

**A CASE STUDY OF ROLE CONFLICT EXPERIENCED BY MIDDLE
MANAGEMENT DURING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Business Administration (MBA)

At

Rhodes Business School

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Submission date: February 2023

DECLARATION

I, Mugabe Sepeng, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted at any university for a degree.

February 2023

Signature

Date

ABSTRACT

This research investigation is based on continuous improvement changes arising from - and related to - ISO 9001 implementation at Sundays River Citrus Company (SRCC), which is one of the biggest packers, marketers, and exporters of citrus fruit in South Africa. The Board of SRCC adopted ISO 9001 to ensure organizational efficiency and sustainability while improving quality control, customer service, teamwork and leadership. However, research indicates not all organizations that have Implemented ISO 9001 realize the intended benefits. While no research was available on the citrus agriculture industry, research in the tourism industry indicates that not only did some companies not realize the expected benefits, but also incurred substantial investment costs.

It is estimated that approximately thirty to ninety percent of change initiatives fail to meet their objectives, and research studies also indicate that middle managers play a critical role that can influence the outcomes of a change project. However, Balogun (2003) indicates that middle managers play a complex role and are exposed to role conflict, which can influence the outcomes of change initiatives.

In this context, this research study aimed to investigate the role conflicts experienced by middle managers during the process of an ISO 9001 continuous improvement change. The study draws on role theory, applying it to their management of change. The following role conflict types were investigated: (1) intra-sender conflict, (2) inter-sender role conflict, (3) inter-role conflict, (4) role ambiguity and (5) role strain.

The research approach is qualitative, and has adopted a post-positivist paradigm, utilizing a deductive qualitative method. The study adopted a case study approach. Data was gathered mainly from interviews and supported by organizational documents. Semi structured interviews were conducted with questions formulated through the use of the coding manual (See Appendix C) to ensure alignment of data collection with the research propositions derived from literature. A deductive thematic analysis method was used to analyze the interview data.

The research findings confirmed that during continuous improvement change, as middle managers strived to satisfy the incompatible expectations of role senders (mainly senior and junior managers), they experienced the five role conflict types. The

study findings also indicate that middle managers experience conflicts due to the incompatible expectations of other role senders such as quality and marketing departments. The findings suggest that middle managers are managing these conflicts, but notes that they do require some assistance and support from senior management. The study concludes with managerial and research recommendations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“Ke tla o tumisa wena Modimo wa ka o leng Kgosi ya ka,
Ke boke lebitso la hao ka mehla le mehla.” Amen.

Psalm 145:1

I would like to thank Prof Pearse for his leadership, guidance and support during this research study. His patience, insight, wisdom and teachings are greatly appreciated. I cannot thank you enough Prof. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

The research study was made possible through the funding and support of the Sundays River Citrus Company management team. I am eternally thankful for all the support you have provided. My sincere appreciation goes out to my Summerville Packhouse colleagues for the overwhelming support they have shown me during these MBA studies.

My sincere appreciation to my family for the understanding and sacrifices you have made to make this study possible. A big thank you to my wife who took good care of me and the boys during these MBA studies. May the good Lord richly bless you.

Finally, this work would have not been possible without the blessings of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Indeed He is faithful and I am eternally grateful for His love and the provisions He has made for me to complete this study. My heart will continue to exalt Thee O Lord. Thank You.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The study aimed to analyse the role conflict experienced by middle managers during an organization's continuous improvement change project. The research took place in a private company that produces, packs, markets and exports citrus fruit. The research context setting involves senior and line managers as role-senders who have expectations of a middle manager during ISO 9001 continuous improvement change implementation. These expectations are sometimes incompatible and create role conflict. In this context, the research study is located in the fields of organizational change management and role theory.

1.2 RESEARCH AIM, OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESIS

The research aims to analyze the role of middle managers during the continuous improvement changes at Sundays River Citrus Company (SRCC) and the role conflicts that they experience. The objectives include:

- Describe the ISO 9001-related continuous improvement initiatives at SRCC.
- As role senders, identify the expectations that senior managers have of their middle managers in their role as change implementors.
- As role senders, identify the expectations that line managers have of their middle managers in their role as change implementors.
- Identify the expectations that middle managers have of themselves in their role as change implementors.
- Analyze the types of role conflict that middle managers experience as change implementors, being located between their senior and line managers.
- Describe how middle managers resolved these role conflicts that they encountered.
- Formulate recommendations to improve support for middle managers when they experience role conflict during the implementation of change

1.3 DEFINITION OF TERMS

In the context of ISO 9001 continuous improvement change implementation and the conceptual model discussed in section 2.6; the key concepts are change management and role conflict.

Role Conflict. Schmidt, Roesler, Kusserow, and Rau (2014, p.21 cited Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, and Rosenthal,1964) define role conflict as a situation where “a person is confronted with two or more conflicting or opposing role expectations and the corresponding role demands of others”.

Organizational change. By (2005, p.369) defined organizational change as a continual process of reviewing the organization's strategy to serve the needs of internal and external customers.

Role conflict is a concept that is derived from role theory. Biddle (1986) highlights that role theory is concerned with important aspects of human social life and their behavioural patterns or roles. He highlights that people are part of a social structure and hold social positions in society, and as a result, they have certain normative behavioural expectations for themselves and for other people around them. These normative behavioural expectations are tied to these social positions or roles held by the individuals. In this context, Balogun (2003) identifies that middle managers face role conflict in the process of change management. The role conflict types are discussed in chapter 2 which presents the literature review.

1.4 CONTEXT OF RESEARCH

Empirical evidence suggests that approximately thirty to ninety percent of the planned change projects fail to meet their objectives (Redden, Clark, Tracy, and Shafer, 2019). Among the reasons for these failures is ineffective leadership (Gill, 2003). This research investigation was based on continuous improvement changes arising from - and related to - ISO 9001 implementation at Sundays River Citrus Company (SRCC).

The organization was established in 1924 and has grown to become one of the largest organizations of its kind in South Africa. It employs about 250 permanent employees and 3000 seasonal employees during the packing season. Since its establishment, SRCC has expanded its operations and has gone through multiple organizational

changes. One of its organizational change milestones was the adoption of ISO 9001 accreditation in 2020. In its Strategic Business Plan document, SRCC highlights that the Board of Directors decided to implement ISO 9001 because of the significant organization's growth and the need for a continuous improvement and quality management system. At that stage, the organization had grown to become a respected packer and exporter of fruit internationally. At the same time, fruit volumes increased substantially which initiated major capital investment into fruit packing assets to accommodate the increased volume. These new assets include the latest technology equipment that improved the accuracy of sorting and grading of fruit, to continue building a reputable brand. The organization also invested major capital into Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) farming projects to secure fruit volumes while partnering with previously disadvantaged producers to transfer farming skills and knowledge. These growth prospects also motivated the board to adopt ISO 9001 to ensure organizational efficiency and sustainability while improving quality control, customer service, teamwork and leadership (SRCC, 2021, p.2). The implemented change enabled the organization to review its purpose and strategic objectives which led to other changes such as process changes, system changes and organizational structure changes.

In the midst of implementing ISO 9001 continuous improvement changes, middle managers play a critical role in ensuring the successful implementation of the change initiatives. Literature by Balogun (2003) and Currie and Procter (2005) also highlight that middle managers experience role conflict during this process of leading and implementing change. These role conflicts are discussed in section 2.6, which situates middle managers between senior and junior managers, who are primary role senders. The model also identifies that, as role senders, senior managers have five expectations of middle managers which include: (1) managing daily operations, (2) eliminating resistance to change, (3) adopting the role of a change champion, (4) being an intermediate communicator, and (5) serving as a mediator between senior and junior employees. The model also identifies that, as role senders, junior managers expect middle managers to (1) provide emotional support, (2) be intermediate communicators and (3) mediators between senior and junior employees.

The model also identifies that as the middle managers receive these incompatible expectations; they also experience role conflicts which include (1) intra-sender role

conflict, (2) inter-sender role conflict, (3) inter-role conflict, (4) role ambiguity and (5) role strain.

In this context, the research investigated the role conflicts experienced by middle managers during the process of ISO 9001 continuous improvement change implementation.

1.5 RESEARCH GAP

This study examines the role conflict experiences of middle management. However, literature searches on databases such as EbscoHost, Emerald, and Web of Science indicate that not much research has been done to investigate role conflict during change, or the role conflict experiences of middle management. For instance, EBSCO Host could only provide two peer-reviewed articles (Han, Wang and Dong, 2014; Kras, Rudes and Taxman, 2017).

1.6 INTENDED CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

In light of the research gap discussed above, the study seeks to contribute to the role conflict theory experienced by middle managers. Gill (2003) also highlights that change projects fail due to a leadership failure. Balogun (2003) indicates that middle managers play a critical role in change management. In this context, the study will also assist key role players in organizations to bring about an understanding of role conflicts experienced by middle managers and provide recommendations to improve the management of these role conflicts.

1.7 METHODOLOGY

The research study adopted a post-positivist paradigm, which acknowledges the research context while investigating people's experiences of the event being investigated (Panhwar, Ansari and Shah, 2017, p.253). This research study followed a case study method which Crowe et al (2011, p.2) describe as “...a research approach that is used to generate an in-depth, multi-faceted understanding of a complex issue in its real-life context...”.

The study also utilized a deductive qualitative method, which requires the researcher to first derive theoretical propositions established in the literature (Pearse, 2019, p.143). In line with the deductive qualitative method, the researcher followed seven steps of this method outlined by Pearse (2019). As a result, the interview questions were developed from a coding memo, which the researcher had formulated based on research propositions.

The data was collected through semi-structured interviews and organizational documents. The sample size was guided by Mason (2010), which resulted in two senior managers, four middle managers and six line managers for the semi-structured interviews. The interview data was recorded through the use of the Otter Ai App which records and transcribes the recordings. The transcribed data from Otter Ai App was then downloaded into Microsoft Word and transferred into Microsoft Excel for analysis and pattern matching.

Concerning ethical requirements, The Higher Degrees Committee approved the proposal and identified that the study presented a medium level of risk for human subjects and required a formal Ethical Review Application (ERAS) to be completed. The ethical process followed is discussed in section 3.7 (ethical considerations).

1.8 SCOPE

As stated, the study was conducted in Sundays River Citrus Company. The organization implemented the ISO 9001 system as a continuous improvement change. This research study, therefore, only focuses on the role conflict experienced by middle managers at SRCC while implementing the ISO system. The interview data was gathered from two primary groups of role senders (i.e. senior and junior managers) as well as the middle managers themselves.

1.9 LIMITATIONS

Given that the study is a mini-thesis with limited resources and time constraints, two limitations are identified. Firstly, the study sample size was limited to two senior managers, four middle managers and six line managers in the operations department.

Secondly, data was collected through the use of interviews which are prone to subjective views and experiences of individuals.

1.10 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

The study has five chapters.

Chapter 1 presents the research study's introduction and context. It also presents the study's aim and objectives, and the definition of terms. It further discusses the research gap, contribution, the research methodology followed, scope and limitations.

Chapter 2 presents the literature review of the research study. It presents change management in the context of ISO 9001 implementation and role theory. It also presents and discusses the research study's conceptual model before discussing the role senders' (i.e. senior and line management) expectations of the middle manager. The chapter also presents role conflict types experienced by middle managers during the process of change. The chapter concludes by presenting the management of role conflicts and the outcomes of a successful change.

Chapter 3 presents the research study's methodology, data collection and analysis methods. It also presents the research quality methods and ethical processes followed.

Chapter 4 presents the study findings and discussions. It presents the findings and background of ISO 9001 implementation at SRCC. It also presents the study findings in relation to role senders (i.e. the senior and line managers) and middle managers. It concludes by presenting the findings of how the conflicts were managed.

Chapter 5 presents a summary of the main findings of the research and provides recommendations for SRCC. It also presents the study's limitations, delimitations and contribution and their implications for future research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews change management and role conflict literature in line with the goals and objectives of this research study. It discusses change management literature that is concerned with planned, continuous change and leading change. It also discusses the role conflict theory literature which includes intra-sender conflict, inter-sender role conflict, inter-role conflict, role ambiguity and role strain. The chapter also presents the study's conceptual model, management of role conflict and the outcomes of a successful change, as described in the literature.

2.2 CHANGE MANAGEMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF ISO 9001

By (2005, p.369) defined organizational change as a continual process of reviewing the organization's strategy to serve the needs of internal and external customers. Burnes (2004, p.289) also highlights that organizational change is a *“continuous, open-ended and unpredictable process of aligning and re-aligning an organisation to its changing environment”*. Baillien and De Witte (2009) claim that organizational change is inherent and necessary for any organization to be competitive in a globalized market environment. These changes include mergers, acquisitions, restructuring, management changes, layoffs, downsizing and implementing effective and efficient strategic initiatives such as ISO 9001 to improve the organisation's competitive advantage, profits, quality system and operational efficiencies (Djofack and Camacho, 2017, p.348).

However, Redden, Clark, Tracy, and Shafer (2019, p.501) indicate that organizational change is not always successful and has a failure rate of between thirty and ninety percent. In the context of ISO 9001 in the tourism sector, Djofack and Camacho (2017) highlight that many organizations are not renewing their ISO 9001 certifications because they believe it is not adding the required value to their organizations. Gill (2003) attributes this high failure rate of change management projects to a lack of effective leadership.

2.3 PLANNED & CONTINUOUS CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Burnes (2004, p.267) and other scholars such as Marrow (1969) acknowledge Kurt Lewin as the scholar who coined the term “planned change” to distinguish a change adopted by an organization through a structured planned process versus a change that is a result of an accident, impulse or that is forced upon an organization. In conjunction with his Field Theory and Group Dynamics, he used Action Research and the often-cited Three-Step model to effect planned change (Burnes, 2004, p.275). Lewin was a humanitarian and underpinned his work on ethical and moral values that govern institutions and organizations. He believed that the democratic and collaborative participation of managers, change recipients and consultants was essential for successful change in society and organizations. He identified a humanist approach, democratic orientation and organizational effectiveness as fundamentals of successful planned change (Burnes, 2004, pp.270, 275, 279).

Burnes (2004) highlights that planned change was considered the best approach before the 1980s, however, this has attracted a lot of criticism, and scholars like Kanter et al. (1992:10) argue that change is emergent (Weick and Quinn, 1999, p.379; Burnes, 2004, p.375). By (2005, p.375) highlights that emergent change is a continuous and open-ended process which is unpredictable and has multiple variables with a lot of learning taking place in the organisation. Bhuiyan and Baghel (2005, p.762) and other authors refer to this type of change as Continuous Improvement which has various methodologies such as lean manufacturing, balanced scorecard and six sigma that reduce waste and improve quality while simplifying production processes. Rusjan and Alič (2010, p.758) also highlight that ISO 9000 places an emphasis on Continuous Improvement to achieve the desired quality management goals and improve the financial performance of an organization.

2.4 LEADING CHANGE

Armenakis and Harris (2009) identified leadership as an important element for successful change management. Gill (2003) argues that a successful change requires both managerial and leadership qualities for successful implantation. Change has to be managed well during the entire duration. The planning, organizing, direction and

controlling of the change project are key managerial functions of a project manager. The leader must have a strategy and vision that is supported and bought into by the change agents. He/she has to inspire, motivate, and empower his /her team during the process of change (Gill, 2003, p.307). Gill (2003) identifies that management in a change project is necessary, however, it is not sufficient. He cites Kotter (1995, cited in Gill, 2003) who identified many failed projects as those that have plans, objectives, goals, procedures, methods, directives and deadlines. During the interview processes, Kotter (1995, cited in Gill, 2003, p.312) found that these projects often lacked vision and created confusion for affected employees. He found that a managerial approach did not inspire change and had the opposite effect (Gill, 2003). Gill (2003) further highlights that a successful change project needs both leadership and managerial aspects. He identifies that leadership is about winning the minds and hearts of people to achieve a common goal.

Colette and Richard (2017) observed that change can be complex and have unforeseen and unintended consequences. This requires multiple styles of leadership that are transactional, transformative and encourages team members to fully engage in the change process. They highlight the importance of leadership that connects emotionally to its team, a leadership that is not hierarchical or centred on its leader, but instead is more participative and team culture driven. That is, a leadership that is enabling, engaging and developing team members (Dumas and Beinecke, 2018).

Ester and Mike (2004, pp.153-156) identify different types of leadership styles and their roles that are needed to effect successful change in the organization. They argue that change management cannot have one leader but needs multiple leaders who are working together across different levels in the organization to effect successful change. Gill (2003) emphasizes that the managerial aspects of change such as planning, executing, controlling and monitoring are required but not sufficient to realize a successful change project. He emphasizes the importance of integrating leadership characteristics such as vision, values, strategy, empowerment, motivation and inspiration skills required from a leader during the change process to realize the desired results and benefits. Buick, Blackman and Johnson, (2018) identify middle

managers as critical leaders during change management. They play intermediate roles between senior managers and employees, potentially resulting in multiple role conflicts as they execute change (Caldwell, 2003; Buick, et al., 2018).

2.5 ROLE THEORY

Biddle (1986, p.67) highlights that role theory is concerned with important aspects of human social life and their behavioural patterns or roles. He highlights that people are part of a social structure and hold social positions in society, and as a result, they have certain normative behavioural expectations of themselves and of other people around them. He notes that these normative behavioural expectations are tied to the social positions or roles held by the individuals.

He further highlights that in the context of an organization, role theory recognizes that social systems are formalized and have a hierarchy which generates normative expectations and demands from the organization to employees, and vice versa. He also highlights that these expectations often result in role conflict and role strain which have to be resolved for employees to be happy for the benefit of the organisation's success (Biddle, 1986, p.73).

Other scholars also highlight that these expectations produce role ambiguity (due to unclear expectations), intra-sender conflict (due to incompatible demands), inter-role conflict (arising from multiple stakeholders who have different expectations of one role), inter-sender conflict (arising from opposing pressures from different role senders) and person-role conflict (i.e. a person experiences conflict between his/her values versus the prescribed role behaviour) (Shenkar and Zeira, 1992a, p.59; Jones, 1993a; Schmidt et al., 2014).

