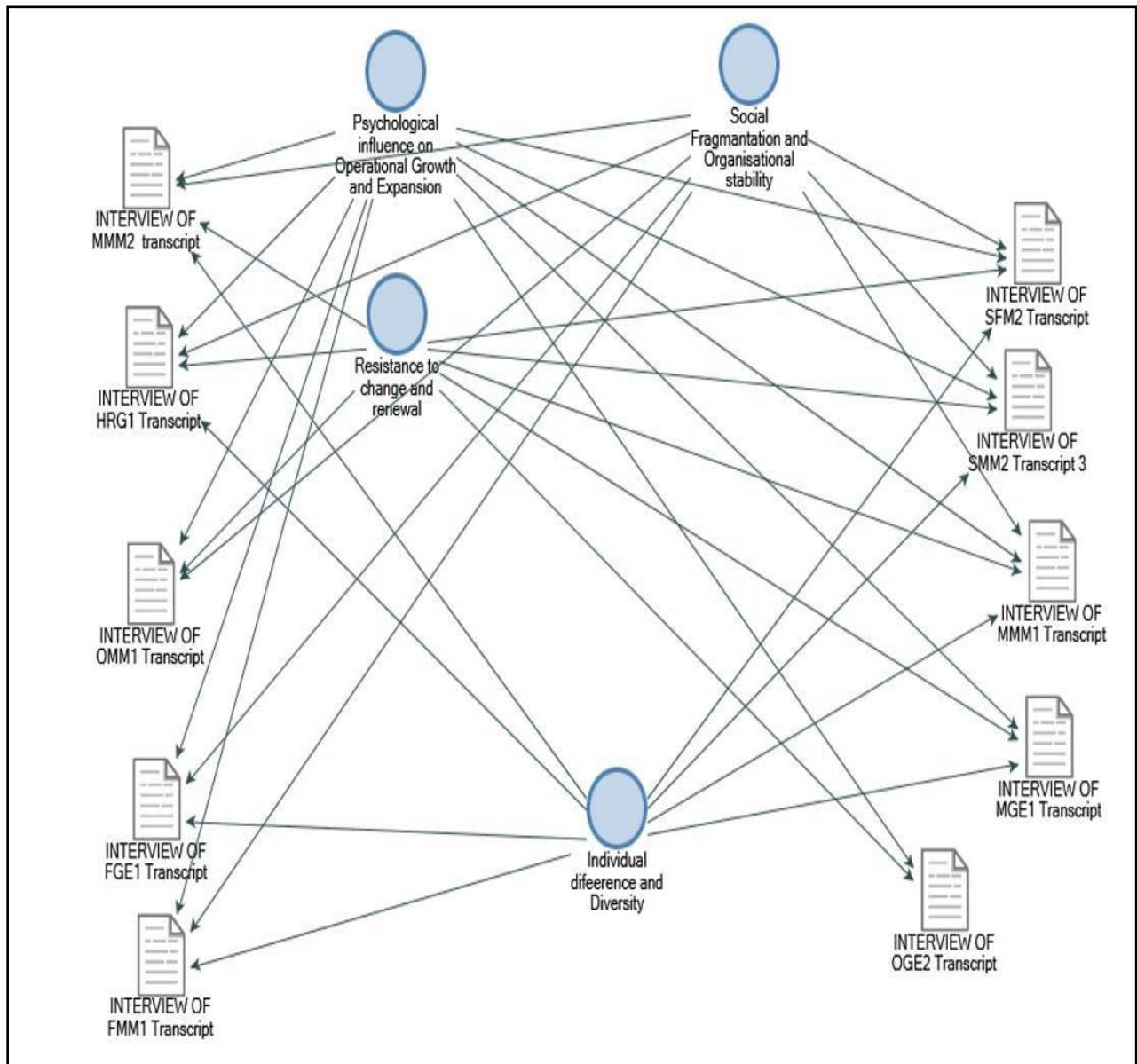
Figure 5.9: Data set 3 codes analysis

This data set yielded direct influence of informal structures on the four broad types of corporate strategy employed by the organisation. The analysis of interviews in the diagram above demonstrates that sociopsychological antecedents like individual differences, social fragmentation, resistance to change and resistance to expansion are

the key drivers that inform informal structures response to corporate strategy. Table 5.5 below gives a brief insight into the influence of informal structure on corporate strategy.

Table 5.5: Influence of informal structures on corporate strategy

Type of Corporate Strategy	Influence of informal structure
Celebration of Diversity – The goal is to make employees celebrate their differences instead of fighting them.	Data demonstrated that the notion of individual differences must be managed to contain diversity. These differences are manifest in various social groups within the organisation that share similar beliefs and goals. The advantage of the notion of diversity is that a lot of brilliant ideas would emerge from the multi perspectives of social groups.
Renewal and Change/ Turnaround	Charismatic leaders influenced group members to resist change especially if they felt that they had not been consulted before the introduction of changes within the organisation. Furthermore, the fear of the unknown also had major influence on corporate strategy. Where informal structures complied with corporate strategy informal leaders would disseminate information efficiently throughout the organisation.
Stability	The strategy of stability was faced with social fragmentation that emanated from diverse needs and focus of various groups. The dynamic social needs of employees progressively confounded strategies of stability.
Expansion and growth	Informal structures resisted this strategy based on the feeling of exclusion. Data suggests that employees wanted to be

	considered in the determination of targets and capacity to meet new production targets. It was also evident that employees were willing to support an expansion and growth initiative that would incentivise their efforts.

It should also be noted that in the same data set it emerged that the informal structure had contrasting attributes which are both positive and negative. The attributes are indicated in the table 5.6.

Table 5.6: Attributes of the informal structure

Positive	**Negative**
Elaborate flexibility	Resistance to renewal strategies
Sharing job related information	Misleading unofficial communication e.g., Rumours, gossip and grapevine
Gives quick feedback and efficient communication	Social fragmentation and division which creates internal hostility and friction
Meets social and psychological needs of employees	Not governed by official rules and processes
Contributes in the issue of productivity	Cannot be identified since it as an invisible structure and layer within the organisation

This data set indicated that the psychological influence embedded in the informal structures was a recurrent phenomenon. It is at this stage that the study decided to analyse 8 interviews from the last data set to establish if saturation point had not been reached since the emerging categories seemed to be recurrent. According to Saunders *et al.* (2018) saturation point is when data collection or analyses is discontinued because of the emergence of recurrent categories.

5.5 Data Collection Cycle 4

The final data set considered the last 8 interviews and established that no further insights were gained therefore the study concluded that saturation point had been reached after iteration and analysis of 30 transcribed interviews. The study had originally aimed to do 50 interviews but according to Fusch and Ness (2015) a study reaches a point of saturation when it's no longer feasible to collect and code more data.

Data cycle 3 clearly demonstrated that the informal structure inherently had positive attributes that included fulfillment of social needs of employees, information sharing and flexibility. Data cycle 4 sought to establish efforts made by the organisation to contain the negative attributes of informal structures. In response to the interventions made by the organisation (mentioned in data cycle 2) like team building, seminars and workshops data cycle 4 revealed that these interventions had limited success. Research participants in data cycle 4 mentioned that these interventions were not sufficient to contain the dynamic socio-cultural needs that are embedded in the informal structures,

According to Akinyode and Khan (2018) data analysis should comprise of 5 steps which are as follows data logging, anecdotes, vignettes, data coding and thematic network. The process is demonstrated below in figure 5.10.
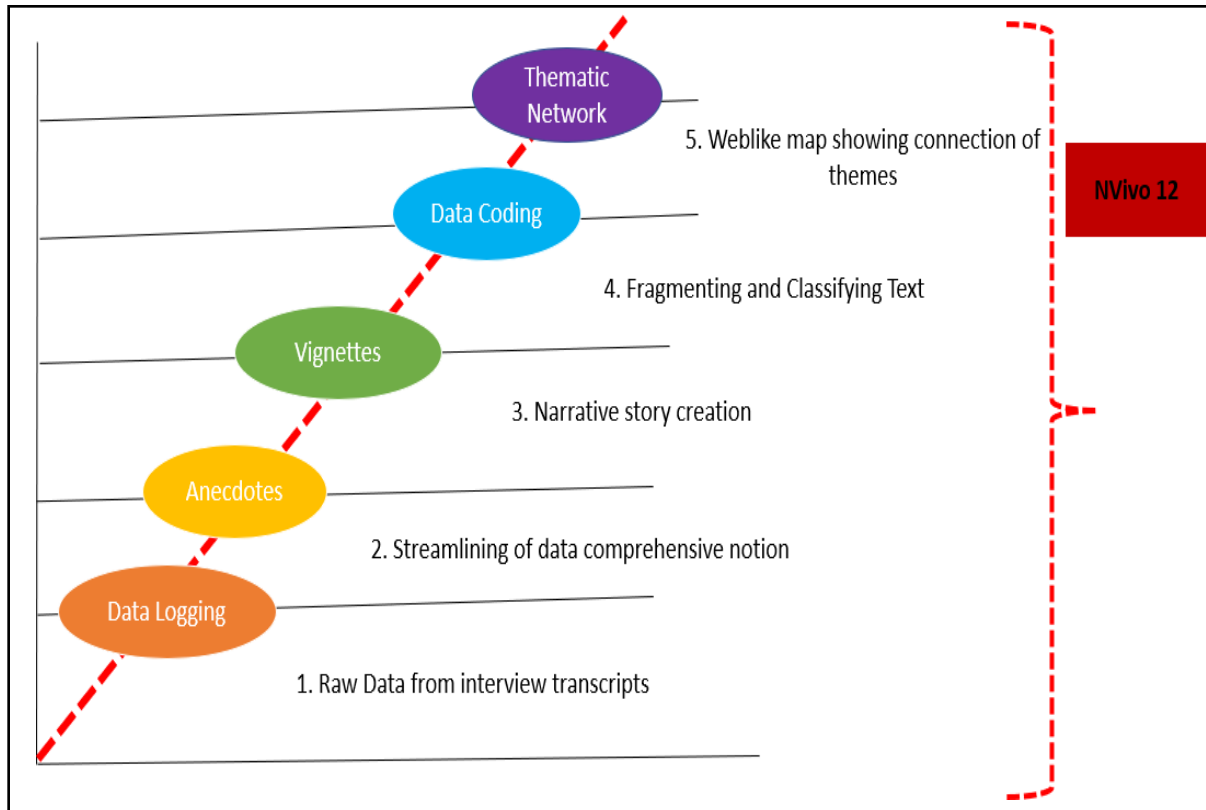
Figure 5.10: Qualitative data analysis (Adapted from Akinyode & Khan, 2018)

Data analysis pursued all the steps indicated above using NVivo 12 a qualitative data analysis software which enabled the process to be done with accomplished precision.

