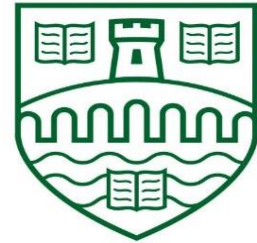


**UNIVERSITY of
STIRLING**



How Sensemaking Processes Influence Organisational
Decision-Making

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ABSTRACT

This research explores how sensemaking processes impact decision-making in organisations. Doing so raises a fundamental question asking how communicative and sensemaking processes influence decision-making outcomes. The main motivation for conducting the study was to determine how organisational decision-making processes were impacted by the action of managers and organisational members. Some of the gaps in the literature were addressed by investigating the complexity in decision-making involving the sensemaking processes, including internal / external environmental factors affecting their outcome. Semi-structured interviews were conducted at a non-profit organisation to collect information, through direct observation of behaviour, examining what influence they had on decision-making processes. Carefully examining the sensemaking processes influencing decision-making, captured the unexplored connections, implications and nuances that constrain organisational decision-making. The concept of sensereceiving which formed the central focus of this study, advances the current literature to make the following contributions: Firstly, it highlights sensereceiving as the key that increases decision quality with the inclusion of more relevant and comprehensive inputs towards the decision-making process. Secondly, decision outcome implementation, increases in effectiveness because of high sensereceiving which strengthens commitment and engagement. Thirdly, organisational efficiency is potentially increased through high sensereceiving because it averts the loss of emotional energy. Finally, sensereceiving impacts are equally as powerful from managers to employees as they are from employees to managers. These findings offer researchers and practitioners a deeper and richer understanding of decision-making processes in organisations.

Keywords

Sensemaking, sensegiving, sensereceiving, decision-making, influence.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

My aspirations in selecting 'sensemaking processes and their influence on organisational decision-making' for my PhD thesis, are borne out of my personal and professional experiences in the corporate world. Further, my passion lies in wanting to use my research to make a difference in the field of Management and Organisational Studies. I was a keen observer of work interactions between executive members and junior workers which raised questions relating to their dynamics as well as how they affected the efficiency and outcomes of the organisation. I have made these observations from a position of senior management, board member, non-executive director and at other times as an investor. These positions have enabled me to be a keen eyewitness, for language, behaviour and demeanour in various boardroom situations, especially pertaining to decision-making.

From this, I have ascertained situations, which have resulted in critical executional challenges specifically in instances where there has been a breakdown in communicative efforts. Often when there are disputes between different groups within the organisation, decision-making takes much longer and mostly leads to uncertainty or a failure in strategic execution. Reflecting on my professional experience raised a fundamental question - how do people make sense and give sense within these organisational settings or simply put, how do communicative and sensemaking processes influence decision-making outcomes? The problem my PhD seeks to address is important, because being able to thoroughly examine sensemaking, sensegiving and particularly sensereceiving activities, would enrich our understanding of its influence on shared meaning making as well as decision-making processes in organisations. This study provides a practical approach for managerial challenges faced by leaders with regards to the utilisation of effective communicative processes in organisations.

1.1 General overview

This study is about an in-depth understanding of how sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving are an inherent part of decision-making processes in organisations. Decision-making is vital to organisations and this study will identify the actions of managers and organisational members, who may enhance decision-making processes or cause them to break down. The sensemaking processes in this study will not be examined as separate processes on their own but as processes which are linked and have varying levels of influence over each other. The literature on sensemaking and sensegiving is well developed but there are certain gaps with regards to the nature of decision-making processes utilising the sensemaking processes, which will be uncovered through this study. Only a small amount of research has been undertaken on a relatively new concept called sensereceiving and therefore it is vital that sensereceiving be fully explored with the other two sensemaking processes (sensemaking and sensegiving) to establish its position and importance in the decision-making process.

Whilst there are many contributing factors that might impede leaders from implementing organisational decision-making successfully (Sull et al. 2015), this study will primarily investigate how communicative approaches impact their success or failure. Leaders play a vital role in the process of sensegiving (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991), where changes may not be fully understood by organisational members, unable to make sense of situations. They may experience a loss of essential meaning of messages, resulting in resistance to proposed changes (Mantere et al. 2012). There are gaps in the sensemaking and sensegiving literature and building on them will lead to the need for understanding sensereceiving. Previous studies lack precision when discussing sensemaking and sensegiving with decision-making processes because they have not been combined with the process of sensereceiving.

This study will also uncover insights into managerial practices, which show how leaders entrusted with the role of creating shared meaning making with their organisational members, effect decision-making processes through sensemaking and sensegiving (Arnaud et al. 2016). One of the key elements of this study will be to examine the varying effects of sensereceiving on sensemaking and sensegiving as well as on the decision-making processes. Additionally, this study is set up to examine if there are links between sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving, which create tensions between leaders and organisational members, causing the decision-making process to fail.

1.2 Introduction to conceptual approach

Research on sensemaking has increased over the years because it is determined as an important aspect of organising, and has evolved through time to “arrive at a fuller integration of meaning and action” (Glynn and Watkiss 2020, p. 1331). The term ‘sensemaking’ used in the literature describes efforts of individuals or groups to bring order and meaning to their understanding of novel, muddled or unanticipated events. Weick (1995, p. 4) suggests that the term ‘sensemaking’ merely means “the making of sense”. The sensemaking process involves “structuring the unknown” (Waterman 1990, p. 51) by “placing some kind of stimuli into some kind of framework” that permits us to “comprehend, understand, explain, attribute, extrapolate and predict” (Starbuck and Milliken 1988, p. 51). Through sensemaking, ongoing intricacies of the world are turned into a “situation that is comprehended explicitly in words and that serves as a springboard into action” (Weick et al. 2005, p. 409). Sensemaking relies on plausibility of explanations rather than accuracy and involves a step into the unknown where anything could happen and trying to explain what you don’t know may be the only way to understand it better.

On a narrower scale, sensemaking features prominently in organisational life and is vital for effective leadership. In the business domain, sensemaking can mean studying new markets, new technologies, politics, a new venture or even a problem not encountered before. Sensemaking is described as a process of interpretation that organisational members use to understand problems faced, resolutions sought and how to better manage their organisations (Rerup and Feldman 2011). Weick (1995) stipulated that because organisations are social constructions, individuals in organisations constantly strive to create and recreate meaning of their working lives. Only if individuals are able to connect to the changes that are taking place around them, can change take place effectively. Leaders help bring about effective change and facilitating shared meaning making by having different processes or structures in place, that enable better understanding of the ensuing change (Weick 1995).

An important element of this study is the identification of sensemaking as a social process, although it must be clarified that individual cognitive processes could also be used to make sense. New meaning is ascribed to unexpected events through dialogue and reflection. Gioia and Thomas (1996) stated that sensemaking takes place in organisations when confusing events or issues are encountered by members. Authors such as Weick (1995), Brown (2000), Maitlis (2005) and Weick et al. (2005) find that at group level, when members of an organisation encounter uncertainty in the environment, an attempt is made to interpret cues from extractions, trying to make the account seem 'plausible'. A particular order is followed, 'making sense' of the occurrence and continuing to enact the given environment. Through sensemaking, individuals are also able to shape their identities whilst dealing with changes in their external environment (Gioia and Mehra 1996). It is suggested that an individual's social environment encountered through their work has a profound effect on their social and personal identities (Watson 2008). This is relevant to decision-making because the type of identity assumed by an individual at work, has a significant impact on their decision-making in organisations (Alvesson and Willmott 2002).

Whilst sensemaking is about meaning making and creating understanding about change, sensegiving is the process whereby stakeholders persuade others as well as themselves to abide with their own sensemaking ideas by using convincing language (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991). Therefore, while sensemaking is about how individuals or groups think, sensegiving is intentionally trying to influence how others think. The process of sensemaking and sensegiving is viewed as a “socially - constructed phenomenon” whereby creating meaning is subjective, could occur simultaneously or in sequence and constrained by goals that are pursued by actors (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991, p. 435). When there is a discrepancy between a recipient’s interpretative scheme and the intended policy, this causes the recipient’s policy to be altered to suit the new policy or to be rejected altogether (Tan 2019).

Four stages of sensemaking and sensegiving were identified by Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991). The stages encompassed envisioning (sensemaking), signalling (sensegiving), revisioning (sensemaking) and energising (sensegiving). Therefore, sensemaking helps individuals understand changes whilst sensegiving is concerned with impacting the outcome through communication (Kezar 2013). It must be emphasised that sensegiving allows multiple actors to interact with each other as it is not just a top down or horizontal process but also a bottom-up process (Tan 2019). Here, the influence and success of sensegiving is very much dependent on how the message is received by the recipient. At times, individuals may exercise their power over others by using tactics that have been reworked into existing practices, to influence others in the organisation (Hope 2010). Upon reviewing the literature, a common theme emphasised is that this kind of behaviour is prominent amongst people in a position of power or leadership roles.

When too much sensegiving from leaders (formal control) with minimum participation from organisational members is bestowed onto organisational members, the end result is often unfavourable (Maitlis 2005). Previous studies examining sensemaking and sensegiving have mainly focused on top-down decision-making highlighting the view of management. More recent studies have looked at how middle managers sell change by the utilization of different strategies but still analysing top-down decision-making (Balogun and Johnson 2005; Maitlis and Lawrence 2007). This study will examine and build on the sensemaking and sensegiving perspectives of both leaders and organisational members whilst analysing its impact on individuals who may be at the receiving end of such information.

This leads us to a new concept which is the focus of this study called 'sensereceiving'. Sensereceiving is a process that "describes the receptiveness of an individual or group of individuals to the sensegiving messages of others" (McKiernan and Mackay 2017, p. 2). Individuals or groups receive these messages based on their degree of mental attitude invested in the messages, which simultaneously arouse their cognitive processes and decision-making skills. It is intended that this study will unpack the role of sensereceiving whilst examining how varying the levels of sensereceiving might impact the behaviour of organisational members and leaders. It is also imperative that the questions offered below are fully addressed, as they will contribute to our understanding of sensereceiving.

How can the role of sensereceiving be enhanced by leaders in a way that invites participation and feedback from organisational members, enabling shared meaning making throughout the whole organisation? How might the processes of sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving function as a coordinated mechanism, so as to bring about a success in organisational performance? Could the success in examining the benefits of sensereceiving contribute to repairing organisational resistance between stakeholders? The findings of this study will offer researchers and practitioners a valuable contribution in terms of unlocking the role of sensereceiving as well as offering a deeper understanding of decision-making processes in organisations.

1.3 Research aim

The aim of this research is to explore how sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving processes shape organisational decision-making.

1.4 Research objectives

1. To develop a theoretical framework to represent the influence of sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving on organisational decision-making.
2. To identify and explain how the different mechanisms that enable sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving, impact organisational decision-making.
3. To explore the relationship between sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving and determine how each one relates to the other in organisational decision-making.