2.6 CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF MIDDLE MANAGER ROLES DURING CHANGE MANAGEMENT

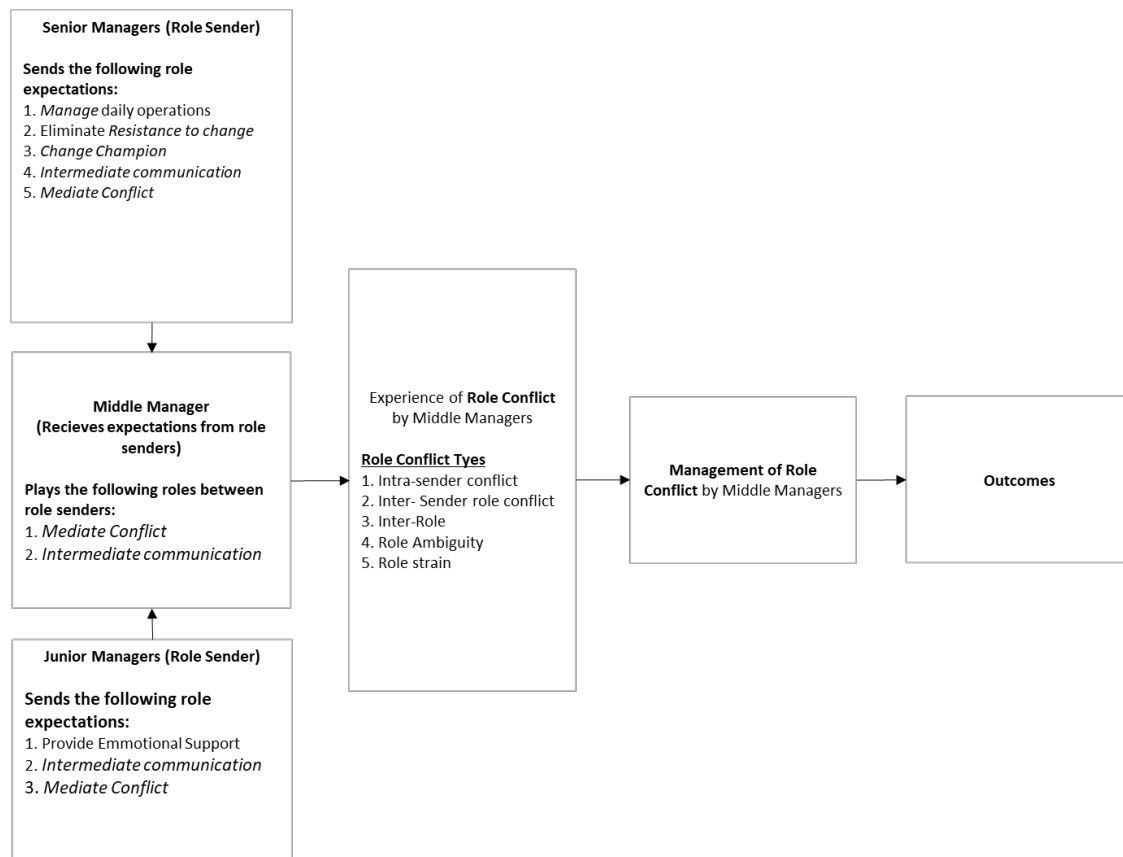


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

Sources: (Shenkar and Zeira, 1992a; Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Currie and Procter, 2005; Buick, et al., 2018)

Harding, Lee and Ford (2014, p.1214) define middle managers as “a position in organisational hierarchies between the operating core and the apex whose occupants are responsible for a particular business unit at this intermediate level of the corporate hierarchy that comprises all those below the top level strategic management and above first-level supervision”. They also highlight the role of middle managers which is to implement senior management strategies while they control and manage junior staff (Harding, Lee and Ford, 2014, p.1214). For this study, line managers are defined “as the first level of management level that non-managerial employees report to” and take instructions from middle management (Hales, 2005, p.473).

Malik, Waheed and Malik (2010, p.224) highlight an important aspect of roles between the organization and its employees. They highlight that the organization allocates roles

to individuals within its structure, which determines the interaction and functioning of the individuals within the system. They further cite Pareek (1993, cited in Malik, Waheed and Malik, 2010, p.224) who notes that the individual role has functions it executes in response to the expectations of other significant role senders.

In the context of this study, Figure 1 illustrates how middle managers fit into the organisational system. The two role senders who are senior and junior management send their expectations to the middle manager who has a specific role to play during the process of organizational change. These expectations create a conflict and add or create the internal conflict faced by the middle manager. The middle manager is then also expected to resolve these conflicts to ensure successful change implementation. Rydland (2018) critically highlights that change initiatives are implemented during normal day-to-day operations. This requires middle managers to balance the implementation of change initiatives while meeting daily operational targets and requirements (Rydland, 2018, p.12).

2.7 SENIOR MANAGER EXPECTATIONS AS ROLE SENDERS

As illustrated in Figure 1, senior managers' expectations of a middle manager include managing daily operations, eliminating resistance to change, championing the change, performing intermediate communication and mediating conflict between junior and senior management.

2.7.1 Managing Daily Operations Role

Senior management expects middle management to **manage daily operations** while implementing change (Buick, et al., 2018). The expectation of this role includes planning, organising, controlling and leading daily operations and change initiatives (Gill, 2003; Buick, et al., 2018). Buick, et al. (2018) highlight that middle managers play a key role in the successful implementation of change management; they argue that middle managers can become a blockage during change or an asset for success. They also highlight the importance of the middle manager's required capabilities to positively change employees' attitudes to embrace change while effectively implementing senior management vision and strategy (Buick, et al., 2018, p.223). Gill (2003) emphasizes that the management aspect of change is not sufficient and needs to be supported by

good leadership qualities which detail the vision and strategy to employees (Gill, 2003). Buick, et al. (2018) highlight that employees can resist change if they perceive it as unfeasible, and illegitimate and would likely result in expected outcomes and there are high levels of uncertainty. Andersen (2006) also highlights that conflict is created during the process of change when employees notice increased work demands, pressure, responsibilities, workload and uncertainty (Andersen, 2006, p.217).

2.7.2 Eliminate Resistance to Change Role

Senior managers expect middle managers to **eliminate resistance to change** by creating a work environment that is conducive for employees to embrace and become part of the change (Buick, et al., 2018). Pardo and Martínez (2003, p.153) describe resistance as a phenomenon that prevents or delays the initiation of a new process of development with the purpose of keeping the current situation in its current form. They highlight that resistance to change results in costly change management process delays that are difficult to anticipate (Pardo and Martínez, 2003, p.148). They describe sources of resistance as the initial perception, low motivation and lack of creative response in the initial steps of the change process. The initial misguided perceptions become a barrier when the organization does not communicate effectively to dispel misinterpretations of facts, or when the organization chooses to be silent. This leads to employees formulating their own assumptions of the change which leads to the denial of accepting any information that is not desired (Pardo and Martínez, 2003, p.149).

Pardo and Martínez (2003, p.149,150) further describe sources of resistance during change implementation as “political and cultural deadlocks”, leadership inability to embrace change due to their own fears, established routines and lack of capabilities and resources to implement change. They highlight the universal consensus that organizations should manage resistance to change and address the issues during the change management process. They acknowledge that managers and leaders play a pivotal role in managing and reducing resistance to change by paying attention to issues presented, ensuring a cultural fit with the change initiatives, sharing information to create and improve transparency and building capabilities through training (Pardo and Martínez, 2003).

Jones and Andrew (2016) highlight leadership qualities as a key requirement for managing resistance to change. Buick, et al. (2018) also highlight that middle managers play a pivotal role in managing resistance to change to ensure change is implemented according to the expectations of their senior managers. This is done by supporting employees by building capabilities, building a positive work environment and building trusting relationships.

2.7.3 Change Champion Role

Warrick (2011, p.15 cites Burke, 2008, Doyle, 1992, Miller, 2002, Senge, 1999) and highlights that over 70 percent of organizational change failure is attributed to the organizational leader's inability to effectively execute their roles as change champions. He proposes that leaders need to focus on enhancing their change-champion leadership skills to improve the success rate of change management (Warrick, 2011). He and Shaw et al., (2012) highlight the change champion roles which include initiation, facilitation and implementation of new innovations (Warrick, 2011, p.15; Shaw et al., 2012, p.676). Shaw et al., (2012, p.676) further elaborate that during the organizational change process, change champions actively promote and implement change with enthusiasm, create a network of connections with all employees in the organization, utilize and mobilize available resources, navigate through organizational politics, mobilize and build support by selling a compelling vision and enhancing employee skills and confidence to overcome change resistance.

The initiation role includes leading and sponsoring change while the leader is informed about the challenges, opportunities and execution process of change. The leader is also continually looking for new and improved methods to implement change (Warrick, 2011, p.15). Nakani-Mapoma (2019) also highlights that during this process of initiation, the leader also works with multiple stakeholders who have influence in the organization and contributes to the change process. She further discusses the importance of getting these stakeholders' support, participation and commitment to achieve the desired change objectives (Nakani-Mapoma, 2019, p.10).

The facilitation role includes involving the correct employees, teams and or organizational departments to explore change ideas, drafting the execution plan to implement change and guiding the process to accomplish the desired change

(Warrick, 2011, p.15). Nakani-Mapoma (2019) also highlights the importance of networking with multiple stakeholders to get their assistance with change implementation. She also highlights that this process requires the leader to adopt or have key skills such as listening, coaching, good people skills, enabling and embracing diversity, building teams, brainstorming techniques, problem-solving techniques, holding productive meetings, planning and being able to resolve conflicts (Nakani-Mapoma, 2019, p.10).

The implementation role requires the leader to adopt a sustainable mindset and utilize sustainable methods to design and manage the change process to make it sustainable (Warrick, 2011, p.15). Nakani-Mapoma (2019, p.10) describes the implementation process as “making things happen”. She highlights that the leader plans, organizes and manages change activities. The leader also controls the process by monitoring the feedback and making required amendments in the process to ensure successful implementation (Nakani-Mapoma, 2019, p.10).

In this context, senior managers expect middle managers to champion the change by initiating organizational change initiatives in their departments and facilitating the process by involving key employees to design the implementation plan and guide the implementation process. Middle managers are also expected to embrace and sell change to their employees and implement the organizational change strategy. They become the face of change in the eyes of employees and support employees by selling a compelling vision and support employees by enhancing their skills to eliminate resistance to change to ensure successful implementation.

2.7.4 Intermediate Role Between Senior and Junior managers

Senior managers expect middle managers to perform an intermediary role between senior management and the employee’s communication process (Ouakouak, Ouedraogo and Mbengue, 2014, p.306). Buick, et al. (2018, pp.224-225) refer to this as a bridging role between senior managers and employees. Radaelli and Sitton-Kent (2016) also highlight that middle managers play a key role in being the controllers for the implementation of the organization's strategy which is controlled by senior managers. They do this by executing their communication function between senior and junior managers (Radaelli and Sitton-Kent, 2016, p.312).

Rezvani (2017) explains that successful implementation of the strategy requires middle managers to interpret and translate the organization's strategy and vision to junior managers and provide information to empower employees. He also emphasises that middle managers influence junior managers through effective communication (Rezvani, 2017). Rydland (2018) further describes middle managers' contribution to the organization's strategy in their intermediate position as mostly positive. She details that they can have a positive impact on the organization's financial position, improve goal congruence and organizational learning (Rydland, 2018, p.4,5). She notes that middle managers can successfully implement change initiatives through communication by setting the scene by sharing information with all stakeholders and allowing engaging conversations to take place (Rydland, 2018, p.12). However, she also cautions that due to their inherent intermediate position, middle managers are susceptible to multiple change initiatives which require them to balance and effectively utilize their resources between change initiatives and daily operational activities (Rydland, 2018, p.19,20).

In the context of this study, the stakeholders are senior and junior managers. Therefore, to positively implement change, it is advantageous for the middle managers to have a forum where senior and junior managers can engage to improve the change vision and understanding and both parties to have engaging conversations that will assist the change process. Rydland (2018) also highlights that middle managers have to manage conflict situations during the process of change (Rydland, 2018, p.12). In this context, conflicts which arise can be resolved through effective communication between senior and junior management (Balliet, 2010; Rydland, 2018, p.12).

While there is some literature on the role of middle management in change management, there is a dearth of literature that has an in-depth focus on the middle managers' intermediate role during change management. However, their middle manager's communication and bridging role between the senior and junior managers is clear and adequate for this study. In this context, there is a need for further research to investigate how middle managers effectively execute their intermediate role during organizational change.

2.7.5 Conflict Mediation Role Between Senior and Junior managers

Floyd and Wooldridge (1997, p.466) highlight that middle managers influence the organization's strategy through the application of their mediation role between senior and junior managers. Buick, et al. (2018) also highlight that senior managers expect middle managers to become mediators between themselves and junior managers during the process of change management. Floyd and Wooldridge (1997) acknowledge that this mediation role gives middle managers significant power to influence the organization's strategy by influencing senior managers. They do this by uniquely interpreting merging issues, providing recommendations and proposing and initiating new organizational change initiatives. Their ability to gather, interpret and utilize organizational data enables middle managers to frame senior managers' perceptions and ultimately alter the strategic objectives (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997, p.466,467).

Floyd and Wooldridge (1997) further highlight that middle managers influence junior managers by adopting the change champion role, implementing organisational strategy with an intention, fostering the change process to create an adaptable environment and adopting a facilitation role that develops employees, empowering them through information and learning to eliminate resistance to change to achieve a desired response (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997, p.467).

By default, the mediation role places middle managers as buffers between senior and junior management and gives them the ability to implement changes at the appropriate timing without negatively affecting daily operations (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997, p.468). Rydland (2018) highlights that organizational change has increased in complexity and is mainly implemented during normal day-to-day operations; as a result, it is not always possible for middle managers to implement change according to a schedule that suits their convenience. Senior managers expect change to be implemented according to their schedule, while employees and junior managers expect middle managers to cater for their individual needs This creates conflict that has to be managed by middle managers (Rydland, 2018, p.11,12)

2.8 JUNIOR MANAGER EXPECTATIONS AS ROLE SENDERS

As illustrated in Figure 1, junior managers' expectations of a middle manager include providing emotional support, performing intermediate communication and mediating conflict between junior and senior management.

2.8.1 Providing Emotional Support Role

According to Buick, et al. (2018, p.223,224), middle management provides emotional support to junior managers during the process of change management. Their study also highlights that employees go through an emotional roller coaster during the process of change (Buick, et al., 2018, p.221). Huy (2002) also identifies that organizational change can be chaotic and have a negative impact on employees' emotions who will then exhibit resistance to change if not managed (Huy, 2002, p.32).

Figure 2 shows his conceptual model for “emotional balancing during radical change” which highlights that middle managers balance and manage employees' emotions while remaining committed to the emotional demands of the change project (Huy, 2002, p.33).

He indicates that neurological studies reveal that employees will inherently display emotions when change is initiated irrespective of whether the change is favourable or not. He utilizes the “circumplex conceptual model of emotions” and “an elaborated model of emotional balancing during radical change” (Huy, 2002, p.33,35) as illustrated by Figures 3 and 4 to illustrate the different types of pleasant and unpleasant emotions that middle managers have to manage during the process of change. He highlights that one of the key roles of middle managers is to increase pleasant emotions such as enthusiasm, excitement and happiness while decreasing unpleasant emotions such as fear, anger, anxiety and stress during the process of change.

He further highlights that middle managers execute this role by supporting employees through listening to their concerns, being empathetic and not being judgemental, organizing meetings to share information and listen to employee feedback related to the change events as well as employees personal challenges. He also encourages middle managers to have one on one meetings with employees to provide a safe space for them to voice their concerns (Huy, 2002, p.35,58,59). Hussain et al., (2018) also highlights that middle managers support employees during the change process

through education and skills to empower employees while encouraging employee participation in the change process (Hussain et al., 2018). The close proximity of middle managers gives them better sense of the emotions employees express during the change process. This allows the middle manager to connect emotionally and offer emotional support to employees during the change process. Middle managers convey and communicate these emotions to senior management as part of the change management feedback while also using their influential power to address some of the concerns expressed by employees (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997; Huy, 2002, p.59; Buick, et al., 2018).

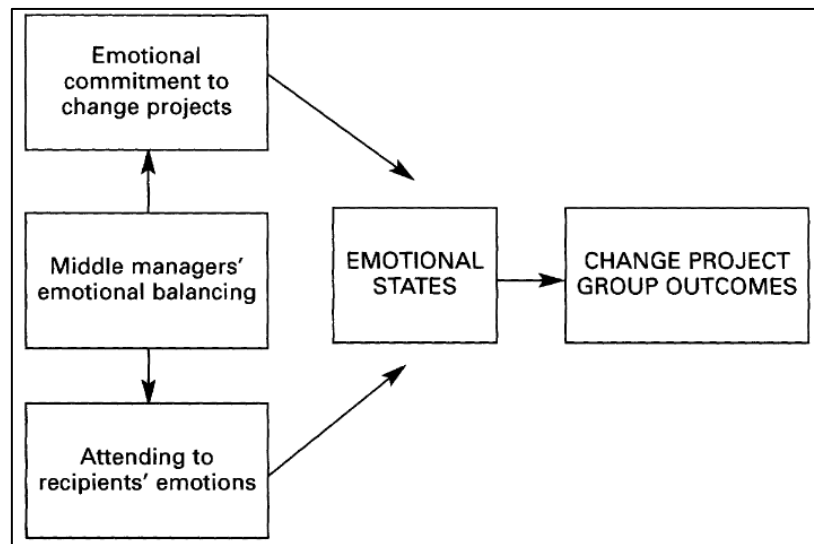


Figure 2. A model of emotional balancing during radical change.