The study had 15 Categories in data cycle 3 and two more new categories that emerged in data cycle 4, but in order to enable concise thematic development the study reduced the categories to 10. Grodal, Anteby and Holm (2019) drawing from categorisation theory argues that to refine the context and basis for theory building similar categories should be merged in order to build overarching categories. Below in figure 5.11 the study demonstrates how the 17 categories were collapsed to form 10 new categories.
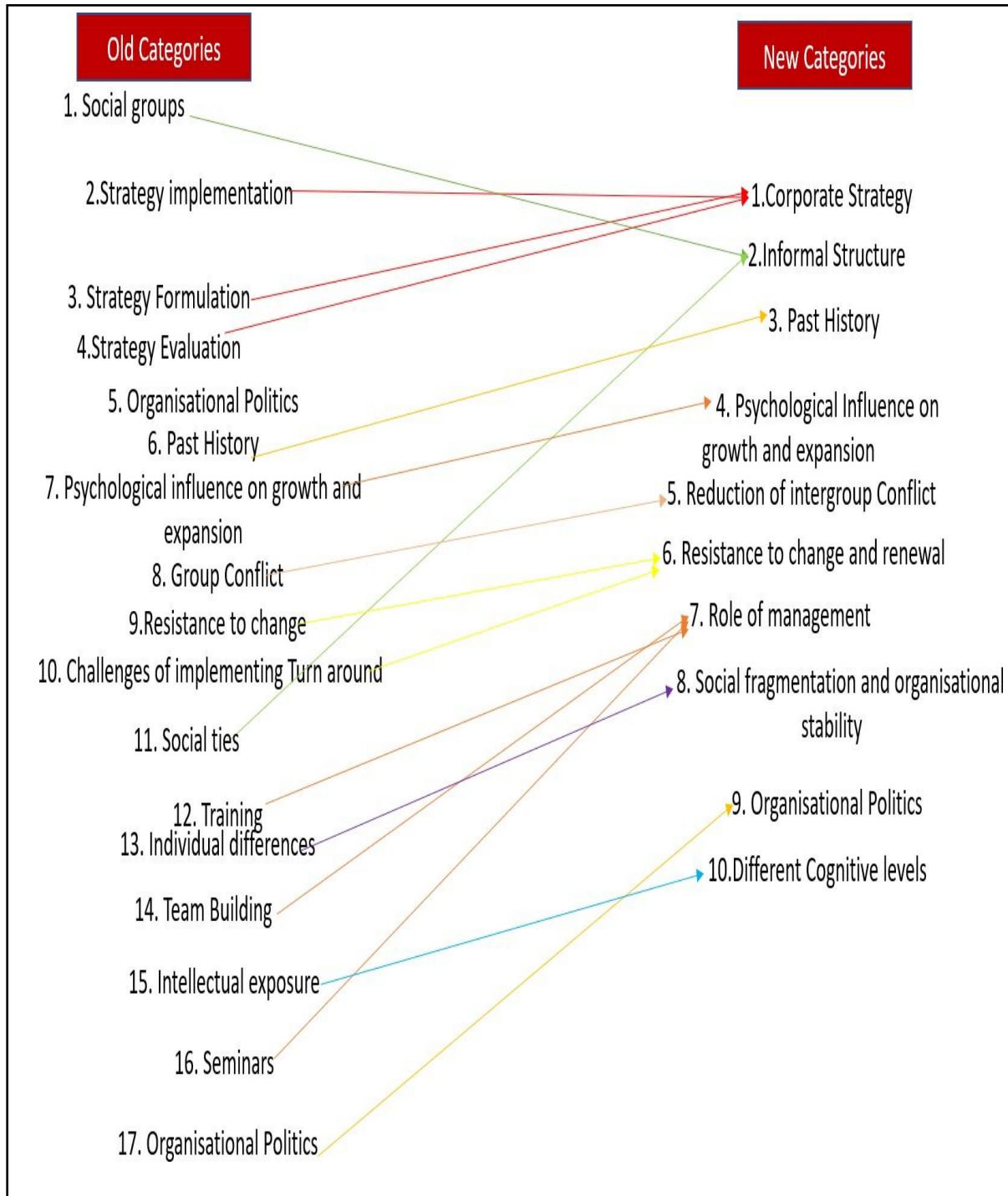
Figure 5.11: Merging of Categories

After collapsing the 17 categories into 10 composite categories the study using NVivo 12 generated a concept map indicating the relationship between the 10 categories and various perspectives of the influence of informal structure on corporate strategy. The bubbles with twin arrows indicate the influence of informal structure on corporate strategy, some of the manifest relationships include the influence of social fragmentation, resistance to change, organisational politics and previous history.

The concept map below demonstrates the relationships that emerge from the 10 merged categories. These relationships enable the study to decipher deeper insights into the context of the phenomenon and to set the basis for systematic concept analysis. Analysis of qualitative data requires considerable creativity because according to Konecki (2019) there are some research contexts that require creative conceptual and interpretive solutions. It is against this background that the study had a multi-faceted approach that drew guidance from a wide range of fields that employed qualitative data analysis. The concept map produced 16 types of relationships that define the influence of informal structures on corporate strategy and that are connected to the 10 composite categories. According to Bazeley (2013); Evers (2016); Reichertz (2015); Saldana (2015) researchers struggle to process qualitative data and to draw coherent connections and meaning from data. Basing on the afore mentioned premise the study presents the concept map showing the connections and links of emerging concepts from the data to expose the salient concepts that can be further processed. Figure 5.12 is an indication of links and connections between the main categories.
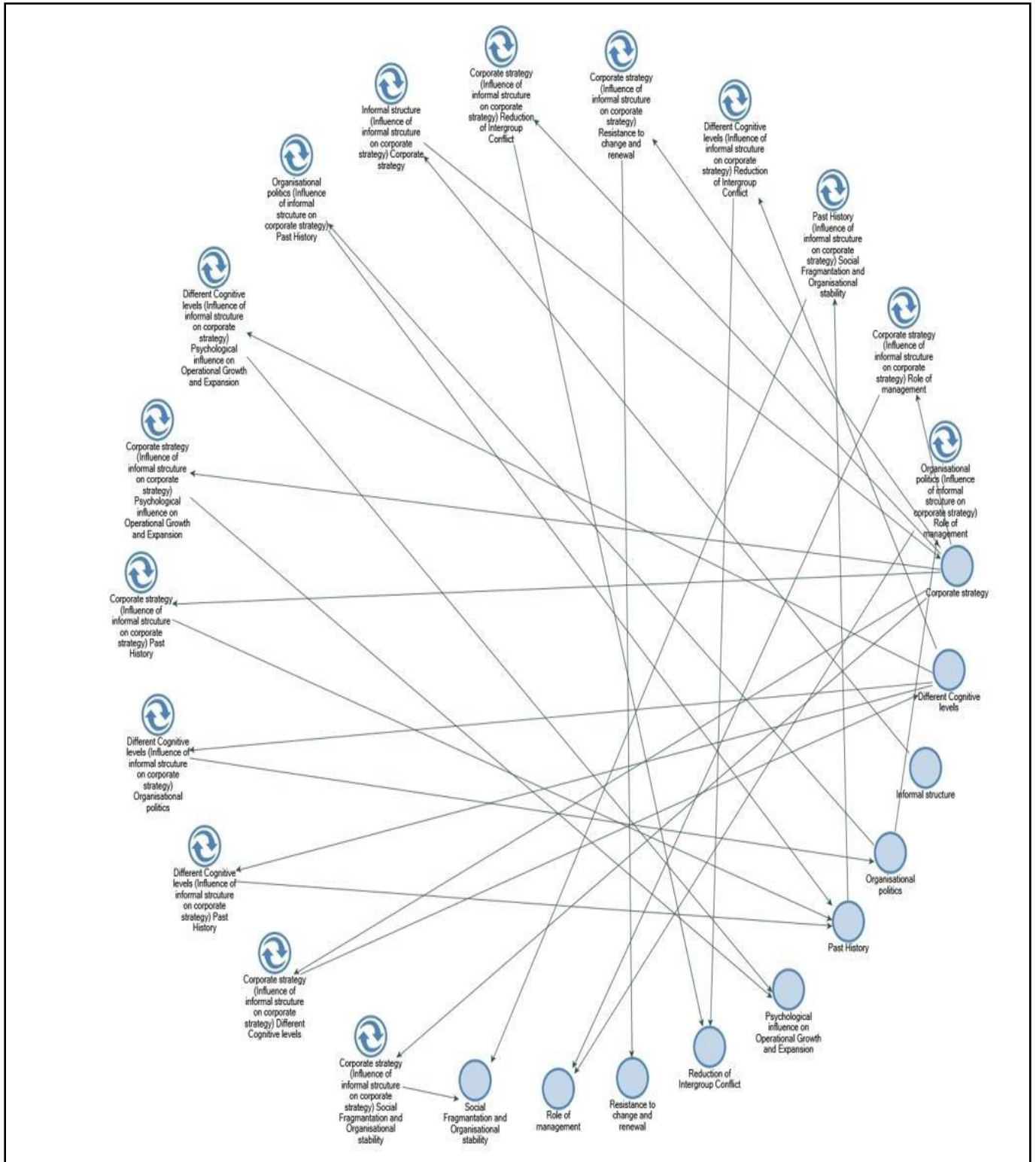
Figure 5.12: Concept map of categories

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The study is based on a non-statistical analysis but however a table showing the connections indicated above is an important tool in drawing a pattern from the data. According to Cloutier and Ravasi (2021) the use of tables enhances the trustworthiness of data and increases transparency in regard to how patterns are drawn and portrays a clear road map to the effectual application of data analysis to theory building. The 10 categories shown in the table are founded on the influence of other subsumed subcategories therefore the frequency shown in these tables also accounts for the categories that have been merged into these main categories. Table 5.7 below demonstrates the distribution of files and references for each category.

Table 5.7: Distribution of main categories

Name	Description	Files	References
Corporate strategy	This is how a company exploits resources and strategies to realise the mission, objectives and vision of an organisation	7	15
Informal Structure	This is a parallel structure from the legitimate structure	15	40
Psychological influence on growth and expansion	Guiding principles and beliefs that inform employees in terms of growth and expansion of the organisation	13	21
Reduction of intergroup Conflict	Strategies employed by the organisation to reduce conflict	9	18
Resistance to change and Renewal	Resistance of new strategies and changes within the organisation by employees. This may be based on the fear of the unknown or riotous behaviour emerging from group pressure	20	16
Role of management	Management efforts to bring order and direction within the organisation	19	50
Social fragmentation and organisational stability	Variation or deviation of characteristics and traits of individuals. The process of enacting ideas and ways to achieve cohesion within the organisation	22	43
Organisational Politics	Self or group agenda that does not pay attention to consequences of actions of individuals/group	20	36

Different Cognitive Levels	Various levels of individuals in terms of remembering, processing, and applying one's mind to given information	6	15
Previous History	The influence of previous experiences on the thought process of individuals and groups	40	70