1.5 Research questions

The main research questions guiding this study are: -

- 1) How do sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving influence decision-making in organisations?
- 2) How do sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving relate to each other?

To answer the two questions fully, various themes connected to the sensemaking processes and decision-making will be examined. Ultimately through an in-depth understanding of sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving, this study will provide clarity on the link between sensemaking processes and its influence on organisational decision-making. This will help develop a new concept / theory which is crucial for the type of collaborative decision-making in organisations.

1.6 Thesis Structure

This thesis is comprised of six remaining chapters.

Chapter 2 consists of a Literature Review defining the key concepts of decision-making, sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving. An analysis is made of the extant literature to develop a theoretical framework that encompasses all four concepts to establish vital links between them.

Chapter 3 introduces and establishes the ontological and epistemological stance for this research. The research method adopted together with the research design utilised will be discussed and analysed.

Chapter 4 presents the results from the preliminary data analysis. A history of ABC, the organisation researched, will be highlighted. The chapter concludes with a summary of how sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving influence decision-making in organisations.

Chapter 5 discusses the second part of the findings with greater emphasis on sensereceiving to understand the relationship between sensemaking, sensegiving and decision-making.

Chapter 6 integrates the findings from chapter 4 and 5 whilst highlighting the theoretical implications that emerged from the analysis.

Chapter 7 concludes the study and outlines the insights generated from the initial problem. Theoretical contributions, limitations, future directions and reflexivity are also discussed.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Several streams of literature have provided a foundation for the theoretical perspective of this thesis. The following topics will be introduced in this chapter and they include subject matters pertaining to *decision-making*, *sensemaking*, *sensegiving* and *sensereceiving*. A reconciliation between decision-making and sensemaking is explored, both of which from the outset, appear to complement each other. The review of the extant literature for each of the topics mentioned will provide the vocabulary as well as essential knowledge to determine the influence each has on the construction and examination of this study. An analysis of the literature review is undertaken to develop a theoretical framework, incorporating all the above four concepts, opening up a range of questions about how they interconnect with each other.

The Research Questions guiding this study are: -

1. How do sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving influence decision-making in organisations?
2. How do sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving relate to each other?

This chapter is organised into various sections detailing how the study will be addressed. First, *decision-making* processes observed through a sensemaking lens will examine the behaviour of managers and organisational members engaged in complex decision-making processes. Second, a foundation will be constructed around the process of *sensemaking*. A brief historical overview of the sensemaking process will help to shed light on the work of Karl Weick who remains the “father of sensemaking” (Ancona 2012, p. 4). The aim of sensemaking, is to provide meaning and clarity to phenomena, but instead the process of sensemaking is sometimes obscure (Namvar et al. 2018), due to ample sensemaking perspectives, which lead to

a position “where there is no single agreed definition of sensemaking” (Brown et al. 2015, p. 266). Various definitions of sensemaking have been introduced over the years but a specific definition embedded in repeated themes from the literature, will be developed for this study. Third, a review of *sensegiving* processes, highlights how managers use their power and knowledge to influence others in their organisation. Fourth, studying the relatively new process of *sensereceiving*, will give insights into how useful sensereceiving is to the other sensemaking processes, along with determining its importance and position within the decision-making process.

2.2 Decision-making

2.2.1 Introduction

“Sensemaking can be seen as an infrastructure of the decision-making process or as an approach that serves to explain decision-making and action: you make sense of reality and, on the basis of that reality, you start doing things” (Giuliani 2016, p. 220). This statement serves to emphasis the notion that sensemaking is an important process which serves as a foundation on which all other explanations pertaining to the decision-making process are built from.

Decision-making is a fundamental process in organisations which influences individuals as well as groups and is perceived as an activity which requires problem solving (Angouri and Bargiela-Chiappini 2011). The role of the decision-maker in organisations has become even more demanding, with the modernisation of businesses and advances in technology, requiring skill and knowledge to make good decisions, leading to successful organisational results (Akdere 2011). A survey by Nicholas (1989), Ireland and Miller (2004) and Nutt (2008) of management literature associated with projects that were successful, revealed that decision-making was a key factor that contributed to their success. An issue of particular relevance to this study concerns leaders or managers in organisations who are often perceived to be carrying out decision-making processes. This aspect of decision-making is vital to this

study as it involves the interactive processes of organisational sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving. Decision-making arises when there is a problem or in some instances, a sense of opportunity that requires a choice to be made. Elbanna (2006) stipulates that organisational actors who are immersed in decision-making processes, when faced with organisational uncertainty, develop and assess various alternatives that may solve the problem at hand.

This section commences with the introduction of a general rational decision-making model, depicting the seven stages of the decision-making process, that will be utilised for the remainder of this thesis. An overview of decision-making processes will be explored to show how it is linked to sensemaking. The concept of rationality and bounded rationality are closely examined together with the literature as they form an essential part of this study. As this research is an intense study of the sensemaking processes in conjunction with decision-making, it is important to take a closer look at cognitive biases experienced by decision-makers. This section concludes with a summary of all the key concepts introduced pertaining to the study on organisational decision-making, whilst outlining their importance to the study as a whole.

2.2.2 The decision-making process

Whether a decision is big or small, it invariably has the power to affect all elements involved, altering outcomes at the micro and macro levels. The process of decision-making involves the selection of the optimal choice amongst a set of alternatives. A good manager will always try and make the right decision when the circumstances are right even with imperfect / incomplete knowledge or information. The role of management is to make decisions that are right for the organisation, taking it forward as well as being able to visualise the impact that the decision has on organisational members.

A rational decision-making model consists of multiple steps, designed for the purpose of problem solving, starting with the identification of the problem and going through the different stages till a solution is reached. Rational decision-making processes may have different stages or steps to the process, but each decision process has similarities (Negulescu 2014; Uzonwanne 2016). Using the decision-making rational model enables utilisation of a decision-making process which is simple and consistent. Additionally, the rational decision-making model permits partial use of the stages or the option of reverting back to earlier stages, if perceived to be appropriate. By following the rational decision-making model process stages, each step of the process is carefully evaluated as the problem and tentative solution is carefully examined. Choosing to use the rational decision-making model for this study, enables a careful evaluation of the problem as well as the decision criteria. By ensuring that the problem / decision identification is clearly recognised, it is then acceptable to proceed to the next stage of the decision-making process, as this will eliminate the time wasted on favouring other options which may not be a suitable fit for the problem.

However, the rational decision-making model does have some constraints which may create difficulties. These may take the form of insufficient information, time constraints or any cognitive biases. Time constraints may limit the effectiveness of the rational decision-making model specifically in a fast-paced business setting. Finally, with the limitations placed on decision-making due to incomplete information, risk aversion may be exercised, and in doing so, potentially miss the opportunity of greater success. The concept of bounded rationality has been utilised in behavioural theory of the firm to show how decision-making ensues in organisations (Cyert and March 1963; Levitt and March 1988; March 1991; Foss 2003). Bounded rationality has also become an important feature in contemporary management theory (Porac and Tschang 2013), agency theory (Jensen and Meckling 1976), biases and heuristics (Kahneman 2003), entrepreneurial cognition (Mitchell et al. 2007), behavioural finance (Thaler 2005) and behavioural strategy (Powell et al. 2011).

Figure 2.1 illustrates a general rational decision-making model which will be introduced briefly in this chapter but will be fully utilised in later chapters. The decision-making model depicts the seven stages of decision-making specifically used for this study, examining the effects of the sensemaking processes as well as their influence on the decision-making processes.

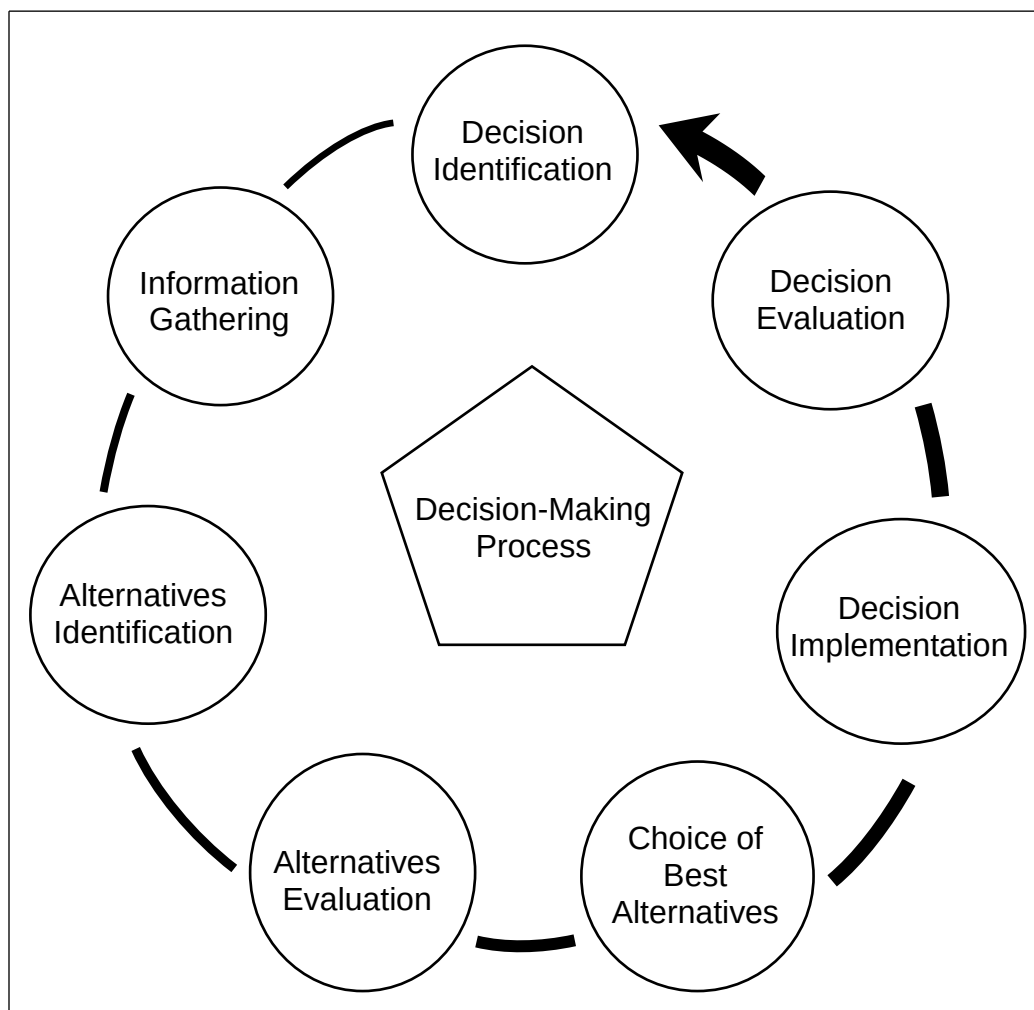


Figure 2. 1 - A general rational decision-making model adapted from Carpenter et al (2010)

The seven stages of the rational decision-making model utilised for this study will be explained further. Decision identification addresses the decision needs of the problem sought. The nature of the decision to be made must be clearly defined. This must be done because what may seem to be a problem to an organisational member may not necessarily be perceived as a problem to leaders. Proper clarification of the problem is important because only then would it be possible to find solutions for the problem. Information pertaining to the nature of the decision must be gathered from internal and external sources. An important factor that must be considered at this stage is if there are any limiting factors that the manager must consider e.g. money or time if they were to solve the problem. All pertinent information must be considered, so that it may help with making the right decision.