(Source: (Huy, 2002, p.33))

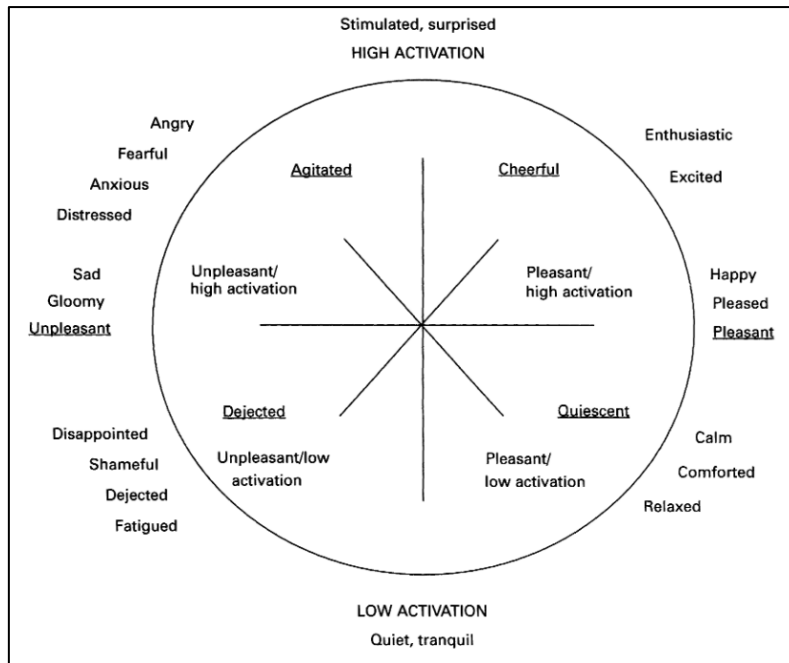


Figure 3 Circumplex model of emotions (Larsen and Diner, 1992)

(Source: (Huy, 2002, p.35))

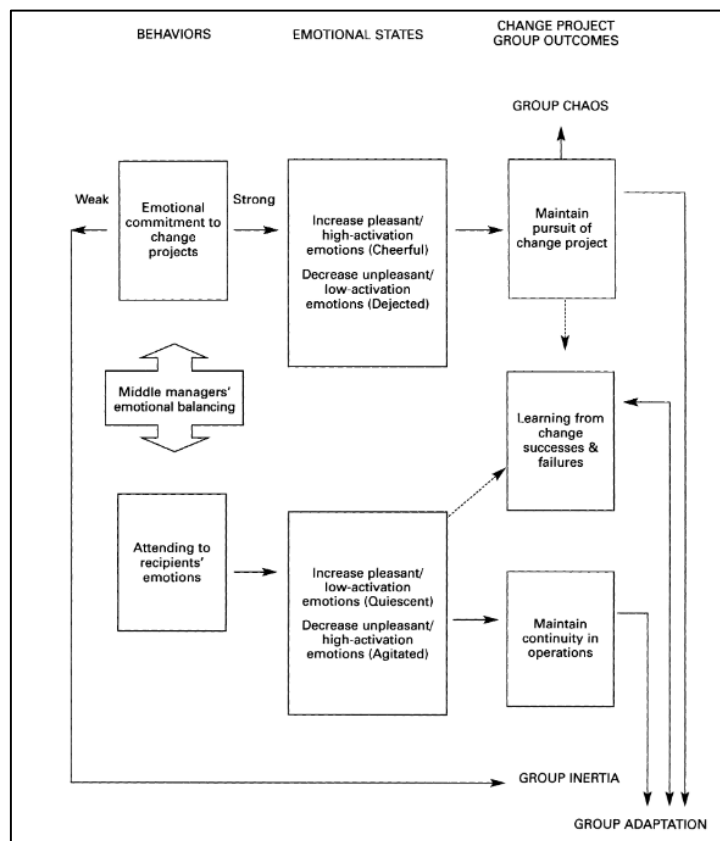


Figure 4 An elaborated model of emotional balancing during radical change.

(Source: (Huy, 2002, p.58))

2.8.2 Intermediate Role Between Junior and Senior managers

As middle managers play the mediation referred to as the bridging role (Buick, et al., 2018, p.224) between junior and senior managers. They link junior managers to senior managers (Buick, et al., 2018; Ouakouak, Ouedraogo and Mbengue, 2014). Rydland (2018) highlights that while senior managers may have expectations to implement change initiatives according to schedule; junior employees will not necessarily share the same expectations and expect middle managers to prioritize their needs. She highlights that this creates a conflict between junior and senior managers and in this instance, junior managers expect the middle manager to communicate their concerns to senior managers to resolve the conflict and take care of their needs (Rydland, 2018). Detailed discussion on how middle managers execute this role has been discussed in section 2.7.1.

2.8.3 Conflict Mediation Role Between Junior and Senior Managers

Floyd and Wooldridge (1997, p.468) describe the mediating role as a buffer between junior and senior managers. Section 2.7.5 describes how middle management executes the mediation role between senior and junior management. In this context, the literature suggests that junior managers look to middle management to mediate conflict that arises between themselves and senior managers and rely on the middle managers to influence the organization's strategy to their benefit through the application of this role (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997, p.466).

2.9 ROLE CONFLICT

Balogun (2003) and Currie and Procter (2005) highlight that middle managers experience role conflict during the process of leading and implementing change (Balogun, 2003, p.69). Schmidt et al. (2014) note that a well-established definition of role conflict is that of Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek and Rosenthal (1964) who describe it as a situation where “a person is confronted with two or more conflicting or opposing role expectations and the corresponding role demands of others” (Schmidt et al., 2014, p.91). Shenkar and Zeira (1992) identified four types of role conflict. These include (1) intra-sender conflict (due to incompatible demands), (2) inter-role conflict (arising from multiple stakeholders who have different expectations of one role), (3) inter-sender

conflict (arising from opposing pressures from different role senders) and (4) person-role conflict (i.e. a person is conflicted between his/her values versus the prescribed role behaviour) (Shenkar and Zeira, 1992b). In addition, Biddle (1986) and Jones (1993) highlight that any individual who occupies a role in society and organization will inherently experience role strain and role ambiguity (Biddle, 1986, p.73; Jones, 1993b). This study focuses on the following role conflicts: (1) intra-sender, (2) inter-sender role, (3) inter-role, (4) role ambiguity and (5) role strain. The description of person role conflict overlaps with that of intra-role conflict. As a result, they were combined in this study and are referred to as intra-role conflict.

2.9.1 Intra-Sender Role Conflict

The American Psychological Association (2023) defines intra-sender role conflict as *“the form of role conflict caused by incompatibility among the behaviours and expectations associated with a single role. These inconsistencies may result from the inherent complexity of the role itself, the ambiguity of the role, or a lack of consensus in defining the role and its demands”* (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2023b). Shenkar and Zeira (1992, p.57) also define intra-sender role conflict as caused by different expectations from a single individual which causes incompatible demands to the receiver or an individual who has to execute the instructions. Nambisan and Baron (2021) also highlight that this conflict occurs when a senior manager makes sudden demands or changing demands on a lower manager who might not have the time, resources and capabilities to execute the task at a given deadline. They further highlight that the lower manager may experience stress and a feeling of helplessness (Nambisan and Baron, 2021, p.552).

2.9.2 Inter-Role Conflict

The American Psychological Association (2023) defines this as *“the form of role conflict that occurs when individuals have multiple roles and the expectations and behaviours associated with one role are not consistent with the expectations and behaviours associated with another”* (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2023a). Rizzo, House and Lirtzman (1970) also highlight a person may experience conflict when one individual plays more than one role which requires different behaviours with varying

expectations and incompatible demands (Rizzo, House and Lirtzman, 1970, p.155). Jean and Lachance (2015) also indicate that individuals fulfilling multiple roles may have insufficient resources, talents and capabilities to fulfil all the role's demands, which then leads to inter-role conflict (Jean and Lachance, 2015, p.15). Studies completed by Ahmad, Ismail and Ming (2007) and Jean and Lachance (2015) indicate that both female and male managers in the workplace play the role of a manager and family leader which inherently places different demands and expectations on the individuals; thereby causing inter-role conflict in the individuals (Ahmad, Ismail and Ming, 2007; Jean and Lachance, 2015).

2.9.3 Inter-sender Role Conflict

Shenkar and Zeira, (1992b) and Mohr and Puck (2007) indicate that this type of role conflict occurs when a single manager receives different requirements with different incompatible expectations from multiple role senders who have different agendas (Shenkar and Zeira, 1992b, p.57; Mohr and Puck, 2007, p.27). Mohr and Puck (2007) report that inter-sender- role conflict has a negative impact on the performance of a manager and the organization while it increases stress levels and erodes the job satisfaction of a manager (Mohr and Puck, 2007).

2.9.4 Role Ambiguity

The APA Dictionary of Psychology (2023) defines role ambiguity as *“indefinite expectations about the behaviours to be performed by individuals who occupy particular positions within a group or social setting. Role ambiguity is often caused by lack of clarity in the role itself, lack of consensus regarding the behaviours associated with the role, or the individual role taker’s uncertainty concerning the types of behaviours expected”* (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2023c). Carter and Harper (2016) further indicate that role ambiguity occurs when a role occupant is unclear about the behavioural expectations that are related to his/her role. It represents the behavioural uncertainty that an individual may have in accordance with their role expectations. They further indicate that this often occurs when an employee does not understand how they need to execute their task due to lack of information and clarity of their roles and responsibilities (Carter and Harper, 2016, p.1). Carter and Harper

(2016) and Dasgupta (2012) also highlight that role ambiguity may be caused by the lack of clear role responsibilities and role demands, inadequate information given to an individual to execute a task, unclear performance consequences and lack of coordination in a work environment. Both authors further indicate that role ambiguity leads to stress and erodes job satisfaction (Dasgupta, 2012; Carter and Harper, 2016).

2.9.5 Role Strain

Clark Cline (2010, p.118) defines role strain as discomfort experienced by an individual who fulfils multiple roles with different and conflicting expectations as received from multiple role senders. He further makes an example by highlighting that married individuals have to balance conflicting demands caused by their other roles such as employment, parenting, being a spouse, friendship and leisure activities (Clark Cline, 2010, p.119). Gordon et al., (2012) indicate that these roles create competing demands and may lead to role strain (Gordon et al., 2012, p.668). Nakani-Mapoma (2019) found that an employee which is faced with multiple expectations from different role senders may experience role overload which may lead to role strain. She points out that an employee who is experiencing role ambiguity may experience role strain due to many demands (Nakani-Mapoma, 2019, p.23). Gordon et al., (2012) also indicate that role strain may cause individuals to feel burdened, exhausted and stressed (Gordon et al., 2012, p.668). Elliott (2003) also indicates that role strain decreased employee psychological well-being and reduces productivity (Elliott, 2003, p.159).

2.10 MANAGEMENT OF ROLE CONFLICT

Various studies reveal that role conflict may erode employee psychological wellbeing and lead to stress, exhaustion, anxiety, depression, reduced productivity, poor work performance, job dissatisfaction, reduce employee self-confidence and feeling helpless (Jones, 1993b; Elliott, 2003; Mohr and Puck, 2007; Baillien and De Witte, 2009; Dasgupta, 2012; Gordon et al., 2012; Celik, 2013; Nambisan and Baron, 2021). Judeh (2011) further highlights that role conflict may increase employee absenteeism and late coming while reducing employee commitment and productivity and increasing staff turnover (Judeh, 2011). Resolving and managing role conflict is therefore critical to create organizational value. A research study completed by Jones, (1993b)

indicates that employees develop a set of skills to manage role conflict. However, it also recognizes the organization's leadership obligation to support employees to manage role conflict. Her study reveals that some of the role conflict challenges are initiated by conflicting policies and the organizational structural organogram which introduced ambiguity (Jones, 1993b, p.138,139). The study also highlights actions needed to resolve role conflict including: reframing ambiguous roles to be more clear and specific for individuals (Jones, 1993b, p.139), managers providing support by protecting employees (Jones, 1993b, p.138), supporting employees with enhancing people skills to increase tolerance and encouraging employees to see others viewpoint (Jones, 1993b, p.138). The study further highlights the need to provide social services to manage employee psychological health (Jones, 1993b, p.138), building coalitions in teams, building trust between employees, empowering employees through education and teachings about organizational systems, policies and their roles within the systems (Jones, 1993b, p.139). In the context of middle management implementing organizational change initiatives while also delivering on the expectations from senior and junior management as role senders; role conflict has to be managed through the application of the actions discussed. In addition, middle managers are expected to empower employees with information to reduce role ambiguity, execute the intermediate role effectively to improve accurate information sharing and link employees with senior managers while they also act as a mediator to resolve conflicts efficiently. In the midst of this, they are expected to provide emotional support to junior managers while they deliver on their daily operational obligations and eliminate employee resistance to change.

2.11 OUTCOMES OF A SUCCESSFUL CHANGE

Gill (2003) indicates that successful change outcomes required good leadership and management skills (Gill, 2003). She indicates that change initiatives often fail due to poor management functions such as planning, monitoring, controlling, lack of resources, and incompatible policies (Gill, 2003, p.307). She further highlights while management is essential, leadership is even more important as it wins the employee commitment and heart of employees to achieve the objectives. Her model of leadership for change highlights the importance of creating a shared vision that can be embraced by all employees and designing strategies that support the **vision** and

brings alignment to the organization. She further cites Kotter (1995 cited in Gill, 2003, pp.310, 312) who identified that a vision has to be “meaningful, ethical, desirable, and inspiring” to employees. Her model also indicates the importance of creating and preserving the functional **values and culture** that creates belonging and bonds the organization together and wins the hearts of employees (Gill, 2003, p.313). She emphasises the importance of formulating and implementing a **strategy** that is aligned with the vision and mission and supports the values and culture that draw commitment from employees (Gill, 2003, p.314). Her model also includes employee **empowerment** as one of the critical aspects of successful change implementation. Empowerment is about involving employees in the process of change. Through this process, trust and commitment are built while gaining support and ownership of the change (Gill, 2003, p.316). She concludes that effective leadership in the change process is about **motivating and inspiring** employees to achieve the change objectives (Gill, 2003, p.316). Gill's (2003) research study is further supported by other research studies such as that of Miller (2001) who also concluded that successful change requires effective leadership skills as a more critical component above management skills (Miller, 2001, p.360). In his study, he also identified that successful change requires a leader to use a commonly embraced vision that is supported by values and a conducive culture that get employees' commitment (Miller, 2001, p.366,367). He also explains that employees are empowered through contact and dialogue in the change process and cautions that emails do not create the engagement and contact required (Miller, 2001, p.367). He also highlights that change needs a systematic **strategy** that is aligned with the vision, is well understood is supported by **empowered** employees through skills enhancement to gain employee commitment and ownership (Miller, 2001, p.368). Within the context of the studies completed by Miller (2001) and Gill, (2003) and other studies in this chapter, they all indicate that successful change has the elements of a clear vision that is supported by employees; a culture and a value system that is supported by employees; a strategy that is supported by the organization's policies and employees; and an inspired and committed workforce that is empowered with skills and knowledge to handle the change.

2.12 SUMMARY

The literature review provided insight into change management and role theory. It further contextualised the role expectations of senior and junior managers expectations and brought an understanding of the role conflicts these expectations create. It also contextualized and explained the role conflicts experienced by the middle manager in line with the concept model. The literature also highlighted an in-depth analysis of the roles played by the middle manager during the process change. The management of conflict section provided a good understanding of the causes of conflict and directives on how they can be managed while the outcomes of the successful change section further enhanced that change requires good leadership to realize change objectives. Literature also highlights that middle management has the ability to influence the organisational strategy of the company to ensure that change management objectives while preserving the core values and culture that ensure employee commitment to the organization.

In conclusion, the main research proposition of this study states that: When one or more role senders send expectations to the middle manager during change management / continuous improvement initiatives, the middle manager will experience role conflict.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the research design and details the process followed to complete the research study. It also discusses the study's post-positivist paradigm, deductive qualitative method, qualitative research and the case study research method. It further discusses data collection and analysis methods. The research quality section addresses the research integrity and ethical issues. Lastly, the chapter discussed ethical considerations and processes followed.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research study adopted a post-positivist paradigm which creates a balance between the positivism and interpretive paradigms while it focuses the research context in the context of people's experiences in a case study (Panhwar, Ansari and Shah, 2017, p.253). Pearse (2021, p.98) highlights that the post-positivism paradigm produces objectives that are in line with society's general knowledge and social patterns to affirm universal theories. Positivism utilizes research data and tests the research propositions that are grounded on theoretical literature to confirm assumptions that are based on certain people's realities (Pearse, 2021, p.98).

The research study utilizes a deductive qualitative method which requires the researcher to first derive theoretical propositions established in the literature before collecting and analysing data. It also integrates a combination of two deductive analytical approaches for the case study, namely deductive thematic analysis and pattern matching (Pearse, 2019, p.143). Hyde (2000, p.83) mentions that this method formulates the research reasoning on established theory or generalisation before testing if the theory applies to a case study. Pearse (2019, p.143) highlights that this method is not widely adopted in research studies and limited guidance is available for new researchers. For this research study, the researcher utilized the guidance provided by Pearse (2019). The method requires the researcher to follow the following listed steps: (1) develop a conceptual framework based on literature, (2) develop research propositions that are to be researched, (3) develop a coding manual that will categorize raw data, (4) develop question matrix that will address research

propositions, (5) collect field data using the question matrix (6) analyzing the data using the coding memo and identifying themes and (7) reporting the findings (Pearse, 2019). The research steps are explained in a summarized paragraph below.

Pearse (2019, p.145) highlights that a conceptual framework can be explained by the use of a narrative of a graphic concept model which lists the main concepts of the study, its variables and relationships. The researcher utilizes the guidance of the model to collect literature that is in line with the model concepts, variables and relationships. Pearse (2019, p.147) also illustrates that research propositions are then derived from the concept model variables and relationships between the variables. Research propositions are qualitative statements of the research study which are grounded and derived from literature. Pearse (2019, p.147,148, 149,150,151,152) indicates that a code manual is then formulated from the stated research propositions which provide a list of key concepts or codes of the research study. The researcher derives descriptions and meanings of each code from the literature. The codes are also utilized to derive research interview questionnaires to gather data. After the research data has been gathered, the researcher utilizes the codes to identify the themes as they analyze the data which is then used to generate study findings.