The study is aimed at determining the influence of informal structures on corporate strategy, therefore the study opted to reclassify the categories based on the number of files and references linked to a particular category. Corporate strategy and reduction of intergroup conflict all had 7 and 9 files respectively, consequently role of management subsumed corporate strategy and organisational politics subsumed reduction of intergroup politics. Similarly, informal structure and psychological influence on growth which had 15 and 13 files respectively were subsumed by previous history which had 40. This whole iteration exercise created 6 core categories which are indicated in figure 5.13.
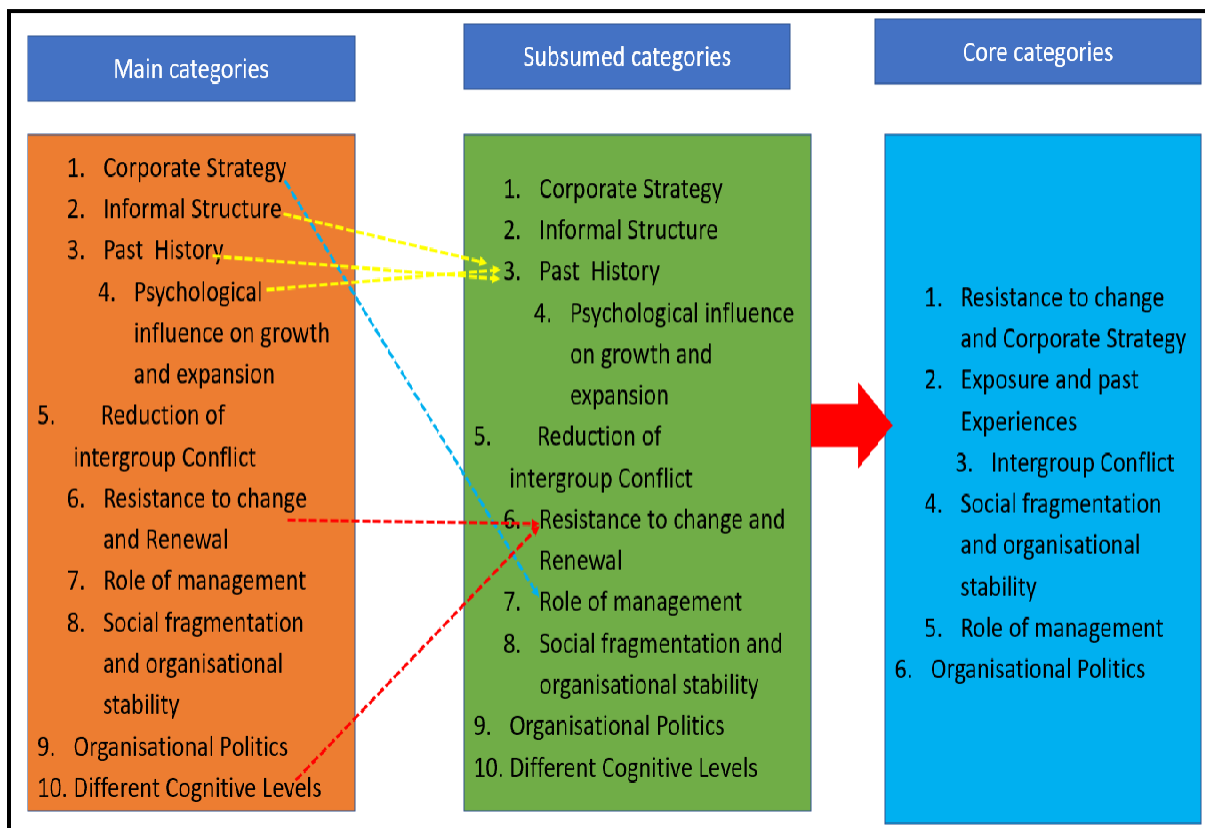
Figure 5.13: Core Categories

The next chapter deals with an in-depth analysis of the categories with the aim of connecting it to findings in literature, contextualising the core categories to the research objectives and research questions. Furthermore, in the following chapter the study derives more insight from applying the theoretical lens (Structuration and Social identity theories) to create new perspectives and new knowledge which is synthesised through a theory building approach to create a theoretical model. The study did not apply the original research questions in the presentation of data because according to Konecki (2019) as the study progressively probes the lived experiences of research participants new insights are gained and subsequently the research questions are readjusted or reimagined to suit the emerging patterns of data cycles. The original research questions are used in the reflective assessment of the research journey where original thoughts before collecting data are reviewed thereby providing a clear basis for new knowledge or perspectives.

5.6 Chapter Summary

The chapter addressed the coding process and discussed the underlying process that informs the iteration of themes and the process of subsuming emerging categories. The chapter demonstrated the analysis of categories and linkages of categories through concept maps generated by NVivo 12. The chapter concluded by abstracting 12 core categories that are discussed in detail in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 6: INTERPRETATION AND THEORY BUILDING

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter is based on presentation of data and an analysis of the relationships of concepts that emerged from the data collection cycles. The previous chapter is informed by the argument by Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure and Chadwick (2008) who argue that interpretation of data should be preceded by data presentation. Furthermore, the previous chapter also discussed the links and connections in the categories that emerged from data because Konecki (2019) argues that categorisation and linkage of categories creates the basis for data interpretation. The study deliberately did not apply theory to data presentation to avoid convolution but allowed the research to present the results as they developed with varying shifts in the various data collection cycles. The presentation of raw results in the previous chapter enables this chapter to apply the dual theoretical lens to probe the findings presented in the previous chapter. This chapter probes the themes derived from the previous study using literature and theory to establish a broader view of how the findings confirm or refute traditionally held views. Furthermore, Snyder (2019) argues that the use of literature in probing themes from data analysis provides a grounded basis for advancing knowledge and facilitating theory development. Interestingly Reeves, Albert, Kuper and Hodges (2013) contend that the use of theory enables a researcher to interpret the data and to propose explanations defining causes or influences connected to a phenomenon.

This chapter which is in two parts commences by interrogating the core categories or themes that emerged from data analysis using literature, theory, and textual responses of research participants. The chapter concludes by giving a synopsis to theory building based on the broad views held by various scholars that have been reviewed and the application of the dual theoretical lens presented in chapter 3.

6.2 Discussion of core categories

Before carrying out theory building it is imperative to explore the core categories to gain a deeper meaning and connection of the informal structure and corporate strategy. The six core categories that were established are namely:

- Resistance to change and corporate strategy
- Exposure and previous experience
- Intergroup conflict
- Social fragmentation and organisational stability
- Role of management
- Organisational politics

6.2.1 Resistance to change and corporate strategy

Resistance to change has proven to be one of the fundamental impediments of corporate strategy because according to Damawan and Azizah (2020) change is inevitable to establish sustainable development and continued relevance of an organisation. Furthermore, drawing from Balogun & Hailey (2004) cited in Damawan and Azizah (2020) research has proven that 70% of organisations that embark on change or shift in strategies usually fail to effect the change due to resistance. There are many factors that can be explored to create clear understanding of the source or motive of the resistance. However, in the context of this study it emerged that social ties and relationships may lead to resistance of corporate strategy. Furthermore, when one mine engineer (MMM1) was asked the following question: What is the cause of resistance to corporate strategy? MMM1 responded as follows:

> *"The behaviour of employees within the various groups is informed by group values and norms. Initially groups are just based on social interaction but may develop to challenge certain issues within the organisation. The primary function of groups Is usually meant to satisfy social needs of employees but as group*

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> *values, beliefs and norms grow apart from organisational ethos a*
> *form of resistance usually takes precedence."*

In agreement with the above notion expressed by one mine engineer (MMM1) another senior human resources manager (SHM1) when asked the same question responded as follows.

> *"Most of our behaviour is influenced by perception which is a*
> *function of interaction. Generally, I have noticed pockets of*
> *resistance to corporate strategy within the employees. This*
> *resistance has adversely affected production, moral, growth and*
> *basic trust of management within the organisation.*

Based on the context of the responses given by the two it can be clearly established that resistance emanates from informal structures. Furthermore, the study observed that within the informal structures there were groups that felt they were excluded in the allocation of resources. Interestingly, the study also observed that within the same informal structures some groups felt they were not duly considered for promotion or training and in both instances the former and latter group had strong reservation on corporate strategy. From a social identity perspective Ashforth and Mael (1989) argue that interaction of group members creates a social moral order that informs the behaviour of in group members. Group members may become resistant if they perceive corporate strategy as a means to attack their position or influence within the organisation. Furthermore, Hunter, Bentzen and Taug (2020) concur that in the past 40 years scholars have called for research that will create a deeper understanding of a formalistic organisational framework and a social network-based structure, where the roles of the two structures (formal and informal) should be viewed as one. However, the conundrum that has besieged most scholars is to create a framework where the two can be perceived as functioning concurrently because the responses given by the two research participants clearly indicate that the two structures are mostly in conflict. Interestingly Mckinley, Mastro and Warber (2014) assert that when groups are formed within the organisation the group

norms and values within that group often lead to stereo type thinking. The common beliefs and values in the groups may lead to resentment of corporate strategy for example in the case where a certain group feels discriminated against or side lined.

While the notion of group influence is critical in understanding the influence of informal structures on corporate strategy, it is also critical to understand the individual who is part of the group. To explore the social dynamics of the individual the study uses structuration theory to gain a deeper understanding of the influence behind individual mental processes and how that affects corporate strategy. From a structuration point of view, Rigby, Woulfin and März (2016) argue that institutional agency is undermined by individual agency as structure that exists in the mind of the agent is the principal lens that governs their behaviour. Further to the argument of individual agency the study observed that an individual's conviction takes precedence over corporate rules or institutional agency. Writing on resistance to change Damawan and Azizah (2020); Furxhi (2021) all concur that resistance emanate from individuals. The study established that it was the disgruntled individuals that channelled their resentment to corporate strategy through fellow group members. The puzzle that this research seeks to solve is based on the conflation that informal structure can be viewed as a collective of various social groups with homogeneous interests yet within the same groups they may be individuals that harbour unique individual needs. The study observed that resistance to corporate strategy which emanated from individuals was difficult to trace since the original focus of the study were informal subgroups. The two theories enable the study to go deeper than the traditional approaches that have limited the informal structures into subgroups and have totally ignored the notion of individual differences.

These two perspectives enabled the study to analyse behaviour from an individual to a collective level. Drawing from Machado-da-Silva, Filho and Rossoni (2006) it can be argued that Individual choices which are non-structural factors also forms critical relevance regarding influence of agents on corporate strategy. Anthropological orientation, history and habits of employees also play a critical part in influencing

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corporate strategy. Friedman *et al.*, (2014) argue that an agent's view of life is influenced by internal reality which helps the agent to make sense of the outside world. This argument clearly shows that the primary influence of behaviour is the internal reality an agent carries as opposed to influence that can be exerted by social structures. Therefore, the above argument clearly shows that resistance from informal structures may emanate from interaction with other agents or may originate because of an employee's shared unique experiences.

Antecedent factors of resistance to change

Drawing from various scholars Canning and Found (2015) enumerates several antecedent factors of resistance to change which resonates with the responses given by research participants and field observations, which are as follows:

- Communication: Poor communication and presentation of change within organisations often leads to resistance (Weller & Bernadine, 2007).
- Involvement/ Participation: Those affected by the change should be consulted and engaged throughout the process (Levasseur, 2010).
- Culture: Some change strategies bring disruption to the internal environment as the changes often seek to change the employees and the environment instead of conforming to the environment (Sopow, 2006; Hoogervorst et al., 2004)
- Behaviour: The mind guides an individual's behaviour and it is one of the complex things to change therefore this may manifest as resistance to change (Kotter & Cohen, 2002)
- Organisational dimensions: An organisation's ethos and way of doing things is established over an extended period and cannot be rushed (Bechtold, 1997).