All possible alternatives are collected and evaluated, based on their ability to achieve a specific goal. Due to the complexity of decision-making in organisations, the selection of the best alternative is often regarded as vital for organisations, if they are to thrive (March and Olsen 1975). Certain alternatives are regarded as more favourable than others based on feasibility along with acceptability and therefore placed on top of the list. Action is taken to implement the decision and its consequences evaluated. Amongst the things to consider would be if the decision selected will create any foreseeable problems or if there are any risks associated with the decision. If the problem identified is resolved, then the goal has been achieved. However, if the decision has not met with the identified need, then additional steps from the process will be taken to make a new decision.

2.2.3 Decision-making

Sensemaking and decision-making are usually 'decoupled' in the literature according to Elsahn and Benson-Rea (2015, p. 2), who argue that "a sensemaking approach to decision-making can shed light not only on how decisions are made, but also on the process of meaning making and on how organisations enact and make sense of their

environment". By this they mean that the process by which organisations share in meaning making through sensemaking, is developed so as to generate shared interpretations that guide the decision-making process.

If a problem faced by an organisation involves routine decision-making, Mintzberg et al. (1976) assert that such decisions may not trigger sensemaking processes, as the problems faced by the organisation are clearly outlined and information is readily available. Conversely, Mintzberg et al. (1976, p. 246), defined 'unstructured decision-making processes' as decision processes "that have not been encountered in quite the same form and for which no predetermined and explicit set of ordered responses exists in the organisation". This means that unstructured decision processes refer to novel responses, where there has not been any precedence on what form of decision to implement in a specific situation. Unstructured decision-making processes require organisational actors to exert more effort to sensemake, which enable them to enact the environment that surrounds them by extracting cues to decide on the plan of action.

The primary product of decision-making processes are decision outcomes and the utilisation of sensemaking, creating a rationale for the outcomes (March 1997). In order to achieve rationality in organisations, Weick et al. (2005) suggest that the assessment of decision-making is retrospectively assessed as a sensemaking act. This is further restated by Nassehi (2005, p. 186) that rationality in organisations becomes "a retrospective scheme of observation, dealing with the contingency and the paradox of decision-making processes".

Sensemaking is perceived as a wider concept than decision-making because decision-making is mainly about choice evaluation, whereas sensemaking concerns the interplay between interpretation and action (Weick et al. 2005). This means that sensemaking is about interpreting what is going on in specific events as well as thinking of a suitable action rather than looking back retrospectively and assessing

whether a decision undertaken was the right one or not. Weick et al. (2005, p. 415) argued that sensemaking is “more about continued redrafting of an emerging story so that it becomes more comprehensive, incorporates more of the observed data, and is more resilient in the face of criticism”. Conversely, the situation in which decision-making takes place is restricted due to the notion of bounded rationality (Simon 1972; 1979; 1990).

As the main purpose of this section is to review the literature on decision-making, it is imperative that a comprehensive study of the work done by Simon (1990) on decision-making is thoroughly examined, since it forms the basis from which academics were able to build on. Additionally, it is proposed that Simon’s work has offered an important tool for studying decision-making based on:

- i) his notion of bounded rationality,
- ii) the cognitive processes of sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving in collectively evaluating their impact on decision-making.

2.2.4 The Economic Man - An Ideal Model

Barnard and Simon (1947) published their book, ‘Administrative Behaviour’ which determined the way organisational decision-making processes could be understood better. In it, differences between an ideal and a realistic decision-making model were discussed. Simon (1972) explained that there was a wealth of information written about the actual workings of administrative decision-making but much less so pertaining to the processes that precede decision-making. As such, a study of Administrative Theory commenced, with the idea of ‘rationality’ “as a reasonable, logical or intelligent process involving thought and action” (Zafirovski 2008, p. 793).

Simon clarifies that in theory, the ‘economic man’ (Simon 1997) enables individuals to select the best alternative choices amongst those that were available, leading to an

optimal achievement of goals. The 'economic man' acts in a rational manner and strives to attain maximum satisfaction and utility (goods and services) by the use of perfect knowledge. Informed decisions would utilise scientifically based data, thus reducing the chance of error and the inclusion of emotions, which would otherwise result in a bad decision being made. A methodical decision-making process would leave decision-makers well equipped to deal with complex problems. However, on occasion, decision-makers would face problems caused by insufficient information, which would then force them to seek and evaluate alternatives to reach a decision. Simon argued that human rationality was indeed limited because these limits were not only unstable but also dependent on the organisational environment where decision-making occurred.

Simon stressed that by utilising his model, individuals and organisations could differentiate between various alternatives available at any one given time, designing an environment which allowed individuals to make decisions as rationally as possible based on the organisation's goals. When a rational decision is made with the purpose of achieving a goal, an individual realises and decides that something must be done for a goal to materialise. Put simply, individuals are deciding on a means to achieve an end. Means and ends are visualised as being connected via a hierarchical chain.

Alternative suitable choices are considered, with the hope of achieving a desired end. However, these ends on their own are purely influential to more final objectives, thus leading us to a hierarchy of ends. Rationality then plays a part in the creation of a hierarchy of means-ends chains. Various limitations are present when we analyse rational behaviour using this kind of means-end hierarchy, including concealing the comparative component in decision-making, not successfully separating the value elements (goals, morals and law constraints) from the factual elements (knowledge, information and environment of organisation) of decision-making and a lack of the consideration of the time variable present in purposive behaviour (Simon 2013).

2.2.5 The Administrative Man - A realistic model

Whilst the 'economic man' depicts the rationality of an ideal model, the administrative man represents a more realistic situation (Simon 2013). This is because of the reasoning that individuals face limitations due to knowledge, personal values, habits and different senses of purpose to name a few. The limited decision-making behaviour of an individual is present because: -

- i) of incomplete knowledge and an absence of choice consequences which would follow from each choice made and thereby interfere with rationality.
- ii) these future questions about choice can only be analysed in terms of imagination which carries an element of inexperience with attaching value to these choices.
- iii) all possible alternatives must be evaluated if individuals were to make a rational choice - this is unlikely because only a few choices / alternatives are present in the minds of individuals.

Therefore, the Administrative Man differs from the Economic Man in two ways: -

- i) the Economic Man aims to take full advantage of the best alternative choices available whilst the Administrative Man makes a decision not based on maximisation but on 'bounded rationality'. Bounded rationality by Simon (1990) asserts the idea that when decisions are made by individuals, rationality is limited by how the problem is managed, cognitive limitations and time constraints. Therefore, decision-makers seek to find a satisfactory solution to their problems and settle for 'satisficing' rather than an optimal decision, which formulated one of the first models of heuristics to be articulated. Heuristics are described as mental processes that individuals utilise to make decisions, by drawing from inferences which allow them to fill

in information gaps and to come up with a solution for the problem (Guercini and Milanese 2020). “Heuristics are simplified rules that decision-makers use to look for the solution to a problem, disregarding some information or simplifying the process of elaboration” (Barberà-Mariné et al. 2019, p. 2891). The challenges / biases associated with heuristics will be addressed later in this section.

- ii) the Economic Man views the world as it is, whereas the Administrative Man realises that his world views are simplified, enabling decision-making to be based on few choices to achieve goals.

This means that rational decision-making is a hypothetical state, as all individuals have incomplete information. Simon (1990) argues that there are two ways in which an individual's decision-making is influenced in an organisational setting. They are through internal and external mechanisms. Internal mechanisms are predominantly concerned with the internal psychological factors of an individual. External mechanisms include inducements initiated through the organisation which exert some sort of influence on individual behaviour. Organisational influence is established in the five ways outlined below: -

- i) organisational identity - an individual links his decision-making based on their identification to / with a certain group and thereby evaluating the consequences of applying their decision when weighing the alternative choices available. Simply put, the organisation that we work for is sometimes responsible for influencing our ideas which consequently effect our decision-making.
- ii) training - by training individuals, organisations are consciously preparing them to take on the responsibility of decision-making without the need for constant supervision.

- iii) efficiency criterion - the ability to make a decision when considering two alternative choices, although not varying in costs but based on reaching higher organisational attainment objectives. Additionally, when faced with two alternatives which provide an equal level of attainment, the choice selected would be the one with a reduced cost.
- iv) communication - this focuses on formal communication in the form of reports, meetings etc. as well as informal communication centered around the social relationships of its members.
- v) authority - these are actions by authoritative figures in superior positions guided towards their subordinates. Carefully transmitted decisions such as these ensure that they are implicitly accepted by subordinates.

The literature on bounded rationality has also received some criticism, indicating that the agents for bounded rationality are described as misperceiving information (Hallen and Pahnke 2016), not accurately assessing the value of the information (Yang et al. 2011), having to deal with bounded rationality (Peteraf and Shanley 1997) or being disadvantaged by less than perfect information as well as being limited in gathering and processing new knowledge (Cohen et al. 2019). The work by Simon (1972) on bounded rationality was viewed by management scholars as “the glass half empty” which contrasted Simon’s thoughts on bounded rationality which he viewed as “the glass half full” (Bendor 2010, p. 1). This meant that other scholars saw the work by Simon (1972) as being cognitively limited, resulting in mistakes for decision-makers and thus rendering it as inferior when compared to the classical view of rationality (Lejarraga and Pindard-Lejarraga 2020). By this they meant that the previous classical theory of rationality that assumed that all available resources were utilised, was shifted to emphasise the fact that individuals did not optimise all their resources and instead settled for ‘satisficing’ (Simon 1990) which led to reasonably acceptable decisions.

Gigerenzer and Todd (1999) and Chater et al. (2003) argue that the reason the classical view of rationality should be rejected is due to 'framing', which ignores the role of the environment and the presence of cognitive limitations. "Framing is the construction of an agenda with a restricted number of thematic attributes in order to create a coherent picture of a particular object" (McCombs and Ghanem 2001, p. 70). For example, 'framing' of a solution inappropriately by either broadening a solution or making it too narrow can have a negative effect on decision-making processes and this may be experienced during the information gathering stage of the decision-making process (Hodgkinson et al. 2002; Wright and Goodwin 2002; Zeni et al. 2016). Ericson (2010) stated that the framing process reflects reality as an ongoing process, as decision-makers become sensemakers, who are now involved in framing the interpretation, extracting their understanding of the situation and then proceeding with an appropriate action.