The post-positivism paradigm is often adopted in qualitative research to understand a phenomenon in the context of a real-world setting without manipulating the data to influence the phenomenon (Golafshani, 2015; Thanh and Thanh, 2015). Golafshani (2015, p.600) defines qualitative research method as a method that produces findings without the use of statistical methods or procedures. Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2020, p.10) indicate that the qualitative research method examines research candidates' experiences by utilizing various methods such as interviews, observations, group discussions, content analysis, history data, visual methods and biographies to gather descriptive data for interpretation and getting insight understanding of their lived experiences.

Many studies on change management gathered and analysed data through using qualitative research methods (Garcia and Gluesing, 2013). Garcia and Gluesing (2013) believe that this method enhances a deep understanding of the phenomena through more human observations and experiences. They highlight that in some instances, context and human experience data is best gathered through qualitative

methods such as interviews. In the context of organizational studies, they have found that this method adds new insight into organizational phenomena while building and testing existing theories of change management (Garcia and Gluesing, 2013). Other research studies indicate that qualitative methods are appropriately utilized to answer a research question by utilizing people's views, opinions and lived experiences when a research hypothesis is stipulated and unambiguous (Garcia and Gluesing, 2013; Hammarberg, Kirkman and de Lacey, 2016, p.498; Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2020b). In this context, the qualitative research method is preferred and utilized for this research study.

Rahman's (2016) study details the advantages and disadvantages of the qualitative research method. The advantages include: (1) there is detailed data of the candidate's experiences, opinions and emotions, (2) it provides a holistic understanding of the data, (3) it provides a wide variety of human experiences, (4) it provides the research with individuals personal experiences and context, (5) the methods such as interviews, enable the researcher to have a personal interaction with candidates which (6) enables the research design and structure to be more flexible (Rahman, 2016, p.104). The disadvantages of this method include: (1) the exclusion of sensitive contextual data as it focuses on experiences and meanings, (2) the credibility of the results may be questioned, (3) smaller sample sizes may create a generalized view of the population and the data may be more complex to analyze and (4) the analysis of the data take a lot of time to provide an accurate view of the analysis (Rahman, 2016, p.104). To mitigate the credibility and trustworthiness risks that are presented by the qualitative research method, Anney's (2015) study highlights that the researcher needs to address issues of credibility, transferability, dependability and conformity (Anney, 2015), which this study addresses.

3.3 RESEARCH METHODS – CASE STUDY

The study follows a case study method which Crowe et al. (2011, p.2) describe as “...a research approach that is used to generate an in-depth, multi-faceted understanding of a complex issue in its real-life context...”. They further indicate that it is a research design that is utilized in various disciplines such as social sciences. George and Bennett (2005, cited in Crowe et al., 2011,p.4) defined a case study as “...an instance

of a class of events [where] the term class of events refers to a phenomenon of scientific interest...that the investigator chooses to study with the aim of developing a theory regarding causes of similarities or differences among instances (cases) of that class of events". Gerring (2004, as cited in Rebolj, 2013, p.31) indicates that there are many case study definitions, which may lead to confusion. Rebolj (2013) notes that their common emphasis is the importance of the continuation of research to grow the body of literature through new theoretical discoveries.

Yin (2009, as cited in Crowe et al., 2011, p.4) indicates that case studies are used to describe everyday events in the set context in which they occur. He further indicates that case studies assist with the understanding of causal links that are influenced by policies to explain the "...*how what, and why questions...*" of social events in a real-world setting (Crowe et al., 2011, p.4). He also indicates that case studies provide insight and understanding of the research gaps for further development of theories. He also highlights that there are many approaches which are determined by the "...*epistemological standpoint of the researcher...*" (Crowe et al., 2011, p.4).

Rebolj (2013, p.32, 34) identifies case studies that are classified according to the time dimension and theory formation. He listed three types of time dimension case studies as (1) retrospective studies (these are studies focusing on the past phenomenon), (2) snapshot studies (these are studies that focus on a particular period) and (3) diachronic studies (these are studies which focus on events that change over time). George and Bennett (2005 cited by Rebolj, 2013) highlight six types of case studies, namely: (1) atheoretical studies (studies that are not based on theory), (2) disciplined configuration studies (which use established theory to explain the case), (3) heuristic studies (these are studies which make discoveries through scientific research methods), (4) theory-testing studies (these are studies that assess the validity of a theory), (5) plausibility probing studies (these are studies which determine if the case study is true) and (6) building blocks studies (studies which contribute to a theory). Concerning the time classification, this case study adopted the retrospective approach; and in terms of the theoretical classification, this case study utilized the theory-testing studies which tests and contributes to existing theory; and makes recommendations for further research.

3.4 METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

Following a case study research method, the research utilized data collected from semi-structured interviews and organizational documents related to ISO 9001. Interview questions (See Appendix A) were developed through the use of the deductive qualitative method as outlined in Pearse (2019). The Otter Ai App was utilized to record and transcribe the conversations for data analysis. The researcher also utilized the laptop voice recorder to capture the interview data.

3.4.1 Semi-Structure Interviews

This study adopted semi-structured interviews as one of the data-gathering methods. Kallio et al. (2016) indicate that semi-structured interviews are used widely in qualitative research due to their flexibility and versatility benefits. While the methods can be utilized in group interviews, the researcher for this study chose to interview individual employees for ethical reasons but to also increase the quality and trustworthiness of the data to get improve the accuracy of the results (Kallio et al., 2016, p.2954). The method was chosen for this research study as it complemented the deductive research method as both methods rely on established theoretical knowledge for structured interview questions which are formulated before the interview sessions (Kallio et al., 2016, p.2954; Pearse, 2019). The method also provides a rich insight into the research study phenomenon (Kallio et al., 2016).

3.4.2 Sampling

Malterud, Siersma and Guassora, (2016) highlight that qualitative research sample number is necessary for research planning and gathering data. However, they also indicate the importance of quality data versus quantity. They argue that "... the more information the sample holds, relevant for the actual study, the lower number of participants is needed" (Malterud, Siersma and Guassora, 2016, p.1759).

Mason (2010, p.4) indicates that there is general acceptance from other scholars who advocate for a sample size of between twenty and thirty percent of the population. However, he also emphasizes that while a sample size for qualitative studies is important, the main objective is to get quality data during research interviews (Mason,

2010). Hammarberg, Kirkman and de Lacey (2016, p.500) also indicate that in some cases a small sample size may be sufficient if the data meets saturation criteria.

Based on the literature above, the selected sample size was influenced by Mason (2010) who states the generally accepted practice of sample size that is between twenty and thirty percent of the population. The data was collected from two senior managers, six line managers and four middle managers.

3.4.3 Other data-gathering methods

Other data-gathering methods included SRCC company documentation related to ISO 9001. These included organizational strategy documentation and minutes of meetings related to the ISO 9001 change management project.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

As stated above, the interview data was recorded and transcribed through the use of the Otter Ai App. The transcribed data was downloaded into Microsoft Word and Excel and sorted for analysis as guided by Ose(2016). Once the data was in Excel, the research followed the analysis pattern matching method as prescribed in step 4.6 of Pearse (2019, p.149). The researcher identified themes from the data and utilized them in the reporting. The researcher also utilized recordings for the analysis of the data.

3.6 RESEARCH QUALITY

Hammarberg, Kirkman and de Lacey (2016, p.499) highlight that qualitative research should be ethically conducted and most importantly the data should be used for good quality and accurate reporting. He further highlights that researchers who defend the integrity of their research study apply trustworthiness, credibility applicability and consistency evaluation methods.

3.6.1 Trustworthiness

Hammarberg, Kirkman and de Lacey (2016, p.500) indicate that research reports should be transparent and have a robust procedure that details how the study was conducted, detail how decisions were made and how data was acquired and used. He indicates that the reviewer must be able to follow and understand research logic that is well-described and explains the methodology and methods utilized in the study. In the context of this study, chapter 3 details the research study's design, and explains the data collection and analysis methods and procedures that were used.

3.6.2 Credibility

Hammarberg, Kirkman and de Lacey (2016, p.500) further highlight that a qualitative research study is considered credible when the results are well-described, provide context and when the research participants can recognize their own experiences in the study. To ensure credibility, the research defends the study's credibility by utilizing methods such as (1) reflexivity, (2) triangulation and (3) substantial description. The researcher applies reflexivity to reflect how they have influenced the research. The research also utilizes triangulation to answer the research question in multiple ways through the use of multiple methods such as observations, documentaries and interviews. The research also utilizes substantial descriptions such as research candidates' quotations to support their illustrations and interpretations (Hammarberg, Kirkman and de Lacey, 2016, p.500). During the data gathering process, the researcher continually reflected if he had in any way influenced the study. The research also used a substantial amount of research candidates' quotations in the study report to preserve the illustrations and interpretations for accuracy. During the interviews, the researcher also asked followup questions to clarify and get an agreement of the statements they have made.

3.6.3 Applicability

Hammarberg, Kirkman and de Lacey (2016, p.500) highlight that a qualitative research study meets the applicability criteria if its findings *“can fit into contexts outside the study situation and when clinicians and researchers view the findings as meaningful and applicable in their own experiences”*. In the context of this study, the deductive

qualitative method was utilized to derive the conceptual model and research hypothesis through established literature. As a result research questions were formulated based on the coding manual which was derived in line with the conceptual model. As per the deductive nature of the study, this research study tests the established theory. Therefore, through this exercise, the findings were found to be in line with the established theory. On these grounds, the study has passed the applicability test.

3.6.4 Consistency

Hammarberg, Kirkman and de Lacey (2016, p.500) highlight that in qualitative research, the consistency of research findings is the equivalent criterion to reliability. They further highlight that other researchers verify the research findings of the study. In the context of this mini-thesis, the adopted deductive research method ensures consistency through the use of established literature to provide a more structured approach to data analysis.

3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Flick (2009, p.36) indicates that the ethical clearance process is formulated to regulate the relations of the researcher with research participants and also the field where the study will take place. He also highlights that this is to prevent harm to research participants.

In the context of this study, the research proposal was submitted to the higher degrees committee (HDC) for review. The HDC approved the proposal and identified that the study presented a medium level of risk for human subjects and prescribed a formal Ethical Review Application (ERAS) to be completed. The researcher followed completed and followed the ERAS process to obtain ethical clearance (Application number 5844) before research data could be gathered. As part of the ERAS process requirements, permission to conduct the research study at SRCC was obtained from the organization's gatekeeper. The gatekeeper approval letter is attached as Appendix D. In line with the ethical requirements, the researcher ensured the participant's confidentiality is maintained. The participants also signed the consent forms attached as Appendix E as per the ethical requirements.

3.8 SUMMARY

The chapter discussed the post-positivist paradigm and described the deductive research method utilized in this research study. It also discussed qualitative research methods and case studies. It also discussed the data collection and analysis methods applied. The research quality section addressed the research integrity and ethical issues.

Chapter 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to present and discuss the findings of the research study to answer the research question and address the objectives of the research study. The study adopted the qualitative research method and gathered data through employee interviews and organisational documents. The case study focused on change management that was initiated through the application of ISO 9001 at Sundays River Citrus Company. It specifically focused on identifying and analyzing different types of role conflicts experienced and managed by middle management as a result of the organizational change. The qualitative data and findings were analyzed by utilizing a deductive thematic analysis method. The following themes were created for the analysis (1) intra-sender role conflict, (2) inter-sender role conflict, (3) inter-role conflict, (4) role ambiguity and (5) role strain.

Through the application of the deductive thematic analysis, the study also seeks to test the research proposition as stated in Chapter Two.

The study objectives are as follows:

- Describe the ISO 9001-related continuous improvement initiatives at SRCC.
- As role senders, identify the expectations that senior managers have of their middle managers in their role of change implementors.
- As role senders, identify the expectations that line managers have of their middle managers in their role of change implementors.
- Identify the expectations that middle managers have of themselves in their role as change implementors.
- Analyze the types of role conflict that middle managers experience as change implementors being located between their senior and line managers.
- Describe how middle managers resolved these role conflicts that they encountered.

- Formulate recommendations to improve support for middle managers when they experience role conflict during the implementation of change.

4.2 BACKGROUND OF THE ISO 9001 CHANGE IMPLEMENTATION AT SRCC

Since its establishment in 1924, Sundays River Citrus Company (SRCC) has expanded its operations and has gone through multiple organizational changes. One of its organizational change milestones was the adoption of ISO 9001 accreditation in 2020. In its Strategic Business Plan document, SRCC highlights that the Board of Directors decided to implement ISO 9001 because of the organization's significant growth and the need for a continuous improvement and quality management system. At that stage, the organization had grown to become a respected packer and exporter of fruit internationally. At the same time, fruit volumes had increased substantially which initiated major capital investment into fruit packing assets to accommodate the increased volume. These new assets include the latest technology equipment that improved the accuracy of sorting and grading of fruit, to continue building a reputable brand. The organization also invested major capital into BEE farming projects to secure fruit volumes while partnering with previously disadvantaged producers to transfer farming skills and knowledge. These growth prospects also motivated the board to adopt ISO9001 to ensure organizational efficiency and sustainability while improving quality control, customer service, teamwork and leadership (SRCC, 2021, p.2).

ISO 9001 implementation also enabled the organization to review its purpose and strategic objectives which led to other changes such as process changes, system changes and organizational structure changes. As a result, the organization adopted a matrix structure which created functional and multidivisional departments and structures across the organization intending to create efficiency. The structural changes meant that some functions were removed from operations managers and different departments were established and new heads of departments were employed to lead those departments. Significant changes that impacted middle managers responsible for operations were the establishment of independent maintenance, engineering and quality departments which used to report to them. This was also

followed by the employment of qualified heads of those departments who were all recruited externally. It is also important to note that operations middle managers were not required to have formal qualifications such as degrees, and many of them did not have them but had been promoted within the organization based on their experience.

These organizational changes were generally met with mixed reviews as they had a different impact on different employees. In the context of middle management, some of the well-experienced middle managers resigned and pursued other opportunities while others remained in the organization. The managers who left were replaced by qualified candidates as the organization sought to get more qualified managers into key positions across senior and middle management positions; and some junior management positions.

4.3 SENIOR MANAGER'S EXPECTATIONS OF MIDDLE MANAGERS

In line with the research study objectives, the conceptual model and the research hypothesis discussed in chapter 2; the literature study indicates that senior managers are role-senders who have different expectations of middle management. As a result, middle managers may experience role conflict due to conflicting expectations from senior management. To address objective 2 of this study, this section of the study discusses the research findings of the interviews conducted. The following role expectations are discussed: (1) managing daily operations, (2) eliminating resistance to change, (3) being change champions, (4) being intermediate communicators and (5) mediating conflict.

4.3.1 Senior Manager's Expectations for Middle Managers to Manage Daily Operations

The two senior managers indicated that they expect middle managers to manage daily operations and achieve their key operations performance indicators (KPIs) targets while simultaneously implementing change initiatives. The KPIs include operational deliverables such as throughputs, product and system quality standards, budgets, safety and discipline (e.g. managing absenteeism). One of the managers mentioned that he expects middle managers to filter down the KPIs / expectations to lower levels within the *organizations* “...they need to bring that down to the first level of

management...”. They also expect middle managers to ensure compliance and implementation of company and legal policies and procedures.

Concerning continuous improvement, one of the managers expressed that middle managers need to “... *identify operational gaps and put procedures in place to manage and improve the process...*”. He also highlights that during the annual ISO document process review, he noticed that some managers feel pressurized to make changes to the process document, and he feels that they must not “...*feel the pressure to make changes if the process is working...*”.

Both senior managers recognize and understand that implementing change during normal production is not always easy. One of the managers recognized that operations people would rather focus on managing daily operations rather than implementing change, as it creates conflict between operational priorities versus change priorities. He also indicated that operations KPIs also initiate intra-sender conflicts when he said the following “...*we also created conflict because we sent our operations people and told them this is what is important in your life, but yet at the same time, we can also do this... so they focusing on what they think they're getting measured on...*”. The other manager's view is that the people reporting to middle managers' might only be focusing on operations due to the lack of understanding of the importance of the ISO 9001 continuous improvement process. He made an example of an incident that took place where a non-conformance was raised against the packhouses which resulted in a big fight because that particular middle manager failed to recognize that it was not a personal attack but a critical step of the continuous improvement process to evaluate the failure and put improved processes in place to prevent another failure.

Both managers highlighted that middle managers also face *inter-departmental conflict* due to the matrix organizational structure. One mentioned that sometimes the quality and operations departments' priorities may not be aligned. For example, the quality department may prioritize audit actions which may sometimes not be achieved by operations, which results in conflict between them.

When it comes to implementing change during normal operations, the managers indicated that middle managers were sometimes not clear (i.e. role ambiguity) of what is expected of them. He mentions that organizational structural changes during operations contribute to this and states the following “...*if you implement a change in*

the structure during operations time... these people are sometimes not sure of what it is that they have to do now. So if you implemented say, ... a new QC team ... during operations time... that could then lead to people not knowing exactly what it is I need to do or if some of the roles shift a bit or their responsibilities shift, but they often are not completely aware of what the new role and responsibility will be...".

Poor communication from role senders about the continuous improvement initiatives contributed to role ambiguity. To illustrate this, one of the senior managers stated the following *"...sometimes the change gets communicated by either a form of a single email or a comment in some kind of review meeting. But that communication is often not sufficient for ops people during ops time. And the unfortunate thing is ... you can't send an email and then think it's all going to happen because often they read the emails a week or two later..."*.

The managers felt that middle managers partially met their expectations and indicated that within their teams, some managers excel while others struggle to meet this role expectation. The interview data indicated that there are instances where business suffers due to these role conflicts. One of the senior managers shared one incident where a junior manager from another department made a change to one of the packhouse machines without communicating with the middle manager responsible for that packhouse, which ultimately led to a financial loss. That incident led to interdepartmental and role ambiguity based conflicts. The manager who initiated the change executed his responsibility while the middle manager responsible for the packhouse did not understand why he was also accountable for the incident. The senior manager's expectation was, even though he was not aware of the change, the line managers should have reacted when they saw something was wrong. From this incident, it is evident that the middle manager was uncertain of the senior manager's expectations which led to the organization's financial loss. The line managers responsible also seem to have trusted the actions of the manager who initiated a change. This indicates that they might also not be aware of their role expectations

4.3.2 Senior Manager's Expectations for Middle Managers to Eliminate Resistance to change

Senior managers confirmed and expressed they expect middle managers to be able to eliminate resistance to change by persuading lower employees to embrace changes. However, they both highlight that not all middle managers succeed in meeting this expectation because some middle managers struggle to embrace the change initiatives themselves. One manager mentioned how they tried to implement a system at their site, however, the middle manager *"...struggled to sell something that he did not believe in..."*. The other manager also expressed that middle managers face difficulty in selling change initiatives because *"...change initiatives mostly improves things for the company, and not very often improves things for the employees, because either they're expected to do their work differently or work a little harder or work a little bit more clever...so it is very seldom that continuous improvements add benefit to the employees themselves..."*.