Observation of the influence of resistance to change on corporate strategy

> *I observed that resistance to change had a negative influence on corporate strategy and affected the organisation in several ways:*

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- *Resistance to change affected staff moral and subsequently productivity was also affected.*
- *Resistance to change created tension between the saboteurs and change agents that tried to champion change strategies. This tension created fragmentation and polarisation.*
- *Resistance to change also created delays in the implementation of cost-effective strategies.*
- *Planning and projects were also affected by resistance to change.*
- *I observed that resistance to change was sustained by the unique contextual setting of South Africa where a culture of blind comradeship dominated the group ties.*
- *Employees resisted change which required them to function as individual players due to the dominant communalism prevalent in African contexts.*

6.2.2 Exposure and past experiences

The South African context presents a history of oppression and apartheid which forms part of the volatile history of the mining sector. The study observed that the informal structures inherently harboured these past experiences, and they draw from these experiences to inform their behaviour. According to Chreim (2006); Karp and Tveterass Helgo (2009) as cited by Canning and Found (2015) resistance to change is influenced by previous experiences. These previous experiences may manifest through resigned compliance, opposition and ambivalence. Drawing from prior social context argument Burke, Joseph, Pasick and Barker (2009) articulate that social, cultural, organisational, historical and political influences are perceived to be background variables that inform beliefs which are theorised to be the dominant influence of individuals and group behaviour. Further drawing from prior arguments on the social context Rehbein (2018)

further argues that the apartheid hierarchical classes established in 1948 fragmented the society by establishing entrenched social classes. The social classes and past hostile history could be the cradle of resistance and bickering within the organisation. Regarding the impact of past experiences, a mine general employee (MGE1) was asked the following question: Is your perception of corporate strategy influenced by any past experiences? The research participant responded as follows:

> *There are undeniable walls of class system that have divided us along racial lines. The status quo that prevailed during the apartheid era still seems to persist though it may not be largely about race, but it has become more of elites. My personal view is nothing has changed and all the strategies that are introduced by these managers are ultimately meant to benefit them.*

According to Taylor, (2018) through interaction agents attach meanings, values, or interpretations that enables them to draw from past experiences to attribute meaning to their current environment. The meanings that employees attribute to change and corporate strategy determine whether they will support or oppose corporate strategy. It can be argued according to structuration theory that informal structures draw from shared beliefs, groupthink and myths which then become default interpretive schemes of corporate strategy. Agents use shared stocks of knowledge which are known as interpretive schemes to interpret behaviour and events to determine meaning of corporate strategy (Heracleous, 2013). Furthermore, according to Oppong (2014) structural properties of societies depend on regularities of social reproduction; structure exists through recursive and discursive interaction of agents within social groups. Drawing from Beaty, Seli and Schacter (2019) individuals have diverse past experiences that inform their decision-making framework and based on this premise the notion of individual differences emerges. Furthermore, employees have divergent experiences which shapes the way they perceive corporate strategy and which may lead to dissonance in acceptance of corporate strategy.

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Factors underpinning past experiences

- Using past experiences as the basis for decision making

- Past experiences provide the basis for individual differences

- Behaviour is modelled by past experiences

- Past experiences function as a lens to interpret the present environment

The below decision-making model demonstrates how an individual draws from the past or uses comparable memory which is a similar event from the past.
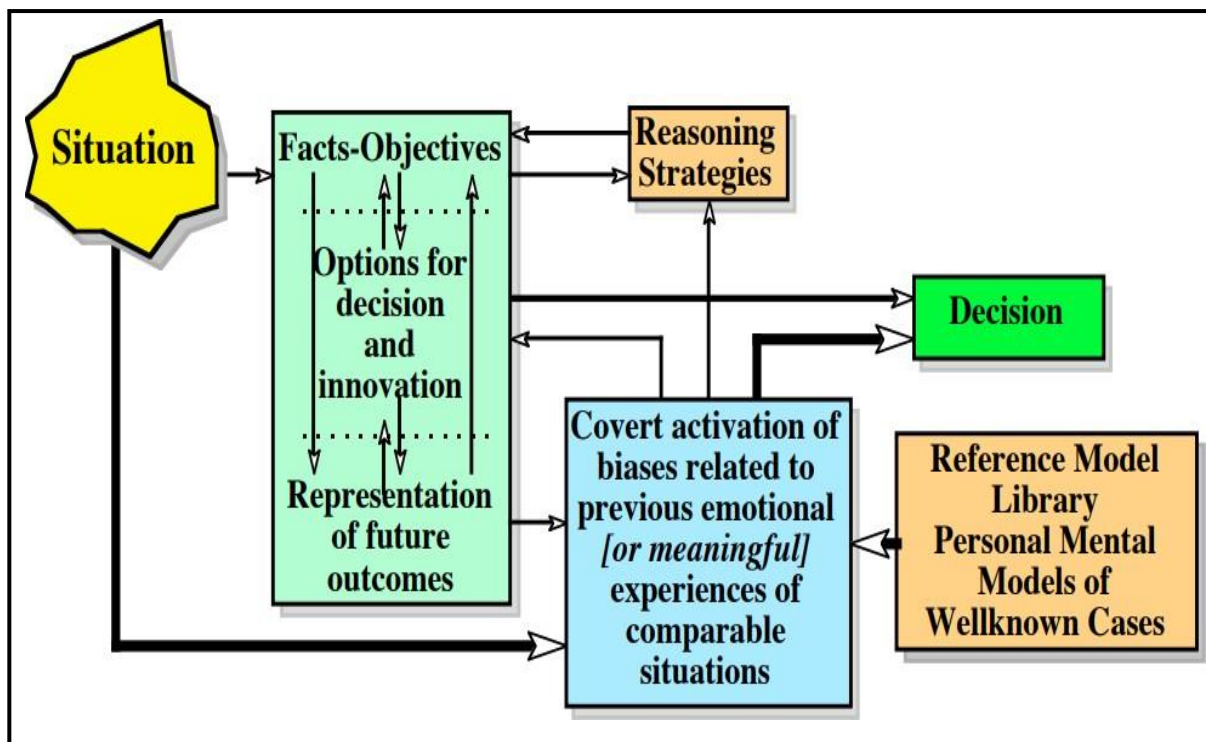
Figure 6.1: Decisions from previous experience; Adapted from Bechara, 1997

Observation of the influence of past experiences on corporate strategy

I observed that employees taped from previous experience to support or reject corporate strategy. The observation was based on the following factors.

- *Research participants compared strategies from previous organisations with strategies of present organisation.*
- *Comparison of managers and leadership style of previous managers had an influence on the acceptance or rejection of corporate strategy.*
- *Research participants compared the functioning of the organisation under different political dispensations (Apartheid and Post-Apartheid)*
- *Research participants also utilised their own life experiences to interpret the implication of corporate strategy.*

6.2.3 Intergroup Conflict

According to Halevy and Cohen (2019) intergroup conflict is founded on the three "I" s which are interests, Identity and ideology. Furthermore, recalling from literature review Hopkins and Reicher (2011) argue that social identity shapes behaviour of group members and influence their thought processes. The potential loss of status of an ethnic or racial group might create tension against other organisational subgroups. This tension might affect organisational strategy since a lot of bickering and posturing is bound to take place. The tension usually arises against the outgroup because of divergence of social needs and traits. The same tension affects the effective implementation of corporate strategy since cohesion is needed in the implementation of corporate strategy. Pertaining the notion of identity literature reviewed positive self-concept or identity leads to job satisfaction and adherence to corporate strategy. Mishra (2016) asserts that Self-concept is critical in defining the behaviour of an agent including their relational conduct. Regarding the issue of self- concept and its role in the organisation Behe shtifar and Rahimi-Nezhad (2012) notes that positive self-concept leads to job satisfaction and the opposite leads to poor delivery and job dissatisfaction. The study notes that a positive self-concept leads to an employee who has good social relations and readily accepts

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corporate strategy while an employee with dissatisfaction suffers from poor social relations and subsequently has challenges with corporate strategy. Drawing from Halevy, Chou, Cohen, & Bornstein (2010) cited in Halevy and Cohen (2019) groups that experience relative deprivation have an elaborate propensity to clash with financially advantaged groups. The Marikana incident where low level income employees clashed with management resulting in the sad loss of lives was premised on the afore mentioned context where there was an irreconcilable difference between the earnings of general employees and management. When one Overseer Miner (MMM2) was asked the following question: What are the sources of conflict within the organisation and how does this conflict affect corporate strategy? MM2 responded as follows:

> *Conflict usually arises from a myriad of issues that include political tensions, competing interests, identity and historical issues. These tensions are visible in the workplace, and they affect the effective implementation of corporate strategy. I have observed that in the mining department Tswana and Afrikaner employees have a clear sense of entitlement since there are the dominant group within the department. This however has created a lot of tension and division especially when it relates to promotion opportunities and allocation of resources.*

Observation of the influence of intergroup conflict on corporate strategy

Gathering from literature review, responses given by research participants and my own independent assessment I observed the following:

- *Conflict was based on individual differences of individuals and clashes between groups because of social identity.*
- *Conflict was also rife due to rumours, gossip and hearsay which was extremely aided by technology through social platform applications like What's App.*

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- *Conflict amongst departments, functional teams and managers also posed a threat to corporate strategy. The finance department felt there were superior to all the other departments while the mining department felt that there were the most important because there were running the core business.*

- *Conflict within the department based on sense of entitlement by other ethnic groups also caused division within the organisation*