Having reviewed Simon's (1990) model of bounded rationality, the focus is now directed to the cognitive biases of managers / middle managers in organisational decision-making processes.

2.2.6 Cognitive biases in decision-making

Tversky and Kahneman (1981) assert that information is a vital factor in decision-making processes and the success of organisational leaders stems from the ability to make logical and rational decisions. Gonzalez (2017, p. 251) states that "heuristics are the 'shortcuts' that humans use to reduce task complexity in judgment and choice, and biases are the resulting gaps between normative behaviour and the heuristically determined behaviour". Heuristics enable managers to make relatively swift and intuitive decisions especially when 'time is of the essence' and a significantly quality decision may be obtained (Jordão et al. 2020). Managers who exercise biased thinking even with the availability of all important information, may end up with decisions that are not only irrational but also may see their credibility suffer as a consequence (Frank 2010).

Cognitive biases associated with decision-making processes in organisations are particularly important to this study, because they may impact the behaviour of organisational members, who may be at the receiving end of these decisions, which could inadvertently affect sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving processes. A number of key heuristics applicable to this study which may affect managerial decision-making processes will be addressed in this section. Cognitive biases are mostly intuitive, helping managers to make swift decisions when called upon, but could also potentially lead to significant errors in judgement (Carter et al. 2007; Choo 2008; Jordão et al. 2020).

As will be discussed below in detail, leaders absorb information through the sensemaking processes and form their own perspectives on the situation or problem encountered (Weick 1995). This has an influence on the 'mental model' created, which explains the individual's thought process, representing the various relationships that they encounter, as well as their intuitive perceptions on their actions and consequences. If the information received is biased, a defective 'mental model' may be created, which has the potential to detract the manager from finding a suitable solution to the problem (Zeni et al. 2016). Pertaining to behavioural strategy, Sibony et al. (2017), argue that an individual's cognitive biases are difficult to change and suggest that organisations must specially design behavioural strategies that allow individuals to use these biases to their advantage.

However, cognitive biases may arise when there are distortions in the collection or interpretation of information, leading to situations where the conclusions reached may be irrational or erroneous (Haselton et al. 2005; Zeni et al. 2016). Porac and Tschang (2013) argued that limited cognitive capabilities as well as the use of heuristics were responsible for the mistakes in decision-making and the perception that managers were 'small brained'. The idea of heuristics was also opposed by Dean Jr and Sharfman (1993) who stressed that heuristics were inferior strategies and therefore managers should not rely on them when making decisions.

In an effort to improve managers' decision-making in organisations, Jordão et al. (2020, p. 654) conducted a study of three biases including "overconfidence, optimism and the anchoring effect" on managers from a port sector in Portugal. The issue of overconfidence in decision-making processes asserts that being an overconfident manager is one of the most damaging biases as its effects are damaging to organisations (Griffin and Varey 1996; Stanovich 2013). De Bondt and Thaler (1995) argue that individuals who are overconfident in their decision-making processes, choose to depend on how problems are framed rather than their main objectives.

It is emphasised that a manager's decision-making skills are unconsciously harmed by overconfidence and this has been seen in issues related to the stock market, mergers and acquisitions as well as entrepreneurial initiatives (Malmendier and Tate 2005; Libby and Rennekamp 2012; Vasile et al. 2012; Nofsinger 2017). Although it has been argued that overconfidence may be beneficial to managers because it could improve an individual's self-esteem, increase commitment to work and to persevere in difficult circumstances, (Bi et al. 2016) this has been disputed by a lack of evidence to support its claims (Jordão et al. 2020). Further, it has been argued that entrepreneurs stand to benefit from cognitive biases because they are able to develop 'mindsets' which put them in a better position to exploit opportunities (Mitchell et al. 2007; Chaston and Sadler-Smith 2012).

With regards to optimism, Baker and Wurgler (2004), Hackbarth (2008) and Jordão et al. (2020) assert that an individual may have the tendency to have an unrealistic optimistic future outlook which may have damaging effects on their decision-making skills. Additionally, control or power tend to falsely build optimism, which may influence individuals to over commit to projects, without the ability to achieve the goals set. In the financial world, the issue of optimism may be responsible for the over estimation of budgets, debt accumulation etc. which prevent individuals from anticipating any foreseen difficulties which may arise and inadvertently cause targets, projections or goals to fail (Heaton 2002; Hackbarth 2008; Siemiatycki 2010; Malmendier et al. 2011).

The issue of an 'anchoring effect' was discussed by Tversky and Kahneman (1974) in which they stated that when quantitative estimates are made, individuals have an arbitrary initial starting point which they modify till a solution is reached. Whilst arguing that these biases are normally effective and economical, they also have the tendency to create decision-making errors. The 'anchor' may be situated in the problem itself or developed by the decision-maker themselves, thereby creating a situation where the search for information is met with preferences associated with the anchor (Ericson 2010). This leads to an erroneous estimate (Epley and Gilovich 2006). Other areas involving the anchoring effect, include business sectors in financial investment decision-making (Serfas 2011), forecasting of business performance (Koellinger et al. 2007) as well as business decisions on pricing (Mussweiler et al. 2000).

Zeni et al. (2016) conducted a study evaluating cognitive biases in organisations which examined several cognitive biases which may also be applicable to this study. Their study identified the sensemaking stages where the cognitive biases ensued. This is similar to the decision-making process that will be utilised for the purpose of this research. During the decision identification stage of the decision-making process, the cognitive bias of 'false consensus' allows individuals to presume that others are in agreement with their thoughts and ideas of how to act in various situations (Krueger and Zeiger 1993; Monin and Norton 2003; Zeni et al. 2016). 'Moral insensitivity' which included being oblivious to the effect of an individual's actions on others in the organisation also transpired during the decision identification stage of the decision-making process (Wittmer 2000; Detert et al. 2008; Zeni et al. 2016).

The decision-making strategies of leaders and their impact on organisations, has been frequently debated relating to issues on upper echelon perspectives (Hambrick 2007) or the behaviour of top executives (Barnard 1968; Mintzberg 1973; Finkelstein and Hambrick 1996; Samimi et al. 2020). Additionally, the issue of conflicting preferences must be addressed by managers who encounter complex organisational situations (March 1962; Bendor and Hammond 1992; Lau 2003). Decision-makers build a power

base so that they may exert their ideas, preferences and interests by using experts, withdrawing / withholding of information, forming an alliance etc. (Eisenhardt and Bourgeois III 1988; Pettigrew 1992; Ericson 2010). This may result in the manager / decision-maker controlling all inputs (including the collection and processing of all information) before the selection of a choice even begins (Lundbäck and Hörte 2005).

There are instances when individuals in organisations engage in actions which aim to persuade others by intensifying their power, often referred to as 'politics', consciously influencing the decision-making process (Fast and Schroeder 2020). It is argued that subordinates also possess considerable power as they are entrusted with the responsibility of implementing decisions from management (Barnard 1968). Cyert and March (1963) noted a distinctive difference in understanding organisational behaviour between behavioural and economic approaches. They proposed an alternative set of behavioural concepts because they argued that organisations were laden with conflicting goals. These goal inconsistencies are often barely visible to organisational members due to local rationality and progressive goal attention (Kutscher 1985; Courpasson 2016). Pertaining to the decision-making processes themselves, Cyert and March (1963), view it as simplistic and responsive (Schoemaker 1993).

Similarly, when it came to government decision-makers, successive limited comparative methods are utilised (Lindblom 1959). Moreover, problems or specific crisis situations trigger an additional search for solutions. A transformative view of organisations was developed by Nelson and Winter (1973) which utilised bounded rationality conventions in their model. These conventions stipulated that organisations reacted with passivity to changes in the environment, new routines were only developed at a slow pace using incremental searches and new situations were dealt with limited routines. A final cognitive bias that is applicable to this research is 'self-justification' whereby negative feedback is rejected in situations that show behaviour that is in contrast with an individual's beliefs and occurred during the decision implementation stage of the decision-making process (Sharmaa et al. 2006; Levy and Hershey 2008; Sivanathan et al. 2008; Wolff and Moser 2008; Zeni et al. 2016).

2.2.7 Summary

Decision-making in organisations is a vital process that influences all individuals / groups. It is a problem-solving activity which places importance on decision-makers because good decisions lead to successful organisational results. Leaders are predominantly entrusted with the responsibility of carrying out decision-making using the processes of sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving. The rational decision-making model was used for this study because of its simplicity and flexibility of being able to revert back to earlier stages if needed. The issue of cognitive biases in decision-making was explored because individuals often seek satisfactory solutions to problems by drawing from inferences and filling in the gaps. Information is absorbed by individuals through sensemaking, and then utilising their own perspectives, deal with the problem encountered. The point in having reviewed all the above material is to build and establish the link between sensemaking and decision-making in organisations. This will be examined further in the section below on sensemaking.

2.3 Sensemaking

Sensemaking is one of the primary theoretical perspectives used to understand social cognition in organisational theory and the social construction of behaviour in organisations (Glynn and Watkiss 2020). The process of sensemaking has taken on several areas of focus, initially highlighting the cognitive processes, followed by discursive approaches to comprehend how individuals unite to coordinate their actions. Individuals rely on repetitive ways to justify and form their decision-making processes by using sensemaking as a principal facilitator of the decision-making process (March 1997). Decision-making rationality is created from various identities, rules, expectations and preferences which are shaped during the decision-making process. Decision-making processes create a decision outcome and this outcome is rationalised by rearticulating a story or a set of events through sensemaking (Weick 1995). Organisational studies have shifted focus from enquiring how decision-making was shaped in organisations to learning about how meaning energises organising through sensemaking (Weick 1993).

Sensemaking research is frequently presented as an interdisciplinary research program because it draws together insights from the field of philosophy, cognitive science as well as sociology. This section begins with the various explanations offered by scholars associated with the term 'sensemaking' whilst shining a spotlight on the work of Karl Weick, his 'seven properties of sensemaking' as well as reviewing the mechanics of sensemaking (Weick 1995). Additionally, the existing gaps in sensemaking are explored which outline several issues brought to light by researchers in the field of organisational studies. The section concludes with an analysis of individual and collective decision-making processes pertaining to organisational decision-making.

2.3.1 The nature of sensemaking - A historical perspective

The term 'sensemaking' was introduced by Garfinkel (1967) in ethnomethodology where he looked at the practice of actors who interacted and interpreted their accounts for their reality experiences. Sensemaking research continued to explore the cognitive aspects of sensemaking and in particular looking at how violated expectations would trigger the sensemaking process (Louis 1980), how environmental stimuli were taken notice of, understood and integrated (Kiesler and Sproull 1982) as well as why some cues were able to receive more consideration than others (Daft and Weick 1984; Starbuck and Milliken 1988). A cognitive approach towards organisational behaviour and strategic management was further advocated by Walsh (1995). Language and the role it played in the building block of sensemaking became a subject of interest to be studied (Boyce 1995). Culture was another important link to sensemaking that was important to organisational outcomes (Drazin et al. 1999), social influence (Ibarra and Andrews 1993) and strategic change (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Thomas et al. 1993; Gioia and Thomas 1996; Barr 1998).