However, the managers acknowledge that in most cases middle managers do manage to eliminate resistance to change. One manager highlights that *"... in most cases, middle managers are well connected with the people that work for them, and in most cases able to manage resistance..."*. The managers highlight that positive working conditions, good relationships, training and sharing of information are key ingredients to successfully managing and eliminating resistance to change. One manager highlighted that middle managers must provide *"...information as much as they can..."*. However, acknowledges that as a senior manager, there is sensitive information he cannot share which *"...often means that you are expecting your middle management to implement a change, not fully equipped with what they should have... so that could add a bit of resistance to change..."*. The managers also highlighted the lack of change management training for middle managers as a contributor to one of the barriers that sometimes prevent or make it difficult for middle managers to execute this expectation efficiently. One manager highlights that *"...I do not recall us training any of the middle management on change management and I don't know if it was done before my time here ...and it is perhaps something we should do..."*.

4.3.3 Senior Manager's Expectations for Middle Managers as Change Champions

Senior managers share a mutual view that "...some of the middle managers meet this expectation, but not all of them...". The manager highlights that he considers 42% of his middle managers to be effective in implementing change in the packhouse. He also highlights that these managers have big teams reporting to them and are very influential as they have good relationships with their teams and interdepartmental teams. As a result, the changes that need to be implemented are normally successful. Both managers also highlight that change needs to be personalized to be sold. The manager expressed his view as follows "*...if the leader believes in the change, then he will make it happen...*". One senior manager makes the point that part of being a change champion is being able to take a change instruction from senior management, personalize it, sell the idea to the team and get buy-in for a successful implementation. He shared his observation of some middle managers receiving change instructions, standing in front of their subordinates and telling people that senior management has made changes instead of personalizing the message and sharing background information about the change to convince people and get buy-in. He further highlights that this causes unhappiness in the team and is counterproductive. His view is middle managers must go through the process of "*... explaining to them, what the problems are, why we want to change it and this is the suggestion...*". He further highlights that "*...if you go to employees with a problem, most employees will understand...*". However, he also highlights that "*...most people say: how can we understand what we don't like...*" and his response is "*...if you just say this is the way it's going to be; then immediately there's a little bit of conflict between employees and management*".

He further highlights that during these discussions, middle managers sometimes use the name of the senior manager as the person implementing the change. As a result, that particular senior manager is immediately seen as a bad person. He argues that this does not assist the middle manager as a change champion to implement the change with authority. However, he also understands that this role puts a middle manager "*...between a rock and a hard place... because they are told what needs to be done... and people get angry at them; so they don't feel safe...*" and this has consequences of breaking the trust between the senior manager and middle manager and also between employees.

The other manager highlights the importance of getting the middle manager involved in the initiation of any change project to get their input, involvement and buy-in. He argues that this assists middle managers to be effective change champions as they become owners of the change and are able to sell it successfully. He further shared his observation of middle managers becoming resistant to the change initiative if it is imposed without their input and involvement, however, when they are involved “... *you get that buy-in and I think it also brings satisfaction for that change champion to say this is what I've done...*” as a result the implementation is successful.

4.3.4 Senior Manager's Expectations for Middle Managers as Intermediate Communicators

Senior managers shared mixed views of the success of middle managers successfully meeting the expectations of this role. One of the managers indicated that he shares and avails information with middle managers to ensure they can share it with their employees. However, he does acknowledge that “...the flow back of information is perhaps not always as efficient...” and is not normally aware of the challenges or resistance middle managers face. He further highlights that this could be caused by the middle managers feeling that they need to solve every problem themselves without escalating. He shared the following view “...*it's almost as if they feel that they have to deal with everything themselves all the time, which is not the expectation. But...perhaps why sometimes they don't come back with problems is because they don't want to give their manager an impression that they have failed and can't resolve the issues...*”. The other manager also shares this view and highlights “...*my expectation is for middle managers. ... if you have concerns, then raise it at our level... so they must bring the concerns...*”

One of the managers also highlighted that many changes are initiated and communicated to the middle managers through him or by other departments such as marketing and quality, however, as the senior manager who is the ultimate person accountable for operations, he recognizes the importance of getting regular and good quality feedback that paints an accurate picture of the change projects from middle managers. He also recognizes that emails are not an effective way of communicating

and providing feedback and would rather prefer to have a more engaging method that provides feedback and gives him a true reflection of the changes implemented.

One of the managers also highlighted that he expects middle managers to perform this role better. He made an example of how during a change project, one of the managers took his instructions and implemented the change without engaging and involving employees who raised concerns, and the middle manager failed to provide that feedback which caused unhappiness and left people confused. The change was about replacing the old system with a new system, however, the middle manager decided to keep both systems in operations, and as a result, this doubled the employee's administration work and left employees frustrated and confused. He further indicates that made employees negative and they could not realize the benefit of the change and argues that, in this instance, the middle manager becomes a blockage instead of an intermediate because he failed to escalate the employee's concerns to him. He continued to highlight that when he became aware of the problem, he intervened and they managed to implement the project successfully by replacing the old system. He, however, highlights that they had to directly engage employees by giving them a platform to hear their concerns. Thereafter, they could provide information, explain the reason for the change and provide training and support.

4.3.5 Senior Manager's Expectations for Middle Managers as Mediators of Conflict

Both managers share a mutual view that middle management sometimes has to implement unpopular changes that makes some employees unhappy and often lead to conflict with employees. Their main concern is that middle managers do not always share these challenges with them, which creates other undesired problems that negatively impact employee morale while also breaking the trust employees have in the organization. One feels that sometimes middle managers might think that they are creating a buffer to protect senior managers, however, this does not always work and *"...makes them a barrier..."*. The other manager highlights that instead of trying to resolve everything themselves, he expects middle managers to bring issues to him for discussion and together they can *"...find those solutions...so that you go prepared to the people that you're going to influence ...to make things a lot easier..."*

Therefore, they appreciate that middle managers execute this role, however, they also feel that middle managers are perhaps overprotective as buffers and this results in them being seen as barriers between senior and junior employees.

4.3.6 Other Senior Manager's Expectations for Middle Managers

One manager expressed his views as follows concerning ISO and continuous improvement “...*apart from their normal job, I expect them to be very knowledgeable and become experts on the system as well as the ISO system. So not only do you manage it, but also become experts. They need to know exactly what it's about how it works, and where everything fits in.*”. The other manager shares the same view, however, he also recognises that they are a new team and need training on these systems. He also expects middle managers to create an inclusive culture that enables lower-level managers and employees to be part of the journey and be the ones who identify improvement opportunities. He highlights that “...*if we could get a way for them, to feed the information to the middle managers so that they can say we need this change before something goes wrong. That would be quite powerful for us as a business...*”

4.4 LINE MANAGER'S EXPECTATIONS OF MIDDLE MANAGERS

As role senders, the third objective was to identify the expectations that line managers have of their middle managers in their following roles: (1) intermediate communicators, (2) mediating conflicts and (3) providing emotional support. The researcher utilized interviews to investigate and collect data used for the discussion and findings.

The data analysis provided a mixed review concerning the overall effectiveness of middle managers playing this role. Some line managers indicated that middle managers were meeting their expectations, others provided average reviews and yet others thought that their managers were not meeting their expectations.

4.4.1 Line Manager's Expectations for Middle Managers as intermediate communicators

Concerning the intermediate role expectations, data analysis indicates that line managers' expectations of middle managers include: (1) being a good communicator, (2) sharing and providing information and (3) being the bridge between the line and the senior managers.

First, during the analysis of the data, it became evident that some of the line managers regarded information as a critical aspect of the change process, and expect middle managers to provide sufficient information during the process of change. The majority of the line managers expressed the impossible task of implementing change without information. Some line managers indicated that when process documents are updated, they are not always informed or trained on the changes, which negatively impacts the change process and creates conflict. Some of the line managers indicated that during this process of continuous improvement "...*they have to run around looking for information...*". Their expectation is for middle managers to provide them with information during the process of change.

Second, the analysis of the data indicated that line managers expect middle managers to execute the communication role with diligence. One of the line managers indicated that "...*we did not get the necessary communication during change projects which caused conflicts. Communication is fundamental. If you are not communicating these changes it becomes very, very, very difficult for us to infiltrate the change to the supervisors below us and employees...*". He was elaborating on one of the incidents that took place and was resolved. However, he further indicated that one of the fundamental mistakes made by middle managers is communicating changes to supervisors or lower-level employees without involving or informing them. He indicates that this creates disruptions and confusion in the packhouse.

All line managers indicated that email communication is not an effective communication tool as it does not allow a constructive dialogue. One of the line managers indicated he was very satisfied with how his middle manager executed the communication role and elaborated that "...*he would let us know what's going on and if there's something that we would need maybe from senior management and more*

top management and then we would ask him to find out for us regarding those things...”.

Concerning the benefits of his manager paying this role successfully, he indicates that *“...what I've noticed is that we are more eager to speak to him. And then when it comes to conflict resolution and stuff like that, nobody is resistant to talk about it or scared to talk about it. You are more open. You trust the person you have to believe that the person who will sort this out for you...”*. He also indicates that what makes his manager successful in playing this role is his ability to deliver the message from senior management constructively and also allow the team to share their inputs on how to best implement the changes.

Lastly, the data analysis indicates that line managers expect middle management to be the bridge between them and senior managers and represent them. One of the line managers reflected on his experience and indicated that sometimes when there was a conflict or request being made to the senior manager via the middle manager; the manager would promise to go and speak to the senior manager, only to discover later on that he did not. He indicated that this is problematic when the change implemented is negatively impacting the production line's productivity. He provided two examples where marketing initiated changes which negatively impacted the packhouse throughputs and efficiencies thereby creating a conflict between the two departments. These examples confirmed and represented the general theme of line managers' expectations.

4.4.2 Line Manager's Expectations for Middle Managers to Mediate Conflict

Concerning the mediation role expectations, the data analysis indicates that line managers' expectations of middle managers include: (1) having a positive influence, and (2) resolving conflicts.

Concerning middle managers having a positive influence between junior and senior managers; line managers highlight that middle managers mediate and resolve conflicts effectively. They also highlight that when the middle manager plays the intermediate role effectively, there are fewer conflicts to mediate and resolve. And the existing conflicts are effectively resolved when he has the ability to influence positively. They highlight that when the middle manager shares information, communicates well,

empowers, provides training, embraces changes and becomes a good example of leading change, creating a positive work environment; the actions ensure fewer conflicts during the process of change implementation.

Some of the line managers indicated that they expect the middle manager to mediate conflicts between them, senior managers and other departments by “fighting” for them to show his support. One of the line managers illustrated this expectation by explaining an incident where the quality department raised a non-conformance against his team due to fruit quality concerns. He did not agree with the non-conformance and asked the middle manager to resolve the conflict by discussing the issue with the senior manager. He indicates that the middle manager referred him to the quality department and the senior manager, which he felt that it went against his expectation and felt unsupported. He expects his manager to mediate conflicts through supportive methods such as him being the individual who goes to the senior manager and other departments to resolve these types of conflicts and fight for them.

To express their expectation, some of the line managers made an example about a chemical trial that was executed and resulted in the productivity of the line being negatively affected. They highlight that at the early stages of the trial, they informed their managers about the negative effects and some middle managers reacted quickly by escalating these challenges to senior managers and to the quality departments. They highlight that during this process, they appreciated seeing their middle managers actively trying to resolve issues. They further highlight that even though the results did not go their way, they appreciate the efforts made by the middle managers.

4.4.3 Line Manager's Expectations for Middle Managers to Provide Emotional Support

Concerning the emotional support role expectations, the data analysis indicates that line managers' expectations of middle managers include: (1) listening, (2) creating a safe space, (3) showing empathy and (4) empowering

Concerning listening skills, line managers indicated that they felt emotionally supported when middle managers listened to their concerns and challenges. Two of the line managers indicated that they consider their managers to be good listeners who provide platforms of engagement and encourage the team to share their inputs

on change initiatives. They highlight that this creates a conducive environment of positive teamwork, openness and trust.

The majority of the other line managers indicated that they appreciate the open-door policy that middle managers utilize to make themselves accessible. One of the line managers expressed a general sentiment shared by the majority of line managers whereby he highlighted how his manager made himself available to listen to some of his personal challenges and offer his advice on how to manage the challenges. He indicated that a safe space provides emotional support, builds his relationship with his middle manager, builds trust and motivates him.

Showing empathy, some of the line managers indicated that the work environment can be tough and challenging. The line managers indicated that they, therefore, value the safe spaces line managers provide as they get to experience the middle manager's empathy. One of the line managers shared how he feels emotionally supported and motivated when his manager can see and understand the work pressure he sometimes experiences. He further illustrated that his middle manager "*...will always ask you how you doing and stuff like that, and then when it comes to performing the duties that he needs you to do, he will always give us the platform that we can speak and we can say that how we feel on certain things and he gives that emotional shoulder which that makes us comfortable and we are eager to go the extra mile because we know he is somebody that has our backs...*". He also highlights that his middle manager creates a healthy and positive environment through, the open door policy where employees can discuss operational and personal matters, his willingness to assist by coming to the packhouse floor and executing certain tasks with the employees, creating a safe space for them to confide in him.

The data analysis also indicated that line managers feel emotionally supported when they are empowered with knowledge and skills. Unfortunately, this is one of the areas they have highlighted for middle managers to improve on. While they appreciate that middle managers make mistakes, they highlight that a lot of change initiatives take place without middle managers sharing information and this makes change initiatives challenging and sometimes leads to failure. One of the line managers indicated the organization has made a lot of improvements in its chemical application strategy. However, he also highlights that not all information and knowledge is being transferred

to them to improve their understanding. As a result, he indicates that having this information will empower him to do his job with a better understanding. Other line managers indicated that when new change projects are implemented, they sometimes have to make plans to get information so that the project can be executed. They highlight that this can be demotivating.

4.4.4 Summary of Line Manager's Expectations

Data analysis indicates line managers' expectation of middle managers to be good communicators, share information, provide training, provide support, embrace change and provide leadership. Some of the line managers indicated that they find it difficult to implement change when their middle managers are resistant to change and don't show enthusiasm while implementing change projects. They highlight the middle managers' attitude towards change determines the line managers' attitude of embracing or resisting change. Line managers also indicated that sharing information and communicating change projects are important in the process of change as this determines the speed and success or failure of change. The data analysis confirms Gill, (2003) view of the importance of leadership during change implementation.

4.5 EXPECTATIONS THAT MIDDLE MANAGERS HAVE OF THEMSELVES

The fourth objective is to identify the expectations that middle managers have of themselves in their role as change implementors. The role expectations include, (1) executing and meeting daily operational expectations, (2) eliminating resistance to change, (3) being change champions, (4) playing the intermediate communicator role between junior and senior managers, (5) being mediators between junior and senior managers and (6) providing emotional support to junior employees. The researcher utilized interviews to investigate and collect data used for the discussion and findings.

The data analysis indicates that middle managers believe that they meet these expectations.

4.5.1 Daily Operations Expectations

Concerning meeting daily operational expectations, the data analysis indicated two themes which included (1) achieving KPIs and (2) implementing the organization's ISO 9001 continuous improvement expectations.

Concerning achieving their KPIs, all middle managers indicated that their senior managers expect them to execute their roles in line with the job output models and to achieve the KPIs associated with daily operations. One of the middle managers also highlighted that job-output models are aligned with the organization's strategic vision, goals and objectives. The middle managers also indicated that they are strictly measured on these KPIs which also determine their annual wage increase.

Concerning their senior managers' expectation to implement ISO 9001 continuous improvement initiatives, middle managers pointed out that this did not necessarily form part of the KPIs which results in conflicts sometimes. The majority of the middle managers highlighted that whilst it is expected for middle managers to implement continuous change, the expectations sometimes create intra-sender conflicts. To demonstrate this, one of the middle managers used an example that shared the general view of the other manager's examples. He highlights that his senior manager expects him to manage his budget and achieve his KPI. However, during the season, sometimes the marketing or quality department initiated changes (which were agreed to and approved by the senior manager) that required additional headcount which negatively impacted his budget KPIs. One of these changes included packing more pockets due to a change in market demand. He highlights that this change caused him to employ more employees which increased his labour cost, and it reduced his line speed which resulted in reduced throughputs and packer performance KPIs. The middle manager indicated that although he understands the reason for the changes; the change caused him to not achieve his KPIs.

In line with the theme of the example above, middle managers indicated that often, change initiative projects have a negative impact on their KPIs. The other middle managers indicated that during ISO 9001 implementation, he was expected to implement the new system during normal production. He also highlights that some of the challenges during this process included the expectation to meet his KPIs while implementing the system which demanded a lot of time to perform training to ensure

the system is implemented successfully. He indicated that this process created a lot of intra-sender conflicts as he was expected to meet daily operational KPIs but still implement the new system which also needed his attention. He also highlights that his KPIs are used to determine his annual increase, and, he can recall how he and his manager had experienced conflict concerning what his priorities should be because the new system demanded his attention while there were daily operational KPIs that had to be met. He felt that at that stage, he expected his manager to be more understanding and give a fair score that reflects his overall performance. He highlights that the same conflict has not been resolved because this still occurs. His manager still expects him to implement continuous improvement projects during normal operations. However, the KPIs do not recognize the continuous improvement efforts he implements, as a result, he feels that his work is not accurately and fairly measured, recognized and valued. He emphasized that the organization needs to align KPIs to reflect all the work he does to promote its fairness and motivation.