The study presents an intergroup conflict model in figure 6.2 to create a deeper and broader appreciation of the contextual influence and consequences of conflict within an organisation.
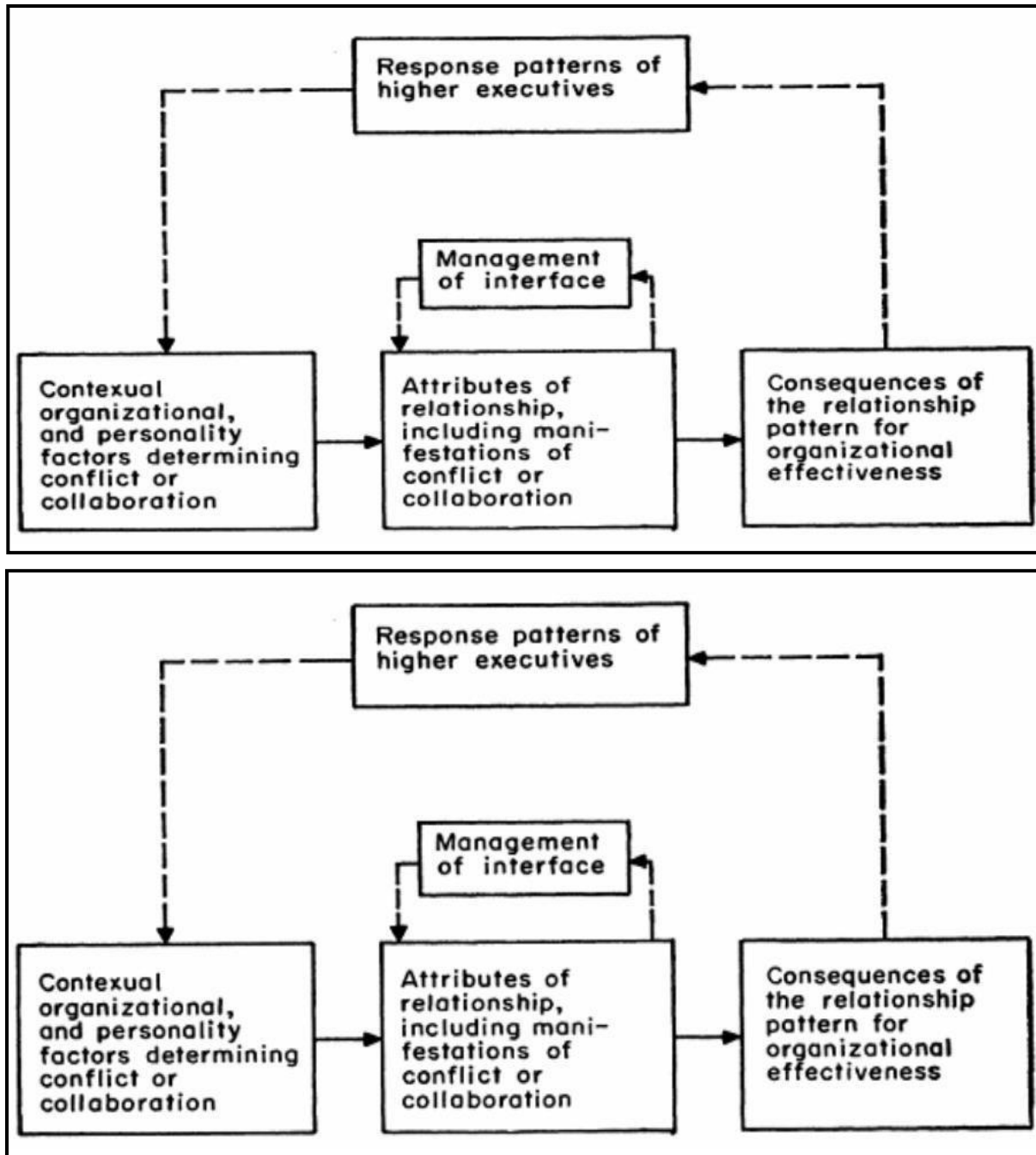
Figure 6.2: Intergroup Conflict Model: Adopted from Walton & Dutton, 1969

The model clearly demonstrates that conflict emanates from contextual, organisational and personality factors. The model ultimately shows that there are consequences to organisational effectiveness arising from intergroup conflict. The context of the

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organisation under study is the mining sector which houses diverse ethnic groups and several immigrants. The demographic distribution within the mining industry is a perfect platform for fragmentation and conflict. The role of higher executives will be explored in the subsequent sections. The model through an oxymoron which juxta poses concepts shows that conflict or collaboration may exist within the organisation.

6.2.4 Social fragmentation and organisational stability

According to Peters and Simaens (2020) fragmentation and disconnection of an organisation's employees from corporate strategy creates a challenge in achieving sustainable development. Furthermore, according to Porter and Kramer (2006) to maintain sustainable development within the organisation there is need to integrate the internal sociological narrative with the organisational strategy infrastructure. A fragmented approach or corporate strategy that is disconnected from the social needs of internal and external stakeholders will lead to failure of corporate strategy due to lack of support by all relevant stakeholders. Failure to manage social fragmentation leads to possible instability and poor financial performance. Commenting on the same issue Oghojafor, Muo and Aduloju (2012) assert that social fragmentation creates an environment where it is impossible to achieve organisational objectives. Therefore, social fragmentation has a negative influence on organisational stability and should be managed to ensure continued development of the organisation. Minh Pham, Kondor, Hanel and Thurner (2020) concur that the subjects of cohesion and social fragmentation have gained a lot of traction amongst scholars yet social fragmentation continues to emerge within organisations. The scholars (Minh Pham *et al.*, 2020) further argue that due to technology employees connect at different levels affecting traceable cohesion ties, more importantly migration of people, ethnic diversity, globalisation and the emergence of transnational entities like the European Union all contribute to social fragmentation. All these factors have convoluted cohesion structural infrastructures within organisations. The informal structures embody all these fragmented groups within the organisation thereby presenting an inevitable need to embrace diversity within the organisation. One senior engineer

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(SEM2) was asked the following question: What are the sources of social fragmentation and how do they affect corporate strategy? The research participant answered as follows:

> *Due to the multicultural landscape of South Africa coupled with the diverse foreign nationals within the organisation a lot of clashes erupt around these dynamics. A lot of groups that were aligned to ethnic origin and homogeneous interests were formed and some of them seem to pursue competing interests. This has affected corporate strategy since there has been a lot of fragmentation based on ethnic origin, common interests and divergent social needs.*

Underpinning factors of social fragmentation

- Multiculturalism and diversity
- Use of technology to connect on social platforms like what's app
- Globalisation
- Emergence of transnational entities like EU
- Immigrants
- Ethnic divergence

6.2.5 Role of Management

According to Tapera (2016) It is the role of management to craft, implement, monitor and evaluate strategies that provide guidance to the operations of an organisation. Furthermore, Strickland and Gamble (2007) cited in Tapera (2016) assert that effective corporate strategy formulation and implementation has a significant impact on the growth and development of the organisation. Drawing from literature review Hax and Majluf (1984) defines corporate strategy as the framework in which a company reveals its objectives, goals, mission, policies, purposes, principles and plans. Echoing the same sentiments Abdulwase, Ahmed, Nasr, Abdulwase, Alyousofi and Yan (2021) mention that a good corporate strategy should demonstrate how the resources and competencies of a

company will be utilised in line with corporate goals, vision, mission and adopted strategies. The study drawing from Taylor (2018) notes that the organisation is comprised of social beings that enjoy social relations and must execute corporate strategy driven by collective goals. Drawing from the afore mentioned statement there is need to manage the social needs and relationships within the organisation to ensure the successful implementation of corporate strategy. One Senior Finance Manager (SFM1) was asked the following question: Define the role of senior management in the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of corporate strategy? The research participant (SFM1) responded as follows:

> *The role of management is to formulate, implement, monitor and evaluate corporate strategy. We are also tasked with revising some of the strategies if they don't yield the required results. Management first has to carry out environmental scanning before crafting corporate strategy.*

Drawing from literature review and response given by the research participant the below listed factors can be abstracted.

Factors underpinning the role of managers in corporate strategy

- Formulation of corporate strategy
- Implementation of corporate strategy
- Monitoring of corporate strategy
- Evaluation of corporate strategy
- Managing the social needs of stakeholders
- Carryout diagnostic scanning of the environment
- Management of diversity
- Managing conflicts and social fragmentation

6.2.6 Organisational Politics

Cacciattolo (2014); Sun and Xia (2018) define organisational politics as behaviour that is driven by interpersonal antagonism based on emotional matters. Writing on organisational politics Kacmar and Ferris, (1993) argue that it may be characterised by the need to assert power to influence decision-making processes or to influence the outcome of decisions in a bid to safeguard individual or group interests that may not be espoused by other individuals or groups. Furthermore, commenting on the negative influence of organisational politics Marques (2009) mentions that it may wreak havoc through gossip, rumours, bickering, back biting and corrupt behaviour. The afore mentioned clearly indicates how organisational politics can impede the effective implementation of corporate strategy. Commenting on the relationship between corporate strategy and organisational politics Boateng, Agyei and Louis (2013) mention that political behaviour brings mistrust and rifts that eventually affect corporate strategy. Interestingly, Room and Pliskin (1997); Seo (2003); cited in Cacciattolo (2014) indicate that organisational politics emerges in the informal groups that are formed within the organisation. These groups may be based on common needs and interests that do not support corporate strategy.

The study in the preliminary literature review mentioned that Schoenefeld (2021) argues that a bibliometric analysis of 780 articles demonstrates that interest groups are usually found in political science literature. The study therefore observes that Fu *et al* (2019) used this phrase to denote the notion of organisational politics caused by informal structures. Furthermore, preliminary literature review had mentioned that according to Morrison and Nolan (2007) organisations are expected to practise fairness and equity yet due to friendship ties, office bearers may be forced to give special treatment to their friends which may lead to political bickering and thereby subsequently affecting strategic procedures of the organisation.

One finance department employee (SFM1) was asked the following question: Based on your personal experience comment on the attributes of the informal structure that affect corporate strategy?

> *I have observed that in most cases the various groups I have been part of revolve around selfish group needs and they achieve these through plotting and bickering as means of maintaining power and influence. The positive attributes of information sharing and skills transfer is overshadowed by the tension and fights for recognition and resources.*

Drawing from literature and the responses given by the research participant the following key factors can be drawn from this core category.

Antecedents of organisational politics

- Selfish individual/group interests
- The unquenchable need for power and recognition
- Mistrust and fragmentation
- Gossip, rumours, back biting and bickering
- Corrupt behaviour
- Nepotism and favouritism

6.3. Qualitative meta synthesis

Drawing from Daniel and Harland (2018) qualitative studies lack proper structure and systematic approach to synthesise research findings with the broader context of research work and the body of evidence. In agreement with the afore mentioned scholars Kazak (2018) cited in Duden (2021) argues that that the heterogeneous perspectives that are abstracted from a single qualitative study require meta synthesis. The meta synthesis process does not seek to absolve the study of its contribution to the body of knowledge but seeks to engage the study with current perspectives to clearly deduce the contribution of the study. Flemming and Noyes (2021) assert that qualitative synthesis is increasingly

becoming popular in qualitative studies as this approach enables the studies to compare findings across different contexts and draw conclusions in a transparent manner.

Based on the background given above the study will partly draw from the Noblit and Hare (1983) meta ethnographic model as presented by Norwood and Turner (2018). The synthesis enables the study to engage in a metaphoric dialogical analysis of literature and theory with the view of establishing the contribution of the study both in literature and theory. The study notes that previous chapters (chapter 2 and 3) discussed literature review, contextual framework, and theoretical lens respectively. In the sections that follow these are discussed to strengthen the basis of theory building. Drawing from Shugan (2004) the study argues that the phase of synthesis of themes is the one that makes academic writing different from research by consultants who seek immediate benefits that are not driven by defined scholarship and theoretical foundations.