There was renewed awareness in the social process of sensemaking (Maitlis 2005) which included studies on the relationship between language and sensemaking (O'Leary and Chia 2007; Cornelissen 2012) and discursive practices (Balogun 2003; Balogun and Johnson 2004; Rouleau 2005; Rouleau and Balogun 2011). There has been a continuing interest in the diverse settings on sensemaking (Anand and Peterson 2000; Lüscher and Lewis 2008; Colville et al. 2013), to explore the various levels of analysis (Weber and Glynn 2006) and the socio material nature i.e. an integration of theories combining technology, work & organisation of sensemaking which was formerly treated as discursive and cognitive (Whiteman and Cooper 2011; Cunliffe and Coupland 2012; Stigliani and Ravasi 2012).

2.3.2 Making sense of sensemaking

The literature on sensemaking is vast and therefore a conscious effort was made to locate and contextualise the work of authors whose contribution specifically relates to this research. The term sensemaking used in the literature describes efforts of individuals or groups to bring order and meaning to their understanding of novel, muddled or unanticipated events (Weick 1995; Introna 2019). Cues are extracted from the environment and interpreted which are then used as a basis for creating a plausible account, creating order and making sense of the occurrence. Sensemaking does not just stop at interpretation but extends to roles that individuals play in the construction of situations from which they try to understand (Weick 1995; Brown 2000; Weick et al. 2005; Sutcliffe 2013; Maitlis and Christianson 2014; Brown et al. 2015; Sandberg and Tsoukas 2015; Schildt et al. 2020).

Sensemaking is needed when our perception of the world becomes confused or distorted in some way, primarily with rapidly changing environments which leave us unprepared and ill equipped to face adaptive situations rather than mere technical difficulties (Heifetz et al. 2009). It is at times such as these that phenomena “have to be forcibly carved out of the undifferentiated flux of raw experience and conceptually fixed and labelled so that they can become the common currency for communication

exchanges” (Chia 2000, p. 513). Therefore, sensemaking is about turning meaning into an action or a new reality, which would in turn create new meaning (Weick et al. 2005). In the scope of this study, the focus is on sensemaking in an organisational context, as experienced by managers and organisational members in relation to decision-making.

Managers in organisations are often entrusted with the role of making sense of situations (sensemaking) and passing on the sense (sensegiving) to organisational members who receive this information (sensereceiving). Effects are also identified at the individual level, as sensemaking is regarded as the process by which people give meaning to their experiences. Weick (1993) proposes that sensemaking is a key mechanism in shaping each of our unique world view on a continuous basis. “The basic idea of sensemaking is that reality is an ongoing accomplishment that emerges from efforts to create order and make retrospective sense of what occurs” (Weick 1993, p. 635).

Weick’s comments align with the notion that sensemaking is a process of social construction (Berger and Luckmann 1991) in which individuals attempt to interpret and explain sets of cues from their environments (Maitlis 2005). One of the main concerns of sensemaking is the way in which individuals interpret the social world with sensemaking and interpretation, being treated equally. Weick (1995) treats different interpretations separately and argues that sensemaking is far broader than interpretation because cues are extracted and singled out for interpretation in the first instance. By selectively perceiving the world, sensemaking establishes how individuals interpret their circumstances. To inform this study, this matter is explored further.

The notion of the ‘self-fulfilling prophecy’ a sociopsychological phenomenon was introduced by Merton (1948) and refers to a prediction or expectation becoming true, simply by virtue of the individual’s belief that by aligning behaviour to fulfil this belief, it will become true. This implies that an individual’s beliefs influence their actions and

that previous knowledge on an issue create the consequences affecting people or events. Self-fulfilling prophecies capture these processes, further reiterating that 'seeing is believing' (Weick 1995). "It serves as a prototype because it is a mechanism of self-validation" (Weick 2020, p. 1423). An example of sensemaking and decision-making with self-fulfilling prophecy effects was discussed in Wilkinson (2009), whereby patients in an intensive care unit (ICU) were projected to have unfavourable outcomes. "Predictions can effect the outcome, and in the case of uncertainty, the SPF (self-fulfilling prophecy) is a necessary consequence of decision-making" (Wilkinson 2009, p. 409). The ICU case is an example of a self-fulfilling prophecy whereby the prediction independently increases the chances of the outcome actually happening.

2.3.3 Karl Weick's approach to sensemaking

It is important for this study to understand the work of Karl Weick as it provides the foundation for sensemaking and forms the basis of how individuals construct meaning of ongoing events (Weick et al. 2005). In his book 'Sensemaking in Organisations', Weick (1995) highlights how the sensemaking process shapes organisational behaviour and structure. The process of sensemaking takes shape as people try to make sense of the situations that they find themselves in. Weick illustrates his explanations by means of incorporating a series of stories to further enhance understanding of the sensemaking process. Sensemaking is partially under the control of 'expectations' - when expectation is not met, the activity is interrupted and knowing how to cope with these interruptions will enhance our understanding of sensemaking (Weick 1990; 1993). Weick (1995) and his work on sensemaking provided insights into the factors causing uncertainty and ambiguity that arose in organisations.

In a commemorative paper, Weick (2020) reflects on the 50th Anniversary of his book on The Social Psychology of Organising whilst calling out to three additional studies that possess the intent and substance to provide models that enable progress in the field. He stipulates that the authors, Glynn and Watkiss (2020) "change the connection between sensemaking and organisation from sensemaking IN organisation to

sensemaking AS organisation” (Weick 2020, p. 1426). The shift in emphasis, would suggest that over time, the core of organising has become rooted in sensemaking, providing ample opportunity for future research (Tsoukas et al. 2020). Glynn and Watkiss (2020) state that although Weick’s past work was reflected in the work that he currently did, there were two breakthroughs that were particularly important.

Firstly, with regards to the purpose of organising, Tsoukas et al. (2020) reiterate that the attainment of a future goal is not merely the purpose of organising but rather to serve as a justification for past actions. Secondly, the deliberate avoidance in utilising rational models was to stress the importance of sensemaking over decision-making. The analysis by Glynn and Watkiss (2020) further showed that Weick had initially highlighted the role of action which was taken over by the importance of meaning. Schildt et al. (2020) argue that the power effects on the sensemaking processes has not been adequately addressed as acknowledged in reviews by Maitlis and Christianson (2014) and Brown et al. (2015), where the focus has been on the result of sensemaking rather than the process itself, disregarding the interests of individuals (Sandberg and Tsoukas 2015). If power sensitive aspects were to be incorporated into the theoretical models detailing sensemaking processes, these would further provide valuable insights, primarily because the novel events that trigger sensemaking, could also potentially be a threat to power associations. Further, due to the fact that sensemaking captures shared meaning making in organisations and theoretical accounts of power stress the importance of shared meaning making, sensemaking could provide a comprehensive understanding on how power effects operate (Maitlis 2005; Clegg et al. 2006; Schildt et al. 2020).

The sensemaking perspective has shifted its focus from how decisions help to shape organisations to the importance of meaning in driving organisations (Weick 1993). By utilising the process of sensemaking to comprehend things that have occurred more meaningful, individuals are able to evaluate and make a choice amongst different alternatives available. Despite the numerous differences of interpretation in sensemaking, there are seven recurring themes in the literature which interact and

intertwine, thus enabling individuals to seek interpretation of events as they unfold. The following sections are linked to decision-making because it is only through sensemaking that individuals are able to make sense of things that have happened to them (Currie and Brown 2003). By utilising the process of sensemaking to comprehend things that have occurred more meaningful, individuals are able to evaluate and make a choice amongst different alternatives available.

The implications of these seven properties utilised for my particular area of focus are outlined in the following sub-sections: -

2.3.4 The seven (7) properties of sensemaking

Identity

Identity is regarded as a significant theme in studies about management and organisations (Mallett 2016). This is due to the reason that “who one is and who one might become are particularly important in organisational settings” (Watson 2008, p. 161). Identity themes often address a multitude of topics including personal (self), social and organisational issues (Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003). In this study, issues of identity are connected to the influence it imparts onto engagement and decision-making processes. Sensemaking is an understanding of how we view ourselves and our relationship with the world. ‘Who am I’ at the individual level and ‘who are we’ at the organisational level are starting points for the sensemaker who places importance in establishing and maintaining identity (Gioia and Thomas 1996). Individuals are motivated to preserve the integrity of the organisation as they wish to perpetuate the positive image of the organisation and improve or replace any negative ones by taking appropriate action. Who we are (our identity) and how we know (through sensemaking) links both the two concepts (Thayer 1988). Sensemaking is established in the multiple identities of individuals or groups needing to belief that they will succeed in accomplishing goals and challenges. There is also a need for self-enhancement and self-consistency (Albert and Whetten 1985; Dutton and Dukerich 1991; Weick 1995).

Retrospect

Retrospective sensemaking is a comparative process which allows people to make sense from meaningful lived experiences (Weick 1995). This is probably the most distinguishing feature of Weick's sensemaking concept. He explains that sensemaking consists of comparing familiar events from our past to give meaning to our present. For example, in their study of organisational failure, Brown and Jones (1998) investigated an information failure system that occurred in a UK hospital. Different narratives offered during the time of crises may have contributed to the incidents at specific events or purposeful action taken by individuals at the hospital. The construction of events of the failure may have been deliberately simplified to produce an interpretation that seemed coherent whilst imparting blame on other alternative sources.

Although there may be occasions when there is a single cause that instigates failure, there are instances when failure is generated by a multitude of factors including impractical expectations, a shortfall in resources etc. "If the consequences of success are more generally shared, considerations of modesty and mutuality would seem likely to have a greater influence than where blame is being apportioned" (Brown and Jones 1998, p. 86). Magala (1997) argued that organisational events are construed by individuals through the shaping and omission of information that would enhance their self-esteem and feelings of being in control whilst consciously ignoring information that contradicted this. Bruner (1990) builds on this idea by stating that people account for events by reconstructing their own memories and finding logical reasons for their observations. Narratives such as these, called organisational stories, may be shared amongst other individuals in the organisation (Boje 1995).