4.5.2 Eliminating Resistance to Change

Concerning eliminating resistance to change expectations, the data analysis indicated themes which included (1) creating a positive environment, (2) good leadership and embracing change and (3) empowering employees and providing information.

Concerning creating a positive environment, middle managers indicated that a positive and enabling work environment is the foundation of eliminating resistance to change. One of the middle managers indicated that during ISO 9001 implementation, it was easy to implement the system because the work environment was already positive. He highlights that the team spirit was positive, employees trusted each other, and they had a family culture which enabled them to assist each other and work together. As a result, ISO 9001 became easy to implement because employees trusted the senior management and did not have negative perceptions of the change. He further highlighted that one of the first things his senior manager did during the initial stages was to call everyone into a venue where he shared a new strategic vision which included ISO 9001 and asked the team for their input. He indicated that this positive environment made it easy for him as a middle manager to implement ISO 9001 because of the positive work environment.

Concerning leadership and embracing change, one of the middle managers indicated that *“...a fish rots from the head...”*. He made this illustration to indicate that senior management set the tone and example for how middle managers need to execute change and eliminate resistance to change. This particular middle manager indicated that he naturally struggles to embrace change and sometimes needs senior management to lead him and convince him why certain changes need to be made, otherwise he struggles to embrace and sell the change to lower-level employees. He further highlighted that good leadership examples set by the senior manager become a reference point to which he aligns himself, thereby making it easy to sell the change and eliminate resistance to change because lower-level employees see one picture. One of the other managers made an illustration which has a common theme of how other managers eliminate resistance to change. He indicated that *“...taking out negativity, showing their value, asking them for solutions, making them part of problem-solving and then influencing them by asking how they would have done it. So you get some of the feedback instead of being a dictator...”*. He further highlighted the importance of making employees feel as change owners of their projects and celebrating their successes when they do well. Other managers also highlighted the importance of recognizing their efforts and saying *“...well done...”* when employees have done well

Concerning empowering employees and providing information, one of the middle managers shared his experience of how he assists and manages employees who struggle with resistance to change. His illustration also shared a common theme of how other managers also eliminate resistance to change. He indicated that he manages resistance to change by calling the employee into his office and having a discussion to understand the concerns. He identifies that most of the time employees are misguided and misinformed, which leads to resisting change. Therefore, discussing the concern with the individual employee, enables him to provide information to correct the perceptions. He also indicates that as a middle manager, he can only provide information with guidance and support provided by the senior manager to ensure that employees have the full picture and understanding of the change process.

The other middle manager indicated that when he joined the organization, ISO 9001 was in the process of implementation and he soon realized that his team was not

following the process and procedures being implemented. He highlights that one of the challenges was to convince his well-experienced line managers and employees to stop following old procedures and adopt the new procedures. He further highlights that this created a lot of resistance and conflicts between him and his team as he was now seen as the “bad guy” who was coming to change how they do things and creating a lot of administration work. To overcome this resistance to change, he indicated that he had to train employees and restructure his meetings to adopt an agenda that aligned with KPIs that supported this change initiative. For instance, he started discussing issues of safety, and in that way, he used meetings as an information sharing platform as well. He also initiated weekly safety meetings where he gave “toolbox talks”. He further highlights that “...every time there was a change or a new system or a procedure put in place we would give training ...” in these meetings. He also indicates that during the process of change, some employees who show resistance to change do not follow procedures which results in repeat incidents which sometimes have major consequences. He further highlights that as a result, he sometimes felt that his manager was disappointed with him as these repeat incidents continued to take place, which put a lot of pressure on him.

4.5.3 Change Champion Expectations

Concerning change champion role expectations, the data analysis indicated themes which included (1) initiation, (2) facilitation and (3) implementation.

Data analysis indicated that middle managers understand and recognize the importance of generating ideas, finding solutions and implementing them. They all recognized that their job profiles inherently required them to be change champions.

Concerning the role of change champions, one of the middle managers indicated that change champions “...have to take a chance, otherwise you will never improve...”. He further indicates that as a middle manager, he understands his role requires him to champion and implement solutions that will meet the expectations of the other departments and his senior manager to prevent intra-sender conflicts. He made this comment by emphasizing that his role required him to implement changes that are mostly initiated by the quality and marketing departments.

Concerning facilitating change, another middle manager indicated “...it is extremely difficult, and not so much on the systems or the procedures but the people and order

magnitude...". He indicates that during this process the enormous workload causes role strain. He highlights during this process he always questions himself if "...the paperwork is completed...is the process followed correctly...have I missed something...is my team fine?". He highlights that "...you can only give a certain amount of time and energy per day. So I would say that the magnitude is daunting...". He highlights that, even though he is successful in playing this role, it is sometimes not easy and tiring as he has to manage his team and in some cases indirectly manage other people's teams to implement the change which sometimes causes inter-role conflicts. He also highlights that his manager also expected him to delegate some of his work, which he sometimes did not do because he perceived that the line managers and employees reporting to him did not have the required skill set. As a result, his manager got irritated with him because certain tasks took longer to be implemented. However, he indicated that he has now started delegating a lot more and also learnt to empower his line manager and trust that they will also figure things out and make plans to implement changes as part of their development. He further highlights that he now realizes that failure to delegate some of his tasks may result in him "... burning out and dropping the ball..". He also highlights that since adopting this approach, he found that his line managers and the team, are executing some of these projects effectively without him even knowing sometimes. He also realized that his inability to delegate was a bottleneck to the team's efficiency.

4.5.4 Intermediate Role Expectations

Concerning intermediate role expectations, the data analysis indicated themes which included (1) interpreting and implementing organizational strategy, (2) communicating, (3) information sharing and (4) influencing.

Concerning the information sharing, interpreting and implementing organizational strategy expectations, the data analysis indicated that middle managers are playing this role. They indicated that they play this role by continually sharing the organizational strategic objectives regarding continuous improvements and the expectations from senior managers to the line managers. They also indicated that they champion these projects and implement the changes. One of the middle managers indicated that one of the lessons he had to learn quickly was to not over-exert himself

during the continuous project implementation phase but monitor and control. He also highlights that he has learnt to focus on empowering the team through information sharing, and training and to provide leadership. He indicated that he caused problems in his team when he started completing some of the line managers' tasks which resulted in the team being unhappy and caused conflict. Since then, he has learnt to trust the system structures and his line managers for the successful execution of continuous improvement projects.

Concerning communication and influencing expectations, middle managers indicated that good communication is important for the successful implementation of the strategy. One of the managers shared how over and under-communication can influence people negatively and have adverse consequences. He indicated that he used to “... *filter and dilute the message from senior manager too much to protect line managers from the harsh realities...*”. However, he also highlights that this produced undesired behaviours and reactions from the employees, and now he tries to deliver the message in its purest form to make employees understand the context and urgency. He highlights that line managers and employees did not always appreciate him filtering the message and it caused conflicts. Line managers would ask him “...*why did you not tell me this?*” when things have gone wrong. He indicates that he thought “...*he was doing good...*” however, this caused more harm. He mentions that one of the valuable lessons he learnt during this process of continuous improvement, is for the middle manager to “...*push the pain down the chain and expose subordinates so that they can take charge and run with change projects...*”, and he expects his line managers to do the same so that change can take place. But he also acknowledges that sometimes, one of the most difficult tasks of being an intermediary is delivering a harsh message of expectations from senior managers to line managers. He further elaborates that you have to express it constructively, not too harshly, but still get the intended reaction. He also expressed that he has also learnt that over-communication confuses people and sometimes they lose interest. Other managers also shared the same sentiment and highlighted that email is not an effective tool for communication and prefer dialogue to discuss matters during change projects. They also expressed that, when line managers have concerns, they first assess the situation and see if they can resolve the conflict between themselves before escalating it.

4.5.5 Mediate Expectations

Concerning mediation role expectations, the data analysis indicated themes which included (1) creating a positive environment, (2) communication, (3) information sharing, (4) positive influencing, (5) implementation of change initiatives and (6) eliminating resistance to change.

Concerning creating a positive work environment and sharing information; the middle managers indicated that creating a positive work environment prevents severe conflicts and makes the mediation process easier. One of the middle managers gave an illustration that is a common theme with other middle managers. He indicated that when he is well equipped with information he can play the intermediate role effectively and as a result, there are fewer conflicts and he is able to mediate conflicts quicker and effectively when they arise. He also highlights that a positive culture is an enabler that makes mediation of conflicts easier because people are eager to be team players, assist in implementing change and find solutions constructively.

Concerning positively influencing, eliminating resistance to change and using factual information to perform the role, one of the other middle managers also shared his experience which was also a common theme with other middle managers. He indicated that he plays the mediation role by “...*taking charge*...”. He indicated that he allows employees to share their concerns, respond to them and provide reasons why the senior managers have taken a decision. He also tries to avoid a situation where he goes back and forth between the senior and junior managers and would rather focus on creating a functional and positive environment. He also highlights that sometimes resistance to change creates conflict, and as a middle manager, it is critical to first understand and differentiate if the change does not work due to employees' attitude of resisting the change, or if there are legitimate reasons for the resistance.

He explained that in a case where the change is not successful due to legitimate reasons, he will then escalate the message to the senior manager with factual information to find a resolution. He illustrated this by using an example where the quality department initiated a process change by adding a chemical to the wax application which caused other undesired process challenges which negatively impacted the packhouse's productivity. He highlights that after line managers raised the concern, he got involved and obtained factual information before communicating

it to the senior manager and quality department. He highlights that the strategy was effective in resolving inter-sender conflicts because an amicable agreement was reached. The other middle manager also highlighted the importance of getting all stakeholders involved to find a solution which resolves the inter-sender conflicts to gain favour and confidence from key stakeholders such as the quality and marketing departments through their involvement in the solution-finding process.

4.5.6 Providing Emotional Support to Line Managers

Concerning the middle manager providing emotional support to line managers, the data analysis indicated themes which included (1) positive influence, (2) good communication, (3) providing safe space, (4) giving feedback, (5) showing empathy, (6) creating a positive environment and (7) motivating employees.

Middle managers indicated that a positive environment creates a platform for emotional support. One of the middle managers illustrated how he provides emotional support to line managers. His example shares a common theme with other middle managers. He indicated that during the process of change, it is important to be positive and let your positivity influence line managers and employees. He also highlighted that managing line managers and employees in general “...is a tiring job because you have to manage people's emotions...” and one needs to carefully choose their words and use facts before speaking. He stated the importance of showing good leadership qualities that will make it easy for people to follow you and implement the change. He also highlighted the importance of communication skills to be able to deliver the message in its purest form and to achieve its purpose while being constructive. He highlighted the importance of providing safe spaces which enable line managers to share any concern which can be personal or work related. However, he also warns that employees can abuse it.

The other middle manager also illustrated how he provides emotional support to line managers. His example also shares a common theme with other middle managers. He illustrated that during this process of change he supports his line managers by “...showing empathy and providing moral support...”. He further indicates that it is important to him that line managers leave his office motivated and with a smile on their faces; thereby creating a safe space for employees. He explained that he tries to find

solutions together with them when they need assistance, and communicates and listens more effectively. He also recognizes the importance of giving compliments and providing feedback required to employees. He also indicates that relations and trust are important to create a supportive environment.

4.6 ROLE CONFLICTS EXPERIENCED BY MIDDLE MANAGERS

The fifth objective was to analyze the types of role conflict that middle managers experience as change implementors, being located between their senior and line managers.

The research study findings which are discussed below, confirm the literature findings of Balogun (2003,p.69) and Currie and Procter (2005) and other authors who also found that middle managers experience role conflict during the process of change management. Concerning the study expectations, the following themes emerged from the data analysis: (1) intra-sender conflict, (2) inter-sender role conflict, (3) inter-role conflict, (4) role ambiguity and (5) role strain.

4.6.1 Intra-sender conflict

The American Psychological Association (2023) defines this as *“the form of role conflict caused by incompatibility among the behaviours and expectations associated with a single role. These inconsistencies may result from the inherent complexity of the role itself, the ambiguity of the role, or a lack of consensus in defining the role and its demands”* (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2023b). Shenkar and Zeira (1992, p.57) also define intra-sender role conflict as caused by different expectations from a single individual which causes incompatible demands to the receiver or an individual who has to execute the instructions.

The findings indicate multiple incidences of intra-sender conflict. All middle managers indicated that their KPIs inherently cause intra-sender conflicts. They indicated how they are expected to meet the production line throughputs which are sometimes incompatible with the quality and budget KPIs. One of the managers illustrated this by sharing an example which was commonly shared by other middle managers. He indicated that at the beginning of the 2022 season, he and the senior manager agreed on the KPIs, however, in the middle of the season, the senior manager requested him

to pack more pockets to meet market requirements. In this example, he indicated how the change had a negative impact on his throughput and budget because he had to reduce his line speed and get additional labour to satisfy the request. He indicated that this change reduced his throughput rate and packer performance actual KPIs, while it increased his cost which resulted in him not meeting his KPIs for the year. However, he indicates that he decided to show maturity by understanding the business and senior managers' needs and priorities.

He also decided to align himself with these expectations to manage the conflict and build a relationship with his senior manager and the marketing department. He also highlighted that when he is faced with intra-sender conflict, he has decided that it is more important for him to align his priorities with his senior manager's priorities to manage the conflict.

These research study findings confirm the research study findings made by Shenkar and Zeira (1992), that intra-sender role conflicts are created when a manager receives and accepts expectations which have incompatible demands. In the context of middle managers implementing change, the findings above indicate how KPIs with incompatible expectations have the potential to create intra-sender role conflict within the middle manager.

4.6.2 Inter- Sender role conflict

Shenkar and Zeira, (1992b,p.57) and Mohr and Puck (2007,p.27) indicate that this type of role conflict occurs when a single manager receives different requirements with different incompatible expectations from multiple role senders who have different agendas.

The findings indicate multiple incidences of inter-sender conflict. One of the managers illustrated this by sharing an example which was commonly shared by other middle managers. He indicated that he often faces this inter-sender role conflict and goes on to highlight that the marketing department often initiates changes that negatively impact packhouse productivity and efficiencies. He identified his senior manager, marketing and quality departments as key stakeholders who sometimes have incompatible demands which need to be satisfied. To resolve the inter-sender role conflicts, he highlights the importance of involving all stakeholders in the solution-

finding exercise to find an inclusive and amicable solution that is agreed upon by all stakeholders. He also highlights the importance of sharing packhouse equipment capabilities with these stakeholders to manage their expectations as part of resolving the conflict.

He shared an example where the marketing department requested him to pack 6 kg bags, however, historically, they had always packed 5.8 kg bags. He illustrated incompatible demands by firstly highlighting that the bags had already negatively impacted his line speed (which already put him in a less favourable position with his senior manager) while the quality department and the marketing departments were expecting him to meet the market specification provided. To solve the conflicts, he got all stakeholders involved in the solution-finding exercise which enabled all stakeholders to understand the limitations; they all found and agreed on an amicable solution and adjusted the marketing specification to 5.5 kg per bag.

These research study findings confirm the research study findings of Shenkar and Zeira, (1992b,p.57) and Mohr and Puck (2007,p.27) indicating that this type of role conflict occurs when a single manager receives different requirements with different incompatible expectations from multiple role senders who have different agendas. These study findings (as illustrated through the use of an example above) confirm that middle managers can experience inter-sender role conflicts when they receive messages with incompatible demands and expectations from different role senders such as senior managers, quality and marketing departments.

4.6.3 Inter-Role Conflict

The American Psychological Association (2023) defines this as *“the form of role conflict that occurs when individuals have multiple roles and the expectations and behaviours associated with one role are not consistent with the expectations and behaviours associated with another”* (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2023a). Rizzo, House and Lirtzman (1970, p.155) also highlight a person may experience inter-role conflict when one individual plays more than one role which requires different behaviours with varying expectations and incompatible demands.

The findings indicate occurrences of inter-role conflict. One of the managers illustrated by explaining that when contractors come to the site, he needs to wear two hats; with

one hat he has to get the job done as a SRCC middle manager while he wears the other hat as a contractor to ensure compliance with safety requirements. Inter-role conflict occurs when he is under pressure to complete a job, but the safety file does not meet the requirements. In a second example, other managers indicated that when employees approach them with their personal problems and they were providing emotional support, they adopt the role of “psychological support” while they simultaneously wear the hat of a manager.

The research study findings as illustrated through the use of the examples above, confirm that middle managers may experience inter-role conflict during the process of change management. This is in line with the research studies of Shenkar and Zeira, (1992b) and Mohr and Puck (2007) who also found that inter-role conflict was experienced by other managers in their studies.

4.6.4 Role Ambiguity

APA Dictionary of Psychology (2023) defines this role conflict as *“indefinite expectations about the behaviours to be performed by individuals who occupy particular positions within a group or social setting. Role ambiguity is often caused by lack of clarity in the role itself, lack of consensus regarding the behaviours associated with the role, or the individual role taker’s uncertainty concerning the types of behaviours expected”* (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2023c). Carter and Harper (2016,p.1) further indicate that role ambiguity occurs when a role occupant is unclear about the behavioural expectations that are related to their role. It represents the behavioural uncertainty that an individual may have in accordance with their role expectations. They further indicate that this often occurs when an employee does not understand how they need to execute their task due to a lack of information and clarity of their roles and responsibilities.

The findings provided several incidences of role ambiguity. One of the managers illustrated this by sharing an example which was commonly shared by other middle managers. As part of continuous improvement, his senior manager requests him to conduct an investigation, and sometimes he does not have the data, or know where to start, while the instruction is also unclear. However, he has learnt that sometimes, there is value in executing the task without being negative and figuring it out, because,

during this process, he has learnt valuable lessons that expose the gaps in the system; which then allows him to put systems in place to close the gaps. He highlights that ambiguity in a system is often an indication of inefficiency and an opportunity for continuous improvement. One of the other managers also indicated that when he is faced with role ambiguity he manages it by asking the senior manager or the person requesting the change to make it clear or illustrate what they want.

The managers also highlighted that during continuous improvement project implementation, all stakeholders need to be well-informed of the changes to eliminate ambiguity. One of the other managers indicated that when there are any process and documentation updates, he informs his team and has meetings with them to ensure they understand the changes and expectations.