6.3.1 Synthesis of themes

It is important to relate the core categories to literature, context and theory because Akinyode and Khan (2018) posit that it is critical to demonstrate the development of themes in the study because core categories subsume all the other themes to form higher order abstraction of themes. It is important to note that theory is not developed from conclusions drawn from raw data only, but it is developed from a broader layer of theory, contextual framework and literature review. The implications of the connections provide clarity, domain analysis and thematic network analysis which enables the convergence of themes to higher order themes. Figure 6.3 below demonstrates the formulation of theory through synthesis of themes abstracted from field observation, literature review and application of theory.
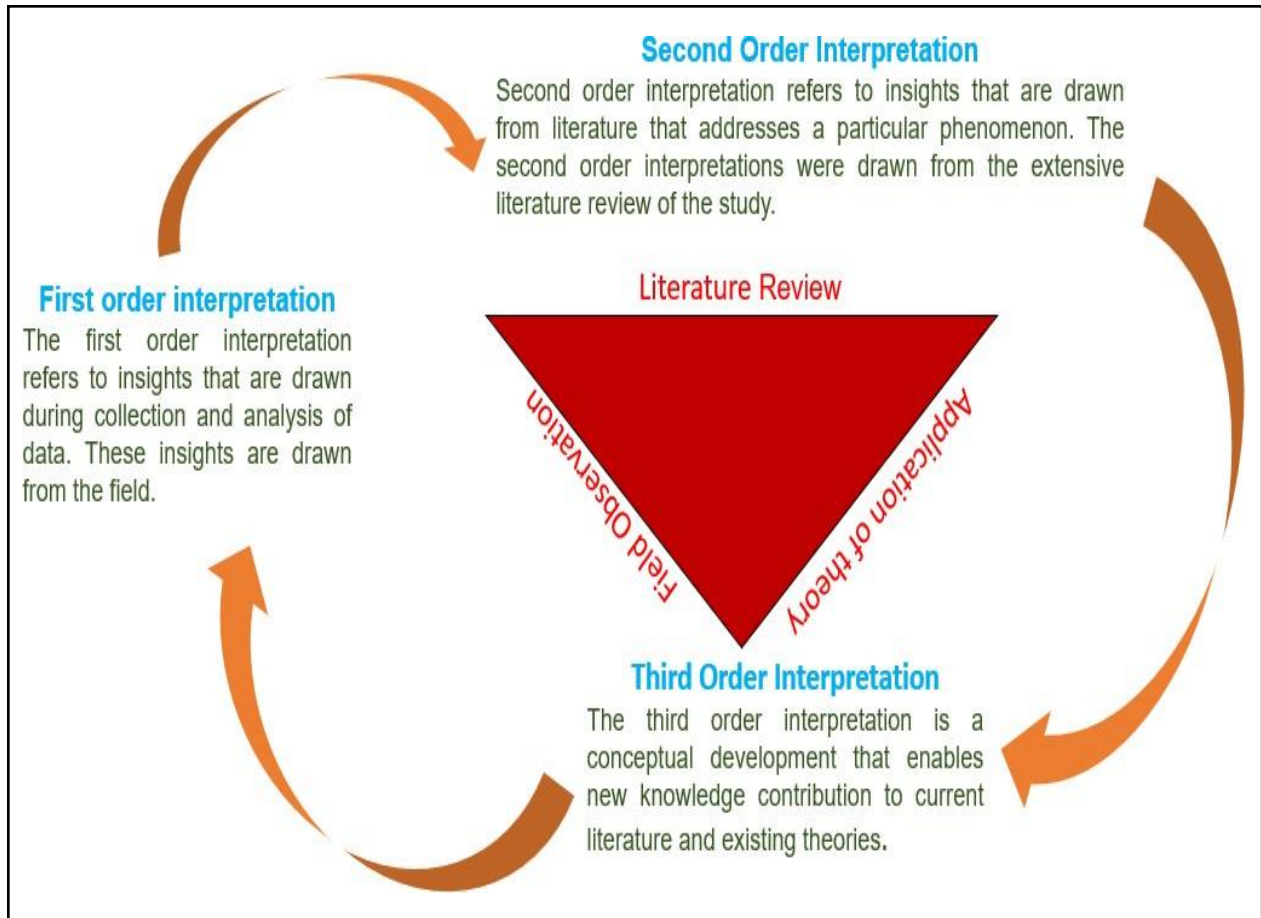
Figure 6.3: Synthesis of themes, Adopted from Noblit & Hare, 1983

(a) First and second order interpretation

First-order theoretical analysis is arrived at through the initial observation that take place during data collection and are usually informed by the various encounters of research participants. Second order interpretation is derived from Schutz's notion of first and second-order constructs, the first construct deals with general understanding of people in their daily routines while second order is the derivation of social constructs from written literature (Britten *et al.*, 2002; Campbell *et al.*, 2011). The first order interpretation refers to insights that a drawn during collection and analysis of data. These insights are discussed elaborately in the data collection cycles. Second order interpretation refers to insights that are drawn from literature that addresses a particular phenomenon. The

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second order interpretations were drawn from the extensive literature review of the study. The insights drawn from literature also provide a formidable grounding base for interpretation of the phenomenon based on multi scholarly perspectives. The second order interpretation did not produce concepts through refutation, but it produced a line of argument where the concepts proved to be reciprocal. The second and third order interpretation presents building blocks which informs the theoretical model proposed by the study. The second order and third order interpretation are briefly discussed below.

(b) Second Order interpretation

According to Shkedi (2004) second-order analysis is a process that aligns observations from the data collected and theory with the aim of aligning structured meaning from data gathered with tried and tested theoretical foundations. Second order interpretation draws multi perspectives from literature which are systematically applied to draw deeper insights and broader application of theory.

(c) Third order interpretation

This last phase is concerned with theorising the descriptive categories gathered in the second phase with the aim of drafting a theoretical model.

6.3.2 Conceptualising of Core categories using the dual theoretical lens

The research used the dual theoretical lens because of the criticism of structuration theory, because while the theory enables the study to explore deeper structural issues it is not without faults which are circumvented using social identity theory. Rose (1998) in his evaluation of structuration theory cites the conflation of structure and agency as the main criticism of structuration theory. Arguing on the same premise, Archer (1996) drawing from Lockwood (1964) who had separated the two (agency and structure to enable critical analysis of both) mentions that conflation of agency and structure limits structuration theory from fully embracing social constructivism. Mindful of the division that exists amongst scholars regarding the position of Giddens (1984) that structure and

agency are mutually constitutive, the study used social identity theory to conceptualise the notion and influence of social structures on corporate strategy. Social identity theory offers a strong ontology that enables it to complement structuration theory and thus the study used the dual theoretical lens. The below section applies the theoretical lens and contextual framework systematically to synthesise high order themes for theory production.

Table 6.1: Resistance to change

Resistance to change	
Structuration Theory	**Identity Theory**
Drawing from earlier review of structuration theory (chapter 3) resistance to change is sustained by structures that recursively creates or modifies structures. The notion of recursive creation of structure denotes the concept of duality of structure. When an employee joins an organisation there are exposed to norms, values and beliefs that may influence them to resist corporate strategy. However, structuration theory also holds that the same employees can alter or change the social structures that influence behaviour of fellow employees. The ability of changing structures relates to agency (ability to make choices) or individualism. Based on the afore mentioned position behaviour of individuals may be viewed as product of collective interaction or individual choices. According to structuration theory agents make their decisions that influence their behaviour through modalities. Modalities are the means by	Resistance to change may be an attitude that is driven by group norms beliefs and values. The mentioned antecedents lead to stereotypical thinking patterns where group members only support institutional decisions that identify with their group norms and values (Mckinley, Mastro & Warber, 2014). Furthermore, employees who share the same ethnic origin are usually inclined to support similar positions, thus an ethic group resisting change will influence new group members to do the same. Ashforth and Mael (1989) further explains that employees may define themselves according to salient demographic variables like race, age, gender, nationality and religious faith. Employees may support the decision to resist change based on the fear of being alienated by fellow group members. Leaders in the social groups to adhere to group norms even though the norms undermine corporate strategy. Group norms

which agents draw from structure to inform their decisions e.g. interpretive schemes (McGarry, 2016). These interpretive schemes are unofficial rules, procedures, beliefs and strategies espoused by a group. Negative unofficial rules and procedures may influence agents to resist corporate strategy. According to Mess (2016) determinism is the process through which employees adhere to norms, values and through time and space alter the same values. Drawing from the earlier articulated contextual framework that includes apartheid, unemployment, xenophobia and social unrest, agents can draw from these structural frames which may lead to negative behaviour like resistance to change. Through continued interaction negative behaviour maintained in the informal organisation is gradually passed on to existing and new employees. Van Veenstra, Melin and Axelsson (2014) mentions that the relationship between agency and structure is dialectic, meaning to say the interface between the two progressively creates structure.

and values create a common thinking pattern which influences the thought process of individuals (Funder & Fast, 2010).

(a) Application of the lens to resistance to change: Based on the data gathered

Most of the research participants that were interviewed or observed regarding the notion of resistance to change derived their orientation from group norms, beliefs, values and ethos. The norms, beliefs and values would be limited to a few individuals but would be systematically cascaded through social interaction. Isolated cases also proved that several employees within the groups that resisted change, disagreed with their groups on the issue of resisting change. These employees within the various groups who supported

change were treated with disdain and were labelled as sell outs in the struggle to bring real organisational change. The label sell out is derived from the apartheid struggle and was used in most groups to whip group members into submission in terms of group values and beliefs.

Table 6.2: Past Experiences

Past Experiences	
Structuration Theory	**Social Identity Theory**
In respect of drawing from previous experiences the agent draws from unconscious component which is stored in the memory traces. These memory traces have structural properties called signification, domination, and legitimation. The agent draws from past experiences and recurrent patterns in the unconscious to construe meaning through signification. The unconscious information stored by agents then constitutes knowledgeability stored as stocks of information that function as interpretive schemes in making decisions. The stocks of information define the norms and resources the employee can use to meet corporate strategy (Veenstra, Melin & Axelsson, 2014). Previous experiences like apartheid, previous bad experiences with management and personal life experiences have a bearing to the agent's reception of corporate strategy. Previous experiences define the notion of individual differences in terms of responding to corporate strategy. The agent draws from past experiences and recurrent patterns in the	Literature reviewed on social identity did not address the dynamics of past experiences. The subject addressed relate to self-categorisation, attribution and intergroup relations or conflict. The absence of literature that relate to past experiences justifies the use of the two theories. The two theories complement each other.

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unconscious to construe meaning through signification and draws authority to manage people and resources. The unconscious information stored by agents then constitutes knowledgeability stored as stocks of information that function as interpretive schemes in making decisions. The stocks of information define the norms and resources the employee can use to meet corporate strategy (Veenstra, Melin & Axelsson, 2014).

(b) Application of the lens to previous experiences: Based on the data gathered

Individual employees subconsciously draw from previous experiences like apartheid, previous experience with managers and personal life experiences to inform their behaviour and that of others within the same group. The past experiences which are stored as stocks of knowledgeability in the memory stocks are used as interpretive schemes to construe meaning. Employees who had unpleasant past experiences especially with management from previous years or organisations were key players in impeding corporate strategy. The same employees influenced a structural framework of reasoning within the informal groups to resist change and corporate strategy. However, it must be noted that some employees had positive past experiences that made them support corporate strategy. The positive and negative unwritten rules consequently created polarisation within the groups and the organisation.

Table 6.3: Intergroup Conflict

Intergroup Conflict	
Structuration Theory	**Social Identity Theory**
Intergroup conflict is founded on the continued rationalisation of group norms and values that conflict with other groups. Kort and Gharbi (2013) contend that the continuous rationalisation of behaviour according to structuration theory is defined as legitimation and once behaviour is legitimised it is accepted as norms and values that ultimately determine behaviour. The study notes that Giddens (1984) saw his theory as 'a general ontology of human agency in the world. Structuralism the basis of the theory of structuration entails the identification of the relationship between the individuals and the social forces like norms, values and principles. Structuration is an attempt to balance the role that actors play with their limited choice of position in history and in the social fabric they find themselves in (Ashley, 2010). Based on the application of structuration theory to intergroup conflict it can be concluded that intergroup conflict is a product of legitimised moral codes of behaviour within a group.	Conflict mostly arises from the in and out group concept within groups. The in group embodies the preference that an agent strongly identifies with while the out group represents limited common preferences and similarity in personality traits. Once an employee identifies perceived similar personality traits in a group of employees, they will proceed to join that group. The employee will then embrace the norms and values of the group based on the homogeneous interests. The groups formed lead to stereotypical thinking patterns where group members only support institutional decisions that identify with their group norms and values (Mckinley, Mastro & Warber, 2014).