Enactment

The term enactment is described by Weick (1988) to constitute an act where individuals set into action structures and events brought into existence by them. This involves two steps, preoccupations from experience as well as acting within these contexts of experience to reinforce these preconceptions. This means that certain stimuli will guide further action, confirming them as being important, resulting in the enacted environment. Enactment provides a direct link between environments and individual cognitive processes. Fiske and Goodwin (1994) argue that this shows the importance of schema, which guide both inference and perception, enacting the environment by conveying the importance and meaning of objects identified in the environment. Schemas are “knowledge structures that contain categories of information and relationships among them” (Bingham and Kahl 2013, p. 14). The new information received through these changes enable individuals to choose to either create new schemas or alter the existing ones, being dependent on discrepancies between the new environment requirements and the prevailing schemas (Maitlis et al. 2013).

Sensemaking is about making sense of the experience within the environment that individuals are a part of. This would mean that we act first and then justify why the action was taken in the first place. To this end, enactment rejects philosophical rationalism, which indicates that actions proceed rational planning (Westwood and Clegg 2003). By using narratives and dialogues, people enact the environment that they are in (Bruner 1991; Currie and Brown 2003). As people talk about their experiences, they understand what they think and this helps them to organise their knowledge and experiences, consequently being able to predict impending events (Isabella 1990; Weick 1995; Abolafia 2010).

An example used by Weick to explain 'enactment' portrays two cops driving in a squad car and a teenager giving them 'the finger' as they drove by (Weick 1995). Various options were available to them - they could choose to ignore, stop or return the gesture to the kid. By choosing the appropriate action to take, they had created their own environment when responding to the teenager. Weick explains that "the process of sensemaking is better understood by examining what is in people's heads and imposed by them on a stream of events than by trying to describe what is out there" (Weick 1977, p. 271).

Social

Sensemaking is influenced by the social setting in which meaning is built and plausible stories are retained, preserved or shared (Maitlis 2005). The social setting created during sensemaking might be thinking about other people's perspectives while reflecting individually, (Blumer 1986) or by interacting directly (Weick 1993). A breakdown in sensemaking is less likely to occur and result in more effective action with face to face communication (Weick 1993). Levine and Moreland (1999) suggest that the ability to make sense of things in organisations takes place through the process of conversing, exchanging ideas or reading communication from others.

Sensemaking is not a solitary process because what a person does internally, has bearing on others (Maitlis 2005). One-way communication and monologues cater to an audience and that audience changes when the monologue changes. In an organisational setting, rules and language will all have an influence on an individual's sensemaking actions whilst providing scripts for suitable conduct. However, when there is an absence of scripts or routines, individuals rely on their own thoughts on how to make sense.

Ongoing Accomplishments

“The basic idea of sensemaking is that reality is an ongoing accomplishment that emerges from efforts to create order and make retrospective sense of what occurs” (Weick 1993, p. 635). By this, Weick portrayed sensemaking as an ongoing flow of events caused by the continuous changing nature of the world, our contacts with it and our understanding of it, enabling individuals to simultaneously react and shape the environment that they are in. Managing an organisation is an ongoing flow of actions and words that highlight events such as launches of products, strategy planning exercises or meetings to discuss budgets (Nohria and Eccles 1992). When that flow is interrupted, emotional responses are induced which in turn influence sensemaking. As individuals immerse themselves into the environment, they perceive the consequences, learn about their own identities and gauge their accuracy of how they view the world (Thurlow and Mills 2009). This feedback process not only allows individuals to construe their identity from the way others behave towards them but also to try and influence this behaviour through sensegiving (Kraft et al. 2015).

Extracted cues

Cues are “simple, familiar structures that are seeds from which people develop a larger sense of what may be occurring” (Weick 1995, p. 50). Sensemaking is retrospective and thus allows rules, regulations and past experiences to dictate which cues will be extracted that enable individuals to make sense of situations. Smircich and Morgan (1982) recognised the importance of cues in organisations when they said that leadership lies in creating a reference point which enables the organisational direction to emerge. Due to the swiftness in which sensemaking occurs, cues become important as they map out the sensemaking process, tying elements in the process together, so as to outline a coherent passage of affairs through meaning making (Weick 1995).

Driven by plausibility

From a sensemaking perspective, human reasoning is driven by plausibility instead of accuracy (Swann 1984; Kruglanski 1989; Fiske 1992). “To deal with ambiguity, independent people search for meaning, settle for plausibility, and move on” (Weick et al. 2005, p. 419). Sensemaking is about redrafting an emerging story, adding data as it becomes available and making it more comprehensible as well as being able to endure any criticism, should it arise (Weick et al. 2005). Managers in organisations tend to settle for speed rather than accuracy because often, there are time constraints attached to organisational action. This stems from research carried out on environmental scanning, strategic planning (Duncan 1972) and strategic decision-making (Bukhszar Jr 1999). Studies on manager’s perceptions on accuracy have been rare (Sutcliffe 1994) and those done tend to indicate that their perceptions are highly erroneous (Mezias and Starbuck 2003).

In summary, Weick’s accomplishment within organisational theory was to develop a sensemaking framework which addressed cognition, perception, memory and action. He then set to construct these into his seven properties which he used to create order from sensations experienced daily. Using Weick’s perspective and reflecting on observations when looking at organisational workings, may result in useful and rich insights. The seven properties of sensemaking form a good fit for my analysis of sensemaking which examine their impact on organisational decision-making processes. These seven properties will be presented as part of an integrated framework for this study.

2.3.5 Triggers, shaping & concluding of sensemaking

Attention is now turned to the mechanics of the sensemaking process and articulating the micro cognitive functions portrayed by individuals (Louis 1980; Starbuck and Milliken 1988) as well as to social organisational settings (Weick 1995). A clear understanding of how the sensemaking process is triggered and the subsequent steps taken to bring it to a conclusion are important for this study. When organisational

members encounter ambiguities in their environment, they work to clarify the uncertainty by interpreting cues, creating a plausible account and trying to enact the environment (Brown 2000; Weick et al. 2005; Maitlis and Christianson 2014). Sensemaking impacts decision-making processes, a key organisational process vital for this study.

An introduction is made of the 'triggers', 'shaping' and 'concluding' of sensemaking, with a detailed explanation of how the mechanics and practices underpinning sensemaking are portrayed in the extant literature. Some of the ideas portrayed below will be discussed in greater detail in the next section on sensegiving.

Triggers to Sensemaking

Triggering of sensemaking is brought about when meaning for events are ambiguous and prior coherent representation cannot be integrated into the situation on hand. This may prove to be detrimental for the organisation because the sensemaker has failed to engage in sensemaking that would have otherwise led to organisational effectiveness. On occasion, sensemakers have attempted to make sense of an otherwise confusing situation which would produce costly consequences. It is argued that "sensemaking in organisations is triggered by ambiguous events, occurs through specific processes, generates specific outcomes and is influenced by several situational factors" (Sandberg and Tsoukas 2015, p. 1).

However, this opinion has been disputed by Maitlis and Christianson (2014) who argue that sensemaking is not necessarily triggered when events are unexpected, unless there is a great enough discrepancy between what a person expects and what one experiences forcing individuals to question what is transpiring and what the next course of action should be. The experience of unease felt is subjective to the amount of impact on individual, social or organisational identity (Corley and Gioia 2004; Pratt et al. 2006) as well as the impact on personal goals (Balogun and Johnson 2004; Maitlis et al. 2013). There are instances when despite disruptions to goals or identity,

sensemaking is still not activated, particularly if group norms advocate against it. There are situations where people try and explain away or accommodate conflicting events (Weick 1988; Dunbar and Garud 2009) because they are part of routines, systems and cultures that reduce concern on discrepant cues (Weick and Sutcliffe 2006).

i) Specific episodes

Specific episodes occur from the instant an ongoing organisational activity is interrupted until it is either restored or shut down (Weick 1979; 1995; Weick et al. 2005). This was first brought to light when organisations were portrayed as interpretive systems and where changes in the external environment triggered sensemaking (Daft and Weick 1984; Milliken 1990). Sandberg and Tsoukas (2015) argue that sensemaking is restricted to specific episodes that occur when an ongoing organisational activity is interrupted until successful restoration.

ii) Identity threat

Weick (1995) highlights the idea that sensemaking is triggered when identity threat is imminent. Individual identity has a profound effect on sensemaking - “what the interrupted situation means is defined by who I become while dealing with it or what and who I represent. I derive cues as to what the situation means from the self that feels most appropriate to deal with, and much less from what is going on out there” (Weick 1995, p. 24). This was further defined when it was stated that people construct their identity to meet human needs for self-enhancement, when under attack will trigger sensemaking so as to eliminate any threats and to restore identity (Earley and Erez 1993). An example put forward by Maitlis (2009), shows that sensemaking is triggered by an event which prevents people from doing a job which is the basis of their identity.

In an organisational capacity, sensemaking is triggered by organisational identity threat, whereby there is a distortion to or discrepancy between what the image of the organisational participants are and their identity. In Dutton and Dukerich (1991), research into the Port Authority revealed how the image of the organisation was damaged after it responded poorly to issues relating to homelessness. This in turn triggered sensemaking amongst its members who changed their portrayal of the organisation. Bang and Olufsen faced similar distress when their identity was threatened in the face of competition and prompted managers to engage in sensemaking to query “is this who we really are?” on numerous occasions - managers were forced to develop new accounts of their organisation’s identity (Ravasi and Schultz 2006, p. 446).

The research literature shows that when there is a substantial threat to identity, sensemaking is triggered at both the individual and organisational level. People work to understand the challenge, choosing to enact and respond to threats which are ambiguous by constructing new accounts for their organisations as well as for themselves. Further it is argued that members in organisations have sophisticated defence mechanisms that shield them from feeling the discomfort of such threats (Brown and Starkey 2000).

iii) Planned events / change

Sensemaking may also be triggered by planned events in some organisations. However, despite being carefully planned, expectations may be shattered, thus creating uncertainty, anxiety and confusion for its members. When a change is planned, it may deliberately target organisational meaning (culture) which triggers sensemaking for organisational members to bring about change to practices and structure. At other times, the planned change induces a structural transformation which triggers sensemaking, because it confuses existing perception of the organisation (Balogun and Johnson 2004).

When a new CEO or President arrives with a new vision that is different from the existing beliefs of the organisation (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Denis et al. 1996), it is argued that new leaders trigger the sensemaking process by undermining the previous direction undertaken by the organisation and instead emphasise the importance of adopting this new change. They may also highlight past drawbacks that the organisation has encountered and work to shape the way forward using particular cues that trigger sensemaking for their members (Humphreys and Brown 2002). Further, when there is discord between the organisation image and its identity, new leaders use these cues to push their ideas and objectives forward (Dutton and Dukerich 1991; Corley and Gioia 2004).

There are occasions when sensemaking is harder to initiate and thus difficult for leaders to introduce new ideas due to the strong organisational identity and collective practices embraced in these organisations (Nag et al. 2007). For example, this is further highlighted in a cancelled planned merger that had devastating effects on an organisation. In Mantere et al. (2012), the team leaders worked hard to discredit staff beliefs about the organisation that they intended to merge with. They created a sense of uncertainty and panic about the future whilst triggering sensemaking with regards to the benefits of the merger. Subsequently, the merger was cancelled and it was difficult to trigger sensemaking again to an alternative set of cues because it was argued that there was a memory of previous accounts which still held their beliefs.