These research study findings are in line with findings made by Carter and Harper (2016) who also found that role ambiguity occurs when a role occupant is unclear about the behavioural expectations that are related to his/her role. In the context of change management, both research studies also confirm that managers and employees will face ambiguity when there is inadequate information given to an individual to execute a task.

4.6.5 Role strain

Clark Cline (2010, p.18) defines role strain as discomfort experienced by an individual who fulfils multiple roles with different and conflicting expectations as received from multiple role senders. Gordon et al. (2012, p.668) indicate that these roles create competing demands for middle managers and may lead to role strain. Nakani-Mapoma (2019, p.23) further highlights that an employee who is faced with multiple expectations from different role senders may experience role overload which may lead to role strain. She further highlights that an employee who is experiencing role ambiguity may experience role strain due to many demands. Gordon et al., (2012,p.668) also indicates that role strain may cause individuals to feel burdened, exhausted and stressed.

The findings indicate multiple incidences of role strain. One of the managers illustrated this by sharing an example which was commonly shared by other middle managers. He highlighted that being a change champion “...is extremely difficult, and not so much

on the systems or the procedures but the people and order magnitude...". He indicates that during this process the enormous workload causes role strain. He further highlighted that during this process he always questions himself if *"...the paperwork is completed...is the process followed correctly...have I missed something...is my team fine?"*. He highlights that *"...you can only give a certain amount of time and energy per day. So I would say that the magnitude is daunting..."*.

He highlights that, even though he is successful in playing this role, it is sometimes not easy and tiring as he has to manage his team and in some cases indirectly manage other people's teams to implement the change which sometimes causes inter-role conflicts. All managers indicated that they manage role strain by delegating their tasks to reduce their workload and share it with multiple line managers. One of the middle managers also indicated that the middle manager role comes with the challenges of feeling overloaded. He also adds, that the lack of assistance, information, guidance and recognition often leads to him feel like giving up. However, he shares that he has learnt to delegate his work to line managers to minimize the workload without overloading them. The other middle manager indicated that he often feels overloaded and that *"...there are not enough hours in a day..."* to execute all his responsibilities. However, he indicates that he manages this by prioritizing and delegating to his strongest employees.

The research study findings confirm the research studies of Gordon et al., (2012) and other authors who also found that managers experience role strain when a manager is faced with multiple expectations from one or more role senders. The research findings also confirm that managers may face role strain when the expectations of their role senders accede their resource capacity.

4.7 CONFLICT RESOLUTION BY MIDDLE MANAGERS

The sixth objective was to analyze how middle managers resolved these role conflicts that they encountered.

A research study completed by Jones (1993b) indicates that employees develop a set of skills to manage role conflict, however, it also recognizes the organization's leadership obligation to support employees to manage role conflict. Her study reveals that some of the role conflict challenges are initiated by conflicting policies and

organizational structures (organograms) which introduced ambiguity (Jones, 1993b, p.138,139). The study also highlights actions needed to resolve role conflict including reframing ambiguous roles to be more clear and specific for individuals (Jones, 1993b, p.139), managers providing support by protecting employees (Jones, 1993b, p.138), supporting employees with enhancing people skills to increase tolerance and encouraging employees to see others viewpoint (Jones, 1993b, p.138). It further highlights the need to provide social services to manage employee psychological health (Jones, 1993b, p.138), building coalitions in teams, building trust between employees, and empowering employees through education and teachings about organizational systems, policies and their roles within the systems (Jones, 1993b, p.139).

The findings from the analysis indicated the following themes (1) organizational support, (2) leadership, (3) protecting employees, (4) resolving ambiguity, (5) creating a positive environment, (6) building team cohesion and trust and (7) empowering employees. Concerning all these themes, data analysis indicated that a positive environment set the foundation for successful change implementation which makes conflict management easier to exercise. Findings also highlight that this type of environment is led and initiated by senior managers.

The study also found that it is difficult to resolve conflicts where there is a lack of trust. One of the middle managers explained how they were able to successfully implement ISO and resolve conflicts that arose because of the positive environment which was created and orchestrated by the senior manager. He highlighted that this enabled them to build positivity, trust and coalitions in teams and as a result, conflicts were easier to resolve.

The middle managers demonstrated how they were able to resolve the conflicts they experienced (that were reported in section 4.6).

Other conflicts that were a result of incompatible expectations from the senior and junior managers are discussed in sections 4.3 and 4.4 respectively. These sections also discuss how each conflict was managed.

4.8 SUMMARY

In line with the objectives of this research study, this chapter provided background to ISO 9001 change implementation at SRCC. Within this context of continuous change management, it also presented and discussed the findings of role senders (senior and junior managers) expectations to middle management. The study also presented and discussed middle managers' expectations of themselves (in-line with the expectations of the role senders), role conflicts experienced by middle managers, and the management of role conflicts. The research study findings and discussions were presented in this chapter in line with the deductive qualitative research method.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter addresses the last objective of the study which is to provide recommendations to improve support for middle managers when they experience role conflict during the implementation of change. It first presents a summary of the study's findings, then makes recommendations in line with the objective. Finally, while acknowledging the limitations and delimitations of the study, as well as its research contribution, recommendations for further research are made.

5.2 SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

The data analysis derived from the interviews confirmed:

Senior managers have the five identified expectations for middle managers as highlighted in the conceptual model in chapter 2. However, the senior managers also indicated additional expectations they have for middle managers. These additional expectations are discussed in section 4.3.6. Concerning the effectiveness of middle managers' achieving these expectations; the senior managers indicated that there were managers who were successfully performing this role while they also recognised that others had room for improvement. Senior managers also confirmed that middle managers faced role conflict due to the nature of their roles.

Furthermore, line managers have the three identified expectations for middle managers as highlighted in the conceptual model in chapter 2. Concerning the effectiveness of middle managers' achieving these expectations, the data analysis provided a mixed review concerning the overall effectiveness of middle managers playing this role. Line managers also identified that middle managers experience role conflicts.

In addition, the data analysis in section 4.5 highlighted that middle managers are aware of the senior and junior managers expectations. The middle manager's data analysis indicates that all managers understood their role expectations and positively provided a sense of achieving these expectations. They also acknowledged that their work environment and senior managers' support determines their success.

Fourth, middle managers' data analysis across sections 4.5 and 4.6 confirmed the middle manager's experience of role conflict as per literature findings of Balogun (2003,p.69), Currie and Procter (2005) and other authors. The role conflicts include (1) intra-sender conflict, (2) inter-sender role conflict, (3) inter-role conflict, (4) role ambiguity and (5) role strain as per the literature findings of Shenkar and Zeira (1992), Biddle (1986, p.73) and Jones (1993b).

Fifth, middle and line Manager's data analysis across sections 4.4 and 4.5 identified communication as one of the challenges that negatively impact the continuous change process. They indicated that change implementation becomes a challenge if communication is poor and inadequate. They and the senior managers all agree that emails are not effective tools of communication as it does not provide an opportunity to engage in a productive dialogue.

Sixth, the line managers' data analysis across section 4.4 highlighted information sharing as one of the challenges that negatively impacted the continuous change process. They indicated that, often, they were not provided with information and training on continuous improvement initiatives.

Finally, the middle manager's data analysis across sections 4.5 and section 4.6 confirmed intra-sender and inter-role conflicts as one of their major challenges. They highlight that while their senior manager's expectations are specified in the form of KPIs, they often face the two conflicts due to incompatible demands from their senior managers and other role senders such as quality and marketing departments.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SRCC

5.3.1 Intra-Sender Role Conflict

Middle Managers highlighted in section 4.61, middle managers indicated that KPIs and continuous improvement initiatives are sometimes incompatible and cause intra-sender role conflicts. Middle managers also indicated that they understood that business requirements may change due to market and quality demands. It is therefore recommended that senior managers align KPIs with other expectations placed on the middle manager's role to suit the business objectives and stimulate motivation for middle managers.

5.3.2 Inter-role conflicts

Middle managers highlighted in section 4.6.3 that they often receive incompatible demands from other role senders such as marketing and quality departments which causes inter-role conflicts. It is therefore recommended for the organization to align key role senders' KPIs with middle manager KPIs or vice versa to create an alignment with business objectives. The main objective is to promote teamwork and synergy between key stakeholders to deliver on business objectives.

5.3.3 Role Ambiguity

Middle managers and line managers' data analysis across sections 4.4, and 4.5 indicates the need to improve communication and information sharing to improve understanding of change projects' objective expectations for successful implementation. Sections 4.4 and 4.5 also indicated that communication remains one of the key tools that improve the understanding of these expectations. Senior managers also indicated that new employees may not be well-informed of their expectations to successfully implement ISO 9001 and indicated that there is a need to retrain employees. They also highlighted that some employees have not received change management training. Carter and Harper (2016) also indicate that a lack of information, ineffective communication and lack of training may contribute to role ambiguity. It is therefore recommended that the organization's senior management team investigate and implement a solution that will improve information sharing and communication among key stakeholders. In addition, there is a need for the organisation to train employees on change management and ISO 9001.

5.4 Recommendation for Research Purposes

Concerning the middle manager's intermediate and mediation roles between junior and senior managers. It is easier to find the literature on senior managers' expectations of middle managers. However, one of the key observations was the lack of literature explaining the role expectations of line managers' expectations of middle managers. It is therefore recommended for further research to be completed to identify the junior managers' role expectations of middle managers.

5.5 Research Limitations

Given that the study is a mini-thesis with limited resources and time constraints, two limitations are discussed: Firstly, the study sample size was limited to two senior managers, four middle managers and six line managers in the operations department. Furthermore, data was collected through the use of interviews which are prone to subjective views and experiences of individuals. To ensure the accuracy of the data, the researcher discussed the application of qualitative methods applied in section 3.6 (research quality). However, considering these limitations it is recommended that future research utilise other methods to promote triangulation of data, and to conduct more interviews to reach data saturation.

5.6 Research Delimitations

The study sample was limited to senior managers, middle managers and line managers in the operations department of SRCC. This delimitation of the study meant that only senior and junior managers were role senders, and only middle managers were role receivers. Therefore, it is recommended that future research also consider other departments (e.g. quality and marketing) as role senders for middle managers in the operations department. Furthermore, it is recommended that research also investigate the experiences of senior managers and line managers as role receivers, and to investigate the role conflicts that they encounter.

5.7 Research Study Contribution

In line with the thematic deductive research method, the study was able to confirm that the pattern reported in the role theory and role conflict literature was experienced by line managers managing operations in a real-world setting, while simultaneously implementing a continuous change process. It is recommended that further research be conducted on the experiences of other line managers with other types of change, and of the same type of change (i.e. ISO implementation) in other organizations and industries.

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APPENDIX A – INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview questions for senior management

- 1 When did you join SRCC as an employee?
- 2 How many years of service do you have as a senior manager at SRCC?
- 3 How many middle managers report to you?
- 4 What is your understanding of continuous improvement (change management) and the function of ISO in SRCC?
- 5 Why did SRCC implement ISO 9001?
- 6 How has your work been affected during this process? And, what has been your experience during this process?
- 7 What role do you play during this process and how do you contribute to the change?
- 8 During continuous change/improvement, senior managers have various expectations of their managers, and in turn, middle managers have various role expectations of senior management. In the context of this research study, these role expectations include:
 1. *Manage* daily operations
 2. Eliminate *Resistance to change*
 3. Be a *Change Champion*
 4. *Intermediate communication* between senior managers and other employees
 5. *Mediate Conflict* that may arise
- 8.1 During this continuous change/improvement process, what are your expectations in relation to middle managers **managing daily operations**? Have they been meeting these expectations?
If yes, why do you think they meet these expectations?
If no, why do you think they don't meet these expectations?
Has this expectation led to a conflict or disagreement?
What happened?
Why did it happen?
Please describe how this took place?
Who were the parties involved?
How did they feel?
What were the immediate and long-term consequences?
How did the employee(s) cope?
Please describe the type of tactics that were used.
- 8.2 During this continuous change/improvement process, what are your expectations in relation to middle managers **eliminating resistance to change**? Are they meeting these expectations?
If yes, why do you think they meet these expectations?
If no, why do you think they don't meet these expectations?
Has this expectation led to a conflict or disagreement between you and your middle managers?
What happened?

Why did it happen?

Please describe how this took place?

Who were the parties involved?

How did the parties involved feel?

What were the immediate and long-term consequences?

How did the employee(s) cope?

Please describe the type of tactics that were used.

- 8.3 “Change champions have been given different meanings. Some writers have defined a change champion as a person at any level of the organization who is skilled at initiating, facilitating, and implementing change’, while Markhan and Aiman-Smith (2001) defined a champion as an individual who recognises a new technology or market opportunity as having significant potential, adopts the project as their own; commits personally to the project; generates support from other people in the organisation; and advocates vigorously for the project.” (Faith Nakani-Mapoma,2019)

During this continuous change/improvement process, what are your expectations in relation to middle managers becoming **change champions**? Are they meeting these expectations?

If yes, why do you think they meet these expectations?

If no, why do you think they don’t meet these expectations?

Has this expectation led to a conflict or disagreement?

What happened?

Why did it happen?

Please describe how this took place?

Who were the parties involved?

How did the involved parties feel?

What were the immediate and long-term consequences?

How did the employee(s) cope?

Please describe the type of tactics that were used.

- 8.4 During this continuous change/improvement process, what are your expectations in relation to middle managers becoming **intermediaries** between senior and junior managers? Are they meeting these expectations?

If yes, why do you think they meet these expectations?

If no, why do you think they don’t meet these expectations?

Has this expectation led to a conflict or disagreement?

What happened?

Why did it happen?

Please describe how this took place?

Who were the parties involved?

How did the involved parties feel?

What were the immediate and long-term consequences?

How did the employee(s) cope?

Please describe the type of tactics that were used.

- 8.5 During this continuous change/improvement process, what are your expectations in relation to middle managers to **mediate any conflict** that may arise between senior and junior managers? Are they meeting these expectations? If yes, why do you think they meet these expectations? If no, why do you think they don't meet these expectations? Has this expectation led to a conflict or disagreement? What happened? Why did it happen? Please describe how this took place? Who were the parties involved? How did the involved parties feel? What were the immediate and long-term consequences? How did the employee(s) cope? Please describe the type of tactics that were used.
- 9 Are there any other expectations that you have of middle managers in relation to the ISO initiative?
- 10 Change management can be a stressful event for some people. What type of organizational support systems are available for middle managers during this change process?
- 11 If the organizational support systems exist; do middle managers utilize these support systems effectively? Please elaborate.
- 12 Middle managers can create provide emotional support for employees. Since they work closely with employees, they can have a better sense of the emotions that employees express during the change process. They could be encouraged to connect emotionally and offer emotional support during the change process. They could express and communicate these emotions to senior managers as part of employee feedback

In this context:

Does the manager exhibit values that motivate and foster positive teamwork?

Is the communication between employees and middle managers effective?

Does the middle manager listen to employees?

Does the middle manager create a safe space for employees to critique the change process and leaders?

Does the middle manager provide regular feedback during the change process?

Does the manager exhibit a positive attitude during change management?

How would you describe the trust between middle managers and employees?

Are employees able to connect emotionally with middle managers?

Empirical research evidence suggests that approximately thirty to ninety percent of the planned change projects fail to meet their objectives). Some of these failures could be attributed to ineffective leadership. While there may be many factors that contribute to the success or failure

of a change project, companies who have invested in ISO 9001 expect to realize the promised benefits, which include improved competitiveness, profits, quality system and operational efficiencies.

Has SRCC realized the intended benefits

Interview questions for middle management

- 1 When did you join SRCC as an employee?
- 2 How many years of service do you have as a middle manager at SRCC?
- 3 How many junior managers report to you?
- 4 What is your understanding of continuous improvement (change management) and the function of ISO in SRCC?
- 5 Why did SRCC implement ISO 9001
- 6 How has your work been affected during this process? And, what has been your experience during this process?
- 7 What role do you play during this process and how do you contribute to the change?
- 8 During continuous change/improvement, senior managers are role senders and have various role expectations from middle managers. In the context of this research study, these roles include:
 1. Manage daily operations
 2. Eliminate Resistance to change
 3. Change Champion
 4. Intermediate communication
 5. Mediate Conflict

Simultaneously, during continuous change/improvement, junior managers are role senders and have various role expectations from middle managers. In the context of this research study, these roles include:

3. Providing Emotional Support
4. Intermediate communication
5. Mediate Conflict

As a result, the middle manager has to be a mediator and play an intermediate role of communication between these two role players.

The manager also experiences Role Conflict, which includes the following types.

1. Intra-sender conflict
2. Inter- Sender role conflict
3. Inter-Role

4. Role Ambiguity

5. Role strain

8.1 During this continuous change/improvement process, your senior manager expects you to **manage daily operations**. Are you meeting these expectations?

If yes, why do you think you meet these expectations?

If not, why do you think you don't meet these expectations?

Has this expectation led to a conflict?

What happened?

Why did it happen?

Please describe how this took place.

Who were the parties involved?

How did the involved parties feel?

What were the immediate and long-term consequences?

How did the employee(s) cope?

Please describe the type of tactics that were used.

8.2 During this continuous change/improvement process, your senior manager expects you to **eliminate resistance to change**. Are you meeting these expectations?

If yes, why do you think you meet these expectations?

If no, why do you think you don't meet these expectations?

Has this expectation led to a conflict?

What happened?

Why did it happen?

Please describe how this took place.

Who were the parties involved?

How did the involved parties feel?

What were the immediate and long-term consequences?

How did the employee(s) cope?

Please describe the type of tactics that were used.

8.3 During this continuous change/improvement process, your senior manager expects you to become a **change champion**. Are you meeting these expectations?

If yes, why do you think you meet these expectations?

If no, why do you think you don't meet these expectations?

Has this expectation led to a conflict?

What happened?

Why did it happen?

Please describe how this took place?

Who were the parties involved?

How did the involved parties feel?

What were the immediate and long-term consequences?

How did the employee(s) cope?

Please describe the type of tactics that were used.

- 8.4 Middle managers perform an intermediary role between senior management and the employee's communication process. Senior managers send messages to the employees through middle managers and vice versa. This role often creates conflict if employees are not satisfied with the message they receive.