(c) Application of the lens to intergroup Conflict: Based on the data gathered

It was observed that the organisation developed intergroup conflict based on divergent social needs or competing needs. Most of the groups that sought after recognition would

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always clash because of competition to be viewed as the most effective and efficient group. The groups were highly polarised along two extremes wherein some groups supported corporate strategy and some opposed the strategic initiatives of the organisation. This variance strongly affected the unitary operation of the organisation and the desired accomplishment of corporate strategy.

Table 6.4: Social Fragmentation

Social Fragmentation	
Structuration Theory	**Social Identity Theory**
Social fragmentation occurs for several reasons and one of the main reasons being contextual dynamics. Van Rooyen (2013) argues that the social context is fundamental in translation of meaning since people who share common origin also largely share the same understanding. Different settings of events might mean different things to different cultural or religious groups. Employees who share a different background might find it difficult to integrate with fellow employees who share a different background.	The act of self-categorisation based on similar personality traits and characteristics naturally leads to fragmentation. Commenting on social identity theory Korostelina (2014) explains that. Self-categorisation is when individuals assign themselves to groups based on homogenous beliefs, behaviour and attitudes. Social identification is self-definition that is influenced by the composition of group members. Social comparison is where one compares themselves with others and defines their traits as similar or different from theirs (Mckinley, Mastro & Warber, 2014). The comparison leads to group identity which is founded on the comparison of the in group and the out group. The in group embodies the preference that an agent strongly identifies with while the out group represents limited common preferences and similarity in personality traits. Once an employee identifies perceived similar personality traits in a group of employees, they will proceed to join that group. The employee will then embrace the norms and

values of the group based on the homogeneous interests.

(d) Application of the lens to social fragmentation: Based on the data gathered

The study observed that social fragmentation within the organisation was based on several factors which include the use of social media, transnational entities, ethnic diversity, immigrant employees and globalisation. The disconnection among employees based on the above-mentioned factors had a negative effect on the smooth dissemination and execution of corporate strategy

Table 6.5: Role of management

Role of management	
Structuration Theory	**Social Identity Theory**
Mangers can use the power of punishment and reward to influence behaviour of employees. Veenstra, Melin and Axelsson (2014) further concur that allocative resources denotes the power to distribute resources and authoritative refers to the power to control people. While managers retain a considerable degree of influence over employees the study revealed that informal leaders had more control of people than managers and according to structuration theory people are seen as resources and their control is defined as authoritative power (Broger, 2011). The control of people gave the informal leaders power and armed the informal leaders with direct power to either subvert or promote corporate	Spoor and Chu (2018) argue that to ease the impediment of social identity on organisational harmony and development management should create Communities of Practice (CoPs), informal groups where people share knowledge, to improve knowledge sharing within the organisation. Creation of these groups by management may circumvent the antagonism that is brought about by the diverse backgrounds of employees.

strategy. Gathering from the data analysed according to structuration theory it can be concluded that informal structure construe power through group norms and values which act as modalities that govern their internal communication process (Albano, Masino & Maggi, 2010). This implies that rules and corporate strategies communicated through official communication channels may not carry weight and power since employees in the informal structure are informed by informal rules and norms in their embedded memory (Whittington, 2015).

(e) Application of the lens to Role of management: Based on the data gathered

It was observed that management had assumed a passive role in terms of establishing interventions that would ensure cohesion and efficiency in the formulation and implementation of corporate strategy. Furthermore, the study established that informality was not checked in terms of work team operations and reporting. It should also be noted that while informality has certain advantages like smooth flow of information, rapid response to issues and flexibility, negative influences within informal structures outweighed the positive attributes of informal structures.

Table 6.6: Organisational politics

Organisational Politics	
Structuration Theory	**Social Identity Theory**
Matthews (2014) asserts that from a structuration point of view organisational politics emerges as employees self-organise around common interests and common language. This self-organisation leads to the formation of groups around various interests which often culminate in conflict based on the need to control zones of influence (resources). This conflict based on the need to control resources and the need of getting recognition leads to organisational politics. Organisational politics is subsumed by the organisational culture which defines the meaning of power, hierarchical authority and managerial power (Indeje and Qin, 2010). This therefore means that if the informal groups view management authority with contempt other employees who are part of these groups may eventually do the same through socialisation.	Jenkins (2014) from a social identity perspective enumerates the dimensions of organisational politics indicated below • Identity politics • Recognition politics • Politics of creation of difference • Collective politics • Ethnic politics The various dimensions of social identity given above clearly indicate that social identity has the potential to block corporate strategy.

The need to control zones of influence (resources), need for power (control of people) and need for recognition are the three pillars of organisational politics. Organisational politics was based on the organisational culture that had been established over an extended period. The study therefore maintains that it is imperative to change organisational culture to change organisational politics.

(g) Conceptualisation of the emerging perspective

The grids presented above shows a coherent and systematic development of a model based on the data collected in the field using the theoretical lens and contextual aspects.
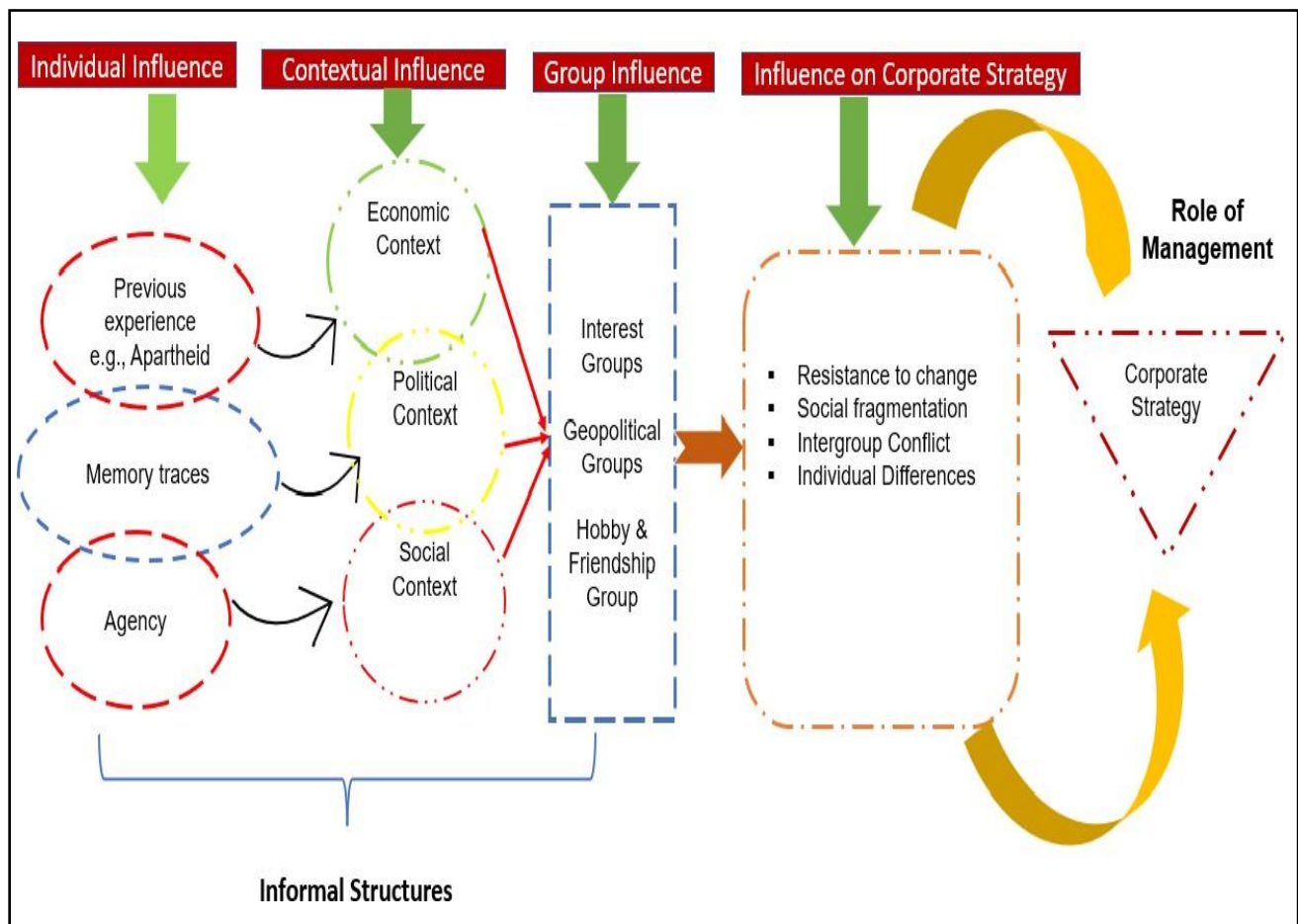
Figure 6.3: Conceptualisation of the influence of informal structure on corporate strategy

The model above shows the conceptualisation of the influence of informal structures on corporate strategy through the eyes of the dual theoretical lens. The model demonstrates that influence of informal structure is based on three different dimensions which are the individual, contextual and group influence. Furthermore, to figure 6.3 a simplified model figure 6.4 which suggests a strategic approach to managing organisational informal structures is given below.
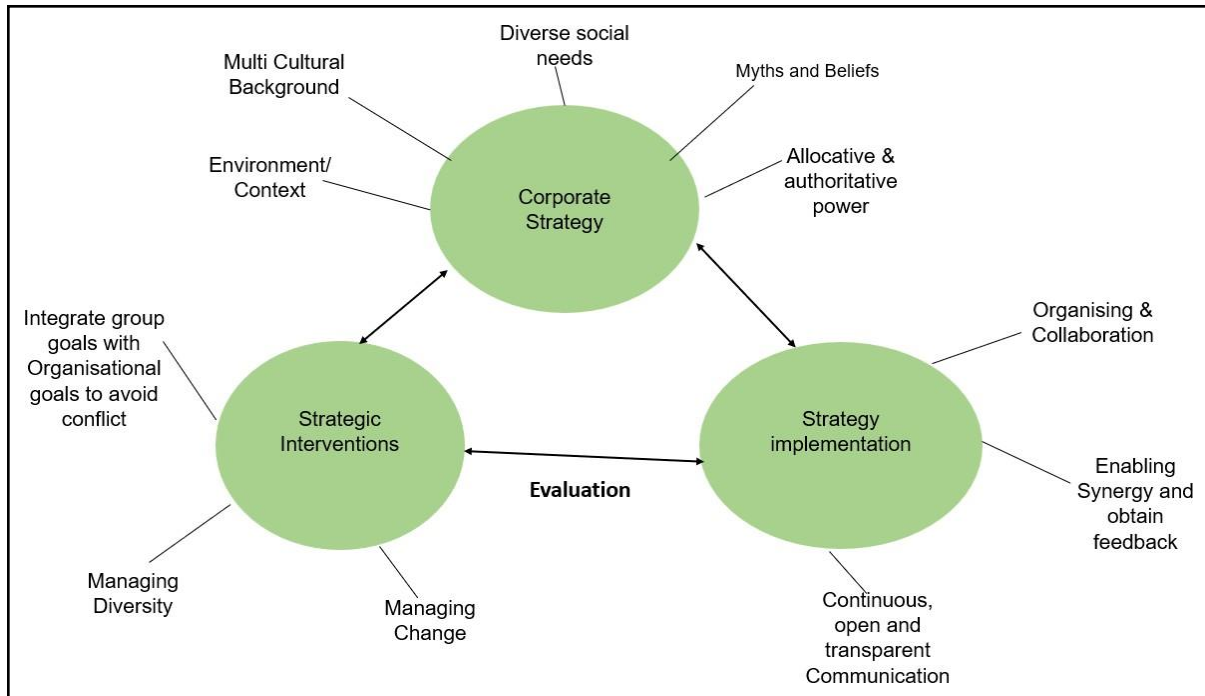
Figure 6.4: Strategic management model; Adapted from Johnson, 2014