For the purpose of addressing the question of “how do people make sense?” it can be asserted that people make sense when their expectations have been disrupted or they encounter a questionable event or threat. This forces them to rethink previously taken for granted roles, and question how they must act. When a crisis occurs, it often triggers powerful sensemaking prompts but sometimes, the culture of an organisation prevents sensemaking from being triggered in the first instance.

Shaping sensemaking

A sensemaking process begins when a novel event leads to a cognitive reaction, trying to gain a greater understanding of the situation. Once it is activated, sensemaking comes to life in the form of 'cues' and 'frames' (Weick 1995). Cues become a point of reference, which can include a wide range of items. Often only physical cues are focused on i.e. wind and heat (Gephart 1993; Weick 1993), readings from equipment, (Weick 1988) or spoken words or texts (Weick 1993; Weick et al. 2005). So it can be shown from this perspective, that cues are uncomplicated familiar structures which enable people to develop a bigger and clearer picture (Weick 1995). When reviewing literature on sensemaking processes, it is seen that the processes differ in various ways. In organisational safety, the interest was on how individuals redirect ongoing action rather than how systems maintained action (Barton and Sutcliffe 2009). Creativity unfolds when situations are complex, long drawn out and in large scale organisations, building on the sensemaking process whilst reframing the order of belief structures (Drazin et al. 1999).

For my research, the role of middle managers is important because they are on occasion left to initiate or start the decision-making process with their organisational members. In other studies, accounts are shaped by middle managers and related back to their leaders. Middle managers play an important role in organisations pertaining to strategic sensemaking because they are influential respondents to decisions from leaders (Dutton et al. 2001; Balogun 2003; Currie and Procter 2005; Mantere 2008; Yang et al. 2010; Raes et al. 2011; Rouleau and Balogun 2011; Sharma and Good 2013). An examination was made of the importance of middle managers in gaining top management influence and attention through 'issue selling' (Dutton and Ashford 1993; Dutton et al. 1997). In order to issue sell, managers try to attract the attention of senior management by using the right language and managing the discussion in order to influence the process that impacts organisational performance.

In a similar situation, middle managers were able to show how strategy could be 'shaped' through their participation with their bosses in 'strategic conversations', influencing how the issue was understood and enacted (Westley 1990). The vital role that middle managers are in, demands a need for good sensemaking skills, whereby they are able to use context and relationships to influence others through dialogue (Pye 1995; Maitlis 2005; Wooldridge et al. 2008). These studies show that although the position of managers in the organisational hierarchy enables them to have a wide influence on the interpretation of issues, others in the organisation, can also influence and shape the sensegiving process (Dutton and Jackson 1987). The discussion on middle managers and their importance to the sensemaking / sensegiving process in organisations will be addressed in the next section on sensegiving.

Concluding sensemaking

In the 'concluding' phase of sensemaking, the sensemaker produces a satisfying account of the situation encountered (Maitlis and Lawrence 2007; Hernes and Maitlis 2010). The sensemaking process is an iterative one where sensemakers continuously try on different accounts until a workable solution is reached (Weick 1993; 1995).

It must be emphasised that sensemaking never completely ends but merely reaches "temporary resting points" (Sonenshein 2007, p. 1029). Plausibility is the primary characteristic that supports the resting points of accounts and plausible stories "tap into an ongoing sense of current climate, are consistent with other data, facilitate ongoing projects, reduce equivocality, provide an aura of accuracy" (Weick et al. 2005, p. 415). Further, Weick (1995) suggests that the plausible account that ensues in a sensemaking process, resolves equivocality, providing answers that are personally gratifying and are easily explainable. Effective management will mean that managers need to thoroughly understand what makes an account 'plausible' (Rouleau and Balogun 2011).

Managers may also benefit from attending to the initial accounts that their members develop from unfolding situations, making sure to listen carefully to the accounts from different members, as different members possess different reactions. Karl Weick's seven properties of sensemaking appear to be a useful tool in explaining sensemaking processes that take place in organisations (Weick 1995). However, upon closer scrutiny, there appear to be some gaps in sensemaking on its own, that raise additional questions (Helms-Mills 2003; Mills et al. 2010). Carefully examining the gaps in the sensemaking literature, will give insights into how some of the gaps may be filled by this study on decision-making and sensemaking processes. These will be outlined in the next section.

2.3.6 Sensemaking in organisations

Sensemaking has become a prominent topic when organisations are studied because it is an influential factor which enables individuals to socially construct their 'realities' and subsequently have an impact on organisations (Weick 1995). When change of any kind takes place in an organisation i.e. through decision-making processes, it disrupts the otherwise familiar reality that organisational members take for granted, forcing them to engage in the surrounding environment to sensemake about the varying circumstances (Balogun and Johnson 2005). Sense is made by a process of negotiation and reconstruction of meaning which is interpreted from cues extracted from the environment, creating certainty and fuelling further action (Weick 1995; Lüscher and Lewis 2008; Maitlis and Christianson 2014). For the purpose of this thesis, it is beneficial to examine the literature on the intricacies of sensemaking, so as to understand how the commencement of sensemaking is triggered, the actions it generates and what it produces as a result.

Sensemaking and in particular an examination of how sense is made in organisations has been extensively researched and in recent times, been addressed by some authors namely Gioia and Mehra (1996), Weick (2001), Sonenshein (2007), Rudolph et al. (2009), Hernes and Maitlis (2010), Clark and Geppert (2011), Navis and Glynn (2011), Whiteman and Cooper (2011), Cornelissen (2012), Weick (2012), Monin et al. (2013), Sutcliffe (2013), Maitlis and Christianson (2014), Brown et al. (2015), Namvar et al. (2018), Sandberg and Tsoukas (2020) and Tsoukas et al. (2020). They identified sensemaking as a social process through which new meaning is ascribed to unexpected events through dialogue and reflection. Gioia and Thomas (1996) argued that sensemaking takes place in organisations when confusing events or issues are encountered by members, and that this social process appears to happen in an iterative manner over time.

Authors such as Weick (1995), Brown (2000), Maitlis (2005) and Schildt et al. (2020), find that at group level, when members of an organisation encounter uncertainty in the environment, an attempt is made to interpret cues from extractions, trying to make the account seem 'plausible' following a particular order, 'making sense' of the occurrence and continuing to enact the given environment. Gephart (1997); Watson and Bargiela-Chiappini (1998) and Brown and Jones (2000) observe that sensemaking involves a variety of communication modes, including spoken, written, formal, informal 'conversational and social practices' (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Gephart 1993; Gioia et al. 1994; Brown and Humphreys 2003; Maitlis 2005; Patriotta and Spedale 2009; Abolafia 2010; Hoyte et al. 2019; Glynn and Watkiss 2020).

The value of sensemaking as a focal concept to management researchers lies in the influence of sensemaking outcomes on a wide range of organisational phenomena (Gioia et al. 1994). Individuals engage in gossip and negotiations, exchange stories, rumours and past experiences, seek information, and take note of physical representations, or non-verbal signs and signals, like behaviours and actions, to infer

and give meaning (Poole et al. 1989; Isabella 1990; Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Gioia et al. 1994; Gioia and Thomas 1996; Labianca et al. 2000). Various, sensemaking has been reported to have an effect on organisational and managerial processes, which include decision-making (Gioia and Mehra 1996; Sonenshein 2010; Rerup and Feldman 2011). As a means of understanding such processes, sensemaking can have value as an analytical concept. This is because individuals rely on repetitious ways in which they use sensemaking as the main facilitator to validate their decision-making processes (March 1997).

2.3.7 Gaps in the sensemaking literature

1. Individual understanding of events

Sensemaking has been critiqued because of its assumptions that individuals in organisations can enact their own environments according to their own desires and personal feelings (Child 1997). Additionally, criticism has been directed towards research conducted by Smircich and Stubbart (1985) who claimed that strategic organisational environments were enacted by the social construction of organisational actors. Child (1997) argued that environments were impossible to create because they possessed 'properties' which organisational actors could not enact but on occasion could be negotiated with suitable communication between each other. Whittington (1988) opposed the representation that strategic choices were uncomplicated and simply based on voluntarist behaviour as well as deterministic factors which affected organisational actors.

Smircich and Stubbart (1985) imply that 'determinism' is linked to environmental constraint, and if removed, can securely accommodate strategic choice. In doing so, these external constraints have ignored the influence of internal mechanisms on the organisational actor themselves. Environmental properties would include "social institutions of capitalism" including firms and markets (Whittington 1988, p. 528). Sandberg and Tsoukas (2015) further argue that stating

environments are enacted is incorrect because it implies that the environment is wilfully fabricated when in fact the environment is revealed to actors in different ways. This continuous reshaping of the market economy by actors creates new institutions and social economic factors (Sarasvathy 2001; Chiles et al. 2004). The implications outlined relate to this study because the decision-making process relating to sensemaking processes is complex and involves internal as well as external environmental factors which affect the outcome.

2. *Greater context of sensemaking neglected*

The larger institutional context of sensemaking tends to be neglected in sensemaking literature (McPhee and Trethewey 2000), whereby it is argued that sensemaking overlooks the “role of larger social, historical or institutional contexts in explaining cognition” (Weber and Glynn 2006, p.1639). These insights significantly affect sensemaking and decision-making processes in organisations, in ways that will be examined / discussed in later chapters in this study. This oversight in sensemaking has been acknowledged by Weick et al. (2005).

Although there is ample literature pertaining to the internal order created from sensemaking efforts, there is very little knowledge on how these orders are made possible. O'Leary and Chia (2007, p.392) stress that “episteme, the underlying code of a culture or epoch that governs its language, its logic, its schemas of perception, its values and its techniques, etc., is what makes individual and collective meaning and sensemaking possible”. They argue that this is the way individuals acknowledge and extract cues from their everyday lives, turning these into coherent interpretations directed by a set of rules / elements which are vital for constructing culture in organisations. Culture in organisations, create assumptions of how individuals think, feel, behave and go about interpreting their environment as well as resolving issues (Schein 2010).

3. *Unclear perception of 'sense'*

A few authors have critiqued the concept of 'sense' in sensemaking for its lack of indeterminate meaning (Gioia and Mehra 1996; Magala 1997; Bakken and Hernes 2006; Munro and Huber 2012). The main criticism of sensemaking as detailed by Weick (1995) is that he omitted elaborating precisely what is meant by his use of the word 'sense'. His use of the word 'sense' is varied and attaches multiple meanings including sense made of disruptive ambiguous situations, as perception, as reflection and as understanding (Weick 1995).