During this continuous change/improvement process, your senior and junior manager expects you to become an **intermediate** communicator between them. Are you meeting these expectations?

If yes, why do you think you meet these expectations?

If no, why do you think you don't meet these expectations?

Has this expectation led to a conflict?

What happened?

Why did it happen?

Please describe how this took place?

Who were the parties involved?

How did the involved parties feel?

What were the immediate and long-term consequences?

How did the employee(s) cope?

Please describe the type of tactics that were used.

- 8.5 During this continuous change/improvement process, your senior and junior manager expects you to **mediate conflict** between them.

Are you meeting these expectations?

If yes, why do you think you meet these expectations?

If no, why do you think you don't meet these expectations?

Has this expectation led to a conflict?

What happened?

Why did it happen?

Please describe how this took place?

Who were the parties involved?

How did the involved parties feel?

What were the immediate and long-term consequences?

How did the employee(s) cope?

Please describe the type of tactics that were used.

- 8.6 The manager also experiences Role Conflict, which includes the following types.

1. Intra-sender conflict (due to incompatible demands) different expectations from the same person, such as at different times.

Has this expectation led to a conflict?

What happened?

Why did it happen?

Please describe how this took place?

Who were the parties involved?

How did the involved parties feel?

What were the immediate and long-term consequences?

How did the employee(s) cope?

Please describe the type of tactics that were used.

8.7 The manager also experiences Role Conflict, which includes the following types.

2. Inter- Sender role conflict (***arising from multiple stakeholders who have different expectations of one role***)

Has this expectation led to a conflict?

What happened?

Why did it happen?

Please describe how this took place?

Who were the parties involved?

How did the involved parties feel?

What were the immediate and long-term consequences?

How did the employee(s) cope?

Please describe the type of tactics that were used.

8.8 The manager also experiences Role Conflict, which includes the following types.

3. Inter-Role (*arising from opposing pressures from different role senders*)

Has this expectation led to a conflict?

What happened?

Why did it happen?

Please describe how this took place?

Who were the parties involved?

How did the involved parties feel?

What were the immediate and long-term consequences?

How did the employee(s) cope?

Please describe the type of tactics that were used.

8.9 The manager also experiences Role Conflict, which includes the following types.

4. Role Ambiguity (*Not Clear message*)

Has this expectation led to a conflict?

What happened?

Why did it happen?

Please describe how this took place?

Who were the parties involved?

How did the involved parties feel?

What were the immediate and long-term consequences?

How did the employee(s) cope?

Please describe the type of tactics that were used.

- 9 The manager also experiences Role Conflict, which includes the following types.

5. Role strain (occurs when the expectations or workload is too much for the individual)

Has this expectation led to a conflict?

What happened?

Why did it happen?

Please describe how this took place?

Who were the parties involved?

How did the involved parties feel?

What were the immediate and long-term consequences?

How did the employee(s) cope?

Please describe the type of tactics that were used.

- 10 Middle managers provide emotional support for employees. They work closely with employees and can have a better sense of the emotions employees express during the change process. They are encouraged to connect emotionally and offer emotional support during the change process. They also express and communicate these emotions to senior managers as part of employee feedback.

In this context:

Do you feel that you exhibit values that motivate and foster positive teamwork?

Is the communication between you & employees and effective?

Do you feel that you listen to employees?

Does feel that you create a safe space for employees to critique the change process and leaders?

Do you provide regular feedback during the change process?

Do you exhibit a positive attitude during change management?

How would you describe the trust between middle yourself and your employees?

Are employees able to connect emotionally with you?

- 11 Empirical research evidence suggests that approximately thirty to ninety percent of the planned change projects fail to meet their objectives. Gill (2003) attributes these failures to ineffective leadership. While there may be many factors that contribute to the success or failure of a change project, companies who have invested in ISO 9001 expect to realize the promised benefits, which include improved competitiveness, profits, quality system and operational efficiencies. However, empirical evidence based on the tourism industry indicates that some companies do not realize these expected benefits due to various factors

Has SRCC realized the intended benefits?

12 Possible Follow-up Questions

Overall, do you feel that the change implemented has benefited SRCC in any way?

Interview questions for junior management

- 1 When did you join SRCC as an employee?
- 2 How many years of service do you have as a junior manager at SRCC?
- 3 What is your understanding of continuous improvement (change management) and the function of ISO in SRCC?
- 4 How has your work been affected during this process? And, what has been your experience during this process?
- 5 what role do you play during this process and how do you contribute to the change?
- 6 As an employee, your manager allocates tasks to you to execute as part of continuous improvement. Sometimes, you may have a different opinion of how these tasks need to be executed and can lead to conflict. Have you experienced conflict or disagreement? How do you resolve these types of conflicts?
- 7 During continuous change/improvement, junior managers are role senders and have various role expectations from middle managers. In the context of this research study, these roles include:
 1. Intermediate communication
 2. Mediate conflict
 3. Providing emotional support
- 8 Middle managers perform an **intermediary role** between senior management and the employee's communication process. Senior managers send messages to the employees through middle managers and vice versa. This role often creates conflict if employees are not satisfied with the message they receive.

Does your manager play an **intermediate** role? If yes, how does he/she do this?

Has this led to any kind of conflict?

What happened?

Why did it happen?

Please describe how this took place.

Who were the parties involved?

How did the involved parties feel?

What were the immediate and long-term consequences?

How did the employee(s) cope?

Please describe the type of tactics that were used.

9 Middle managers become **mediators** when employees exhibit resistance to change and/or express their concerns to the middle manager for them to resolve. At the same time, senior management who have a broader vision will also ensure that change is implemented through the middle management structure. This could create conflict and the middle manager is expected to play a mediation role to create peace and ensure that conflict is resolved constructively.

Does your manager play a **mediatory** role when these conflicts arise? And how does he/she do this?

Can you share one or two incidents of conflict where your manager had to play a **mediatory role**?

What happened?

Why did it happen?

Please describe how this took place.

Who were the parties involved?

How did the involved parties feel?

What were the immediate and long-term consequences?

How did the employee(s) cope?

Please describe the type of tactics that were used.

10 Change management can be a stressful event for some people. Do you feel that your manager has supported you during this change process? If so, how did they support you?

11 Middle managers can create provide emotional support for employees. They work closely with employees and can have a better sense of the emotions employees express during the change process. They are encouraged to connect emotionally and offer emotional support during the change process. They also express and communicate these emotions to senior managers as part of employee feedback.

In this context:

Does your manager exhibit values that motivate and foster positive teamwork?

Is the communication between employees and middle managers effective?

Does the middle manager listen to employees?

Does the middle manager create a safe space for employees to critique the change process and leaders?

Does the middle manager provide regular feedback during the change process?

Does the manager exhibit a positive attitude during change management?



How would you describe the trust between middle managers and employees?

Are employees able to connect emotionally with middle managers?

12 Possible Follow-up Questions

Do you feel that the change implemented has benefited SRCC in any way?

APPENDIX B – DECLARATION FORM

 RHODES UNIVERSITY <i>Gebouwe • 1918 • Suid-Afrika</i> Declaration Form To be completed by ALL students submitting a thesis. Please type or write clearly in BLOCK LETTERS. Declaration submitted by a candidate presenting a thesis for examination.		
Information		
Student Name: <u>MUGABE</u> <i>First Name</i>	<u>M</u> <i>Middle name/s or Initial</i>	<u>SEPENG</u> <i>Surname</i>
Student Number: <u>21S9485</u>		
Title of thesis: <u>A CASE STUDY OF ROLE CONFLICT EXPERIENCED BY MIDDLE MANAGEMENT DURING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE</u>		
The thesis which I now submit for the degree of: <u>MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (MBA)</u>		
* (a) has been published / accepted for publication in <u>(quote full name of the publication(s): use a separate sheet if necessary)</u> Volume: <u>ONE</u> Part: <u>ONE</u> Year: <u>2023</u>		
OR		
* (b) is not being published and I hereby grant to Rhodes University permission to make additional copies of it, in whole or in part, for the purposes of research.		
* Delete (cross out) whichever does not apply		
I certify that this thesis has not been submitted for a degree in any other university and that it is my original work except as follows: <u>N/A</u>		
SIGNATURE OF STUDENT:  DATE: <u>02 Feb 2023</u>		

Updated: 03/12/2015 DP

APPENDIX C – CODING MANUAL

No	Label	Definition	Description of occurrence	Qualifications and exclusions	References/ Sources
1	The management role	Management role ensures achievement of organizational goals through effective and efficient planning, organizing, leading and controlling of organizational resources.	Implements senior management instructions and strategies	Qualification: Implementation of senior management instructions	(Daft, 2015, p.4; Buick, Blackman and Johnson, 2018, p.223)
2	Eliminate resistance to change	Enables and motivates the adaption of new ways of doing things	Overcome negative perceptions by creating a new set of positive perceptions and an environment for change	Qualification: Overcomes resistance to change	(Jones and Andrew, 2016; Buick, Blackman and Johnson, 2018)
3	Change champions role	“Change champions have been given different meanings. Some writers have defined a change champion as a person at any level of the organization who is skilled at initiating, facilitating, and implementing change’ (Shifaza et al., 2013: 597; Warrick 2009:15), while Markhan and Aiman-Smith (2001) defined a champion as an individual who recognises a new technology or market opportunity as having significant potential, adopts the project as their own; commits personally to the project; generates support from other people in the organisation; and advocates vigorously for the project.”	Plays a key role in the implementation of strategic change	Qualification: central key role player for change implementation	(Buick, Blackman and Johnson, 2018, p.224,225; Nakani-Mapoma, 2019, p.8)
4.1	Intermediate Role from a senior managers perspective	The bridging role between senior and junior management	Interpret change requirements and translate them to junior employees	Qualification: Bridging role between two role senders	(Ouakouak, Ouedraogo and Mbengue, 2014; Buick, Blackman and Johnson, 2018, p.224,225) (Rydland, 2018, p.11,12).
4.2	Intermediate Role from a junior managers perspective	The bridging role between senior and junior management	Interpret change requirements and translate them to junior employees	Qualification: Bridging role between two role senders	(Ouakouak, Ouedraogo and Mbengue, 2014; Buick, Blackman and

					Johnson, 2018, p.224,225) (Rydland, 2018, p.11,12).
5.1	Mediators role from a senior managers perspective	Settles disputes when there is a conflict	Mediate between senior management and employees	Qualification: settles a dispute between role senders	(Ouakouak, Ouedraogo and Mbengue, 2014; Buick, Blackman and Johnson, 2018, p.224,225)
5.1	Mediators role from a junior managers perspective	Settles disputes when there is a conflict	Mediate between senior management and employees	Qualification: settles a dispute between role senders	(Ouakouak, Ouedraogo and Mbengue, 2014; Buick, Blackman and Johnson, 2018, p.224,225)
6	Provide emotional support for employees	Provides a healthy phycological environment	Connects and offers emotional support	Qualification: Safe space of emotional support	(Luthans et al., 2007; Conway et al., 2014; Buick, Blackman and Johnson, 2018, p.223) (Huy, 2002,) (Hussain et al., 2018)
8	Intra-sender conflict	<p>“the form of role conflict caused by incompatibility among the behaviours and expectations associated with a single role. These inconsistencies may result from the inherent complexity of the role itself, the ambiguity of the role, or a lack of consensus in defining the role and its demands”</p> <p>Role conflict is caused by different expectations (E.G KPIs) from a single individual which causes incompatible demands to the receiver or an individual who has to execute the instructions concerning the same role.</p>	The personal value set conflicts with the sender's value set	<p>Qualification: Message from one sender same role</p> <p>Exclusions: Messages from multiple senders</p>	(Shenkar and Zeira, 1992a) (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2023b)
9	Inter-role conflict	The American Psychological Association (2023) defines this as “the form of role conflict that occurs when individuals have multiple roles and the expectations and behaviours associated with one role are not consistent	The manager receives one message from senior management with the expectation	Qualification: Message from one sender to execute multiple roles	(Shenkar and Zeira, 1992a) (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2023a)

		with the expectations and behaviours associated with another” (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2023a)	then he/she will perform multiple roles	Exclusions: Messages from multiple senders	
10	Inter-sender conflict	“Conflict occurs when the role behaviour demanded by one role sender is incongruent with the role behaviour demanded by another role sender” (Anon., 2022)	Shenkar and Zeira, (1992b) and Mohr and Puck (2007) indicate that this type of role conflict occurs when a single manager receives different requirements with different incompatible expectations from multiple role senders who have different agendas	Qualification: Message from multiple senders expecting the manager to execute multiple roles Exclusions: Message from a single sender	(Shenkar and Zeira, 1992b, p.57; Mohr and Puck, 2007, p.27)
11	Ambiguity Role	Caused by a lack of clarity and understanding of a sender's message to achieve expectations	Occurs when the manager uncertain of expectations	Qualifications: Unclear Message from role senders Exclusion: Clear message from role senders	(Kazim, 2013; Ebbers and Wijnberg, 2017)
12	Role strain	Occurs when the expectations or workload is too much for the individual (Jones, 1993)	Occurs when the manager is overwhelmed or overloaded with expectations	Qualification: Message from role senders to execute one role with overwhelming expectations Exclusions: Message from role senders to execute one role with achievable expectations	(Jones, 1993c; Clark Cline, 2010)

APPENDIX D – GATEKEEPER APPROVAL LETTER



28th November 2022

Professor Noel Pearse
Rhodes University
Drotsky Road
Makanda
6139

Re – Request for permission to conduct research

Dear Professor Pearse

This letter serves to confirm that the Sundays River Citrus Company supports Mr. Sepeng's studies towards achieving his MBA and accordingly provides approval for him to conduct his research as part of completing his qualification.

Yours sincerely

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of the Human Resources Manager.

A black rectangular redaction box covering the name of the Human Resources Manager.

Human Resources Manager

APPENDIX E – PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION



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PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION

(To be signed by research participant/s)

Project Title: *A Case Study of Role Conflict Experienced by Middle Management During Organizational Change.*

Mugabe Sepeng from the **Rhodes Business School**, Rhodes University has requested my permission to participate in the above-mentioned research project.

The nature and the purpose of the research project and of this informed consent declaration have been explained to me in a language that I understand.

I am aware that:

1. The purpose of the research project is to analyze the role of middle managers during the continuous improvement changes at SRCC and the role conflicts that they experience. The objectives include:
 - a. Describe the ISO 9001 related continuous improvement initiatives.
 - b. As role senders, identify the expectations that senior managers have of their middle managers in their role of change implementors.
 - c. As role senders, identify the expectations that line managers have of their middle managers in their role of change implementors.
 - d. Analyze the types of role conflict that middle managers experience as change implementors, being located between their senior and line managers.
 - e. Describe how middle managers resolved these role conflicts that they encountered.
 - f. Formulate recommendations to improve support for middle managers when they experience role conflict during the implementation of change.
2. Rhodes University has given ethical clearance to this research project (**Ethics Approval Number**) and I have seen/may request to see the clearance certificate by contacting the Ethics Coordinator (ethics-committee@ru.ac.za)
3. By participating in this research project I will be contributing towards the research study. The study will contribute positively to the body of knowledge on Role Conflict Experienced by Middle Management During Organizational Change Research. The

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learnings will be beneficial to organisations like SRCC for effective and efficient management. The research will enable senior managers, middle managers and junior managers to understand and be aware of the types of conflict each party experiences during change. This will present an opportunity for all role players to improve the management of these conflicts to create a constructive work environment. If each role player improve their management of these conflicts, this can lead to the successful execution and implementation of change management.

4. I will participate in the project by being interviewed. My participation is entirely voluntary and should I at any stage wish to withdraw from participating further, I may do so without any negative consequences.
5. I will not be compensated for participating in the research, but my out-of-pocket expenses will be reimbursed.
6. The following risks are associated with my participation: The researcher is a middle manager in the organization. Participants may express sensitive information about colleagues or fellow managers, or the company. To prevent the risk, the researcher will ensure that employee identity is protected at all times. The anonymity of employees will be maintained when writing the research report by using pseudonyms. All recordings and interview materials will be stored securely. SRCC employees will not have access to interview material.
7. The Researcher intends to publish the research results in the form of *presenting the final thesis document and publishing in a journal or as a conference paper*. However, confidentiality and anonymity of records will be maintained and my name and identity will not be revealed to anyone who has not been involved in the conducting of the research, *unless I indicate to the contrary/recognize that as a public figure my identity will inevitably be/become known, in which case I agree to accept the loss of anonymity*.
8. In terms of the Protection of Personal Information Act (No. 4 of 2013) it remains my right to request the Researcher to provide me with a detailed explanation of exactly how confidentiality and anonymity of the data I provide will be achieved. I may also request to know exactly how my personal information will be stored securely, for how long it will be stored.
9. If any data collected from me for this research project is to be used by the Researcher for any further study, I am to be informed in writing and my written consent requested again. I need not give consent for the new research if it is incompatible with the initial purpose of the present study (POPIA, s15(3)). Equally, I can simply reject the request. In such cases, a formal request needs to be made to me by the researcher via the Ethics Coordinator (ethics-committee@ru.ac.za).
10. In terms of the POPI Act, I possess the right to receive feedback about this research. This will take the form of being provided with a copy of the thesis and presentation of

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final outcomes. *(Researcher and/or Supervisor to provide full details on how feedback will be communicated)* unless I elect not to receive this feedback.

- 11. Any further questions that I might have regarding the nature of the research and/or my participation in it will be answered by Mugabe Sepeng (g21s9485@campus.ru.ac.za) and Prof Noel Pearse (n.pearse@ru.ac.za)
- 12. By signing this informed consent declaration, I am not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies. A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record by the Researcher.
- 13. I *agree/disagree* (delete inapplicable) to the Researcher's use of voice recording of my comments and opinions during interviews, the purpose of which is to ensure the accurate recording of my views/responses. Furthermore, I have the right to request a copy of the interview transcriptions to confirm that my opinions are accurately recorded

I,, have read the above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all questions that I wished to ask, and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and I voluntarily agree to participate in the above-mentioned project.

.....
Participants signature

.....
Witness

.....
Date

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