6.3.3 General Implication of the model

Corporate strategy is driven by rules, policies, cultural background, and myths stored in their memory traces of employees. Information stored in the memory traces is what is referred to as the structure. This information stored in the memory traces may be inclined to formality or informality and based on that information employees can interpret meaning, share resources and act in a particular way. In other words, the information provides for what is referred to as modalities or vehicles that govern interaction of agents within the context of the organisation (McGarry, 2016). In respect to adoption of change and diversity the informal structure can choose to either embrace or reject corporate strategy since employees are free moral agents. Therefore, it is imperative to manage change since it is not automatic that employees are always ready to accept change because there are free moral agents and are from diverse backgrounds. The study proves that the informal structure is a parallel structure that functions according to its own social rules and norms. The existence of the informal structure creates an organisation within an

organisation therefore strategy is critical to enable realignment of the organisation to its set objectives. The model demonstrates that synergy should be established on all of the following: social needs, beliefs, background, myths and corporate strategy. Once corporate strategy is placed at a vantage point where it can influence the informal structure then the clash between the formal and informal structuration will be circumvented. The model also shows that behaviour of employees should be regularly monitored through continuous and transparent communication.

6.3.4 Implication of the model to the contextual gap

It should be noted that in chapter one the study intimated a desire to explore the contextual gap as one of the critical aims of the study. The model directly addresses the contextual unique terrain of South Africa through suggesting that corporate strategy should account for the diverse beliefs, backgrounds, myths, political and economic (environmental) contexts. South Arica has unique beliefs and struggles as shall be recalled from chapter 3: Thobejane (2017) asserts that language in South Africa is still dominated by inflections of patriarchy and hegemonic gender discrimination against females. Further to the issue of discrimination embedded in language Sinden (2017) points out that despite the excellent anti gender discrimination policies South Africa still has challenges in accepting female leadership. The study proposes as indicated in the management of change that such issues should be gradually and strategically managed to positively impact the work environment. More importantly on the issue of resistance to change, it should be understood from the contextual background as indicated in chapter 3: Rehbein (2018) further argues that the apartheid hierarchical classes established in 1948 fragmented the society by establishing entrenched social classes. The model suggests collaboration as a way of dissolving the racially mechanised fragmentation. Closely related to collaboration the model suggests bringing together of personal social needs of employees with organisational needs as recalled from chapter 2: These groups emerge due to shortage of recreational facilities which may be used to meet most of the social needs of employees. Wakefield, Sani, Madhok, Norbury, Dugard, Gabbanelli,

Arnetoli, Beconcini, Botindari, Grifoni, Paoli and Poggesi (2017) notes that friendship groups enable greater job satisfaction. The afore mentioned scholars argue that there is a connection between social needs of employees and greater acceptance of corporate strategy or job satisfaction.

6.4 Conclusion

The practical, theoretical, and methodological contribution are discussed in chapter 7. The following chapter assess whether the research has succeeded in answering the research questions and if it all significant contribution to the body of knowledge has been made. The chapter shows the convergence of literature, theory and data as means to construe a model that provides deeper insight into the phenomenon of organisational informal structures in a South African set up. Furthermore, the chapter draws from the conceptual maps in chapter 5 to provide systematic theory building blocks that are based on coherent concept abstraction. The chapter applies the dual theoretical lens to provide deeper theoretical constructs of the phenomenon as drawn from literature and interview data. The chapter concludes by giving implications of the model to the initial contextual gap identified in chapter one.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed analysis of core categories and the development of a theoretical model through meta synthesis of literature, interview data and a dual theoretical lens. In this chapter the study assesses whether the thesis has succeeded in addressing the original intention of the research. To effectively assess the thesis's success in addressing the research gap, this chapter enumerates the findings and evaluates them using the original research questions. Furthermore, this chapter revisits the original assumptions of the study with the view of establishing the gap between the assumptions and the findings. The chapter concludes by briefly discussing the limitations of the study and by suggesting areas of future studies that may possibly address the limitations of this study. My personal reflections and positionality are revisited to give a clear picture of how I interpreted and processed interview data.

7.2 Original intention of the study

The original intention of the study was founded on the need to explore the sociological drivers that determine the influence of informal structures on corporate strategy. Furthermore, the study sought to establish a context specific study because limited studies have provided an Afrocentric based context. This influence has its bedrock on the broader social antecedents and social connections that are unique to an African context. Most studies on informal structures have dealt with the visible manifestations of social behaviour of employees and the subsequent influence of the same on corporate strategy without exploring the underlying subjective and normative social variables.

7.2.1 Research process (Field work)

To accomplish the intentions mentioned above I identified a mining organisation in the Northern Cape that was used as a case study to examine the phenomenon closely. Literature review revealed that there were unique social antecedents that influenced the response of employees to corporate strategy in an African context. Guided by literature,

I then sought to explore the influence of informal structures in an African context with the view of establishing a context specific study. To gather quality data, I used heterogeneous purposive sampling that enabled me to elect 30 informed participants that had elaborate knowledge on the topic. The research participants were selected from a three-tier hierarchy which constituted of the following: general employees, middle management and senior management. The research participants were picked from five different departments to enable multiplicity of perspectives. Through four data collection cycles the research established categories that were analysed using NVivo 12 conceptual maps. The conceptual maps enabled the abstraction of higher order categories through subsuming dominant and recurrent categories with numerous related categories.

7.3 Research gap

Numerous studies on informal structures have used Western and Asian socio-cultural contexts that are motioned by social capital influence creating a vacuum in empirical research in the African context. The aforementioned vacuum was noted by Blunt (1983) and then echoed by Mom (2018), the time period in which this vacuum has remained relevant clearly demonstrates the lack of subsequent studies that have addressed this gap. The underlying assumptions that frame the study are based on the notion that western structural frames which constitute majority of studies in informal structures are divergent from the Afrocentric context. These structural differentials which were effectively discussed in chapter 3 are premised on frames like the economy, socio-cultural climate, psychological and anthropological underpinnings.

7.4 Findings

Drawing from literature, as well as from the 30 in-depth interviews and through application of the dual theoretical lens the study was able to show that resistance to change was a major impediment to corporate strategy. More precisely the study shows that this resistance was based on previous experiences that are unique to the South African context, intergroup conflict, social fragmentation, role of management and organisational politics. Basing on the premise championed by Balogun & Hailey (2004) cited in

Damawan and Azizah (2020) the study argues that research has proven that 70% of organisations that embark on change or shift in strategies usually fail to effect the change due to resistance.

More precisely the study yields to the Clariant call by Blunt (1983) which is echoed by Mom (2018) regarding the conspicuous absence of an African context in organisational studies. This study successfully demonstrates that Western structural frames which constitute majority of studies in informal structures are divergent from the Afrocentric context. The study clearly reveals that structural differentials between the Afrocentric context and other contexts are premised on frames like the economy, socio-cultural climate, psychological and anthropological underpinnings.

The study is not a panacea to the missing African context in respect to informal structures and corporate strategy in organisational studies but is a fervent effort to elicit more robust academic conversation around this subject. Furthermore the study also joins an emerging debate regarding the neglected focus of social theory in strategic management which has gravitated towards competitive advantage and macro-economic dynamics (Ring & van de Ven, 1992; Cited in Gibbons, Scott & Fhionnlaoich, 2015).The study joined the academic debate through exposing the influence that is exerted by normative sociological foundations like values, culture, ethics on employees and the subsequent influence of the former on corporate strategy.

South Africa is a unique case because Bolden (2014) argues that the European interactional philosophy is based on radical individualism (I am because I am) yet the Southern African born social philosophy of 'Ubuntu' is based on moderate individualism and communalism (I am because we are). The study demonstrates how the notion of communalism may work to disseminate information and strategies but in the same breath the study shows how the same unity can develop to impede corporate strategy.

Apart from exposing the influence of informal structure on corporate strategy the study argues that the social context is key in understanding the social antecedents that inform

the behaviour of employees within an organisation. The study also taps from a critical emerging debate regarding the neglect of social theory as means to gain deeper insight into the acceptance of corporate strategy. Drawing from the arguments presented in this section the study can conclusively determine that the main research question (*How is the influence of informal structures in the select organisation influencing corporate strategy?*) was sufficiently answered.

(a) New Insights gained after the study

Prior to carrying out the study I expressed my assumptions through my personal narrative. My assumptions were based on my past experiences which persuaded me to view the negative activities of informal structures within the mining sector as untenable. However, the study exposed a new perspective that has made me appreciate the influence of the socio-ecological context as an inevitable area of focus when contextualising the activities of the informal structure within organisations. I managed to appreciate the positive attributes of the informal structure and the potential that they present in terms of providing foundation to positively influence corporate strategy. I was also made aware by the study of the absence of a model that contextualises the informal structure, corporate strategy and the socio-cultural influence within an organisational context. I noted that while little had changed from the time, I was in the mining sector and to the time I collected data some positive attributes had developed because of increased diversity, better exposure and elaborate information through digital technology that also provided links to share various critical information. Drawing from an existing strategic management model by Johnson (2014) I extend the constructs of the model to contain the reality I encountered through data collection and subsequent analysis.

7.5 Limitations of the study

The study is a single case study of one mining organisation therefore the findings cannot be generalised throughout South Africa later alone throughout the world. As indicated in

literature there are limited studies that have explored the African context in organisational studies therefore at this stage it is not possible to carry out a comparative analysis of the same study done in a similar context. The study used purposive sampling to select participants that were proficient in English and the topic under study however, subsequent studies may use interpreters to establish more inclusivity and prolific pluralistic views.

7.6 Proposed future studies

Further research could focus on Marikana since it is the cradle of labour unrest in the mining sector. The study used two theories namely structuration and social identity theory, further studies can use other theories to determine a different theoretical perspective of the same phenomenon. Further studies can also do longitudinal studies to robustly capture the context of the history of the mining sector in South Africa. Alternatively further studies can focus on a comparative analysis of the same phenomenon across two or three different settings to establish if indeed the issue of context is critical in appreciating informal structures. Future studies may also consider doing a quantitative study that analyses the intergroup interactions in precise detail and connect the positive or negative interactions to corporate strategy.

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