Literature on sensemaking commonly contributes the making of sense to denote an outcome of an organisational actor's interpretation of a novel situation (Weick 1995). The vagueness of 'sense' in the sensemaking process is noticeable in the numerous studies undertaken with most studies "treating 'sense' as the outcome of actors' interpretation / cognising of an interrupted or new activity" (Sandberg and Tsoukas 2015, p. 20). Cornelissen et al. (2012) described sense as a 'cognitive process' in their study of two individuals who 'gave sense' to others by their speech and gestures in the process of creating new ventures.

4. *Conceptual boundaries*

Gioia and Mehra (1996, p. 1228) have criticised Weick because they believe that the perception of sensemaking is too limited due to it being described as a solely controlled process with things only making sense when they are "fitted into prior structures of understanding or schemas". They don't disagree with the statement of sensemaking taking place to make sense of ambiguous situations but rather see that organisational life consists of routine situations which are neither novel nor surprising. Occurrences such as these are no less meaningful because they involve instances where schemas need to be matched and adjusted, borne out of awareness of the situation at hand. Further, when discrepancies occur, triggering an adjustment of prior sensemaking modifies schemas. Additionally, schemas can

also be adjusted by an awareness of subtle cues over a time frame and therefore argue that “unconscious meaning making should have a place in the sensemaking formulation” (Gioia and Mehra 1996, p. 1229). This would remove the incorrect assumption that routine organisational life that doesn’t engage in conscious information processing, lacks sense.

Other researchers, such as Jeong and Brower (2008) have stated that although sensemaking involves processes in which actors solve problems from situational encounters, it creates numerous other problems. This leaves a void in the practical workings of the sensemaking process and argue that “the sensemaking ‘process’ itself is left relatively abstract” (Jeong and Brower 2008, p. 224). O’Connell (1998) has argued that an enhanced view of the mechanisms involved in sensemaking are not present, which may help to clarify the core processes produced in these activities. This line of argument has also been endorsed by Magala (1997), Decker (1998) and Mills and Weatherbee (2006) whereby they have expressed their view that the sensemaking process remains unclear.

It is also worth noting that despite Magala (1997) arguing that the interpretation and creation aspects of sensemaking are distinct, they often appear combined in sensemaking studies (Sandberg and Tsoukas 2015). Additionally, there is no clear indication on the enactment process in sensemaking, whether it is an involvement in all aspects of the enactment processes - (creation interpretation and the enactment process in its entirety) as sometimes embraced by researchers, or merely a particular part of the process. Sandberg and Tsoukas (2015) argue that Weick himself added to the confusion on enactment by stipulating that ‘sense’ and ‘action’ are separate groups that inter-act rather than viewing sense and action as being inevitably entwined. Christianson et al. (2009) imply that sensemaking is about two separate processes, action and interpretation that interact.

5. *'Prospective' sensemaking overlooked*

One of the central critiques of sensemaking presented by researchers, is that Weick fails to acknowledge prospective sensemaking and instead chooses to focus on retrospective sensemaking only. This view is shared amongst many researchers (Gioia et al. 1994; Gioia and Mehra 1996; Gioia et al. 2002; Engwall and Westling 2004; Gephart et al. 2010; Stigliani and Ravasi 2012; Kaplan and Orlikowski 2013). According to Weick's sensemaking theory, sensemaking processes rely on variation of themes of retrospection or past experiences (Weick 1995). Weick further argued that even future - oriented thoughts including plans were guided by retrospective sensemaking because when individuals think about their future, it is thought of in future perfect tense and not future tense. By this he meant that future events are made sense of by imagining that they have happened and then "infusing this elapsed experience with meaning" (Gioia and Mehra 1996, p. 1229). By doing so, Weick chooses to disregard the fact that on occasion, sense may be made prospectively.

Gioia and Mehra (1996) explain that retrospective sensemaking provides a degree of certainty to events unlike prospective sensemaking where there is ambiguity involving aspirations of what ones hopes the future might hold. They argue that Weick's understanding of retrospective sensemaking does provide an insightful view of past events but tends to repress the significance of prospective sensemaking whilst being perceived as a by-product of retrospective sensemaking. Therefore, their suggestion is for Weick to expand the sensemaking domain to include both fundamental elements, (retrospect and prospective) reiterating that the reason for both inclusions was so that retrospective sensemaking would enable making sense of past events, whilst prospective sensemaking if used, would enable individuals to envisage their aspirations going forward. Additionally, Stigliani and Ravasi (2012, p. 1251) argue that "thinking in future perfect tense, however, seems less appropriate to explain prospective cognitive work when expectations or aspirations about the future are

ambiguous or unclear, as often occurs in product development or strategy making". Stigliani and Ravasi (2012) explored situations where individuals / groups in ambiguous situations, were required to adopt prospective sensemaking.

An argument put forward by Gioia and Mehra (1996) and Gioia et al. (2002) reinforced the idea that organisational history was an important aspect to implementing any future organisational change. However, history is treated as if it could be adapted to take into account past events whilst being susceptible to reinterpretation, as organisations look for ways to adjust from how they view themselves presently to what they hope to create and achieve in terms of meaningful opportunities in the future. "It is a means of propelling ourselves forward - one that we conceptualise in the present but realise in the future" (Gioia and Mehra 1996, p. 1229).

Research into prospective sensemaking has been applied towards sensemaking theory with regards to entrepreneurship (Cornelissen and Clarke 2010), innovation (Ravasi and Turati 2005; Rafaeli et al. 2009) and strategy making (Gioia et al. 1994; Gioia and Thomas 1996) to comprehend the creation of novel understandings of the new environment and how individuals might relate to them. Examples of other prospective sensemaking activities include how individuals work towards shaping an industry's future, enhanced surgical procedures or the development of new products (Stigliani and Ravasi 2012; Rosness et al. 2016; Patvardhan and Ramachandran 2020).

The literature on sensemaking is vast and therefore it is important that we respond to the question of "what is sensemaking?" The general definition in this study is as follows:-

Sensemaking is a continuing process through which individuals and / or groups create meaning and understanding of unfolding events through reflection, interaction and observation.

For the context of this study, a specific and narrower definition will be adopted to make it a better fit for the purpose of my research which examines the influence of sensemaking on organisational decision-making. Therefore,

Sensemaking is the reflective process by which managers and organisational members continually update their interpretation of the organisational context in which they are immersed.

2.3.8 Summary

To summarise, the sensemaking literature thus far has provided a foundation of how the process of sensemaking enables managers and organisational leaders to have a better grasp of what is occurring in their environment and effectively make sense of it. In earlier sections, the seven properties of sensemaking as advocated by Weick (1995) were examined. The seven properties allowed us to comprehend how individuals made sense of their experiences through processes that were embedded in identity construction, ongoing, attentive to extracted cues, social in nature, retrospective and driven by plausibility rather than accuracy. However, organisational members make sense of their experiences with the inclusion of the environment surrounding them, and the seven properties on their own, did not provide an adequate explanation for the purpose of this study. The environment that surrounds organisational members includes power from individuals who are able to exert more influence on decision-making outcomes. Instances such as these are prominent amongst individuals in power positions who are simply able to impose their sensemaking onto other organisational members.

In the years that have elapsed since the publishing of Weick's 'Sensemaking in Organisations' (Weick 1995), various research studies have incorporated sensemaking into their analytical approach. The process of sensemaking makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of everyday occurrences, specifically highlighting social psychological organisational processes. Much of Weick's work

focuses on small scale individualised processes which enable people to make sense in different ways with perceptive consequences. However, in processes of organising, there is much more scope for added in-depth analysis of how individual and group sensemaking in organisations may be optimally aligned, so as to bestow reliability to decision-making processes in organisations.

This research will examine the sensemaking processes which influence decision-making whilst continually refining it to capture the nuances and intricacies that impose an internalised constraint on organisational sensemaking. There are unexplored connections and overlooked implications between the sensemaking perspective and decision-making that need to be further examined. The questions posited earlier, emphasise the need and relevance to create a comprehensive theoretical framework that incorporates these missing elements into the current study. This will be done by examining the impact of the other remaining two elements in the sensemaking processes, namely, sensegiving and sensereceiving in organisations. This study seeks to confront Weick's criticisms whilst offering recommendations in line with the theoretical framework, that ensues in later chapters.

2.4 Sensegiving

2.4.1 Introduction

Sensemaking has been used as a research platform to articulate micro cognitive functions (Starbuck and Milliken 1988; Klein et al. 2007) as well as social organisational processes (Weick 1995). Furthermore, organisational members use this social process to interact laterally and vertically to understand the world around them - laterally with their peers and vertically with their managers (Balogun 2006). In the previous section, sensemaking was reviewed, establishing its importance to meaning construction particularly vital for practitioners who are privy to and engaged in decision-making processes in organisations. The processes of sensemaking enable people to create meaning from events derived from the environment by applying their

knowledge, beliefs and experiences (Thomas et al. 1993; Weick et al. 2005). Organisational members engage in appropriate sensemaking activities, through experience or social means, fitting them into an interpretative scheme.

However, when there is discrepancy throughout the organisation, for example, if a new decision is being implemented, members in the organisation are no longer able to make sense of the situation because their existing interpretative schemes are no longer adequate. These decisions could take the form of adopting a new direction for the organisation, downsizing, a restructuring process or in some situations, a change in identity for the organisation (He and Baruch 2009). Smaller changes require minor adjustments to the organisational members' belief systems, (Bartunek and Moch 1987) but larger changes are likely to insert a considerable strain on the organisational members existing belief system and consequently fail to meet these new changes (Weick and Quinn 1999). These new changes may sometimes lead to feelings of confusion, uncertainty or even bewilderment (Maitlis and Sonenshein 2010). Resistance which occurs may not be a reflection of resistance from organisational members reluctant to take on new changes (Ford et al. 2008) but rather due to unsatisfactory sensemaking (Mantere et al. 2012).

Lord and Emrich (2000) were instrumental in initiating the 'cognitive revolution' research and as such have emphasised the vital role that managers play as 'sensegivers' (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991). In strategic change initiatives, organisational leaders are viewed as mainly involved in the task of sensegiving (Balogun et al. 2015) and success is achieved when the sensegiving from leaders is utilised by recipients to construct change interpretations in line with leaders' goals (Mantere et al. 2012; Spee and Jarzabkowski 2017). The effect derived from sensegiving action is dependent on the sensemaking of members who can either choose to accept or reject the influence from leaders' sensegiving, developing their own interpretations of change (Monin et al. 2013; Maitlis and Christianson 2014).

One way of getting organisational members 'on board' with the organisation's goals, visions and missions is to influence their members beliefs and perceptions, thus enabling them to proceed in new directions with enthusiasm rather than resistance (Conger and Kanungo 1987; Shamir et al. 1993; Gardner and Avolio 1998).

"Therefore, shaping how people understand themselves, the work they do, and others involved in that work is a critical managership task" (Foldy et al. 2008, p. 514). This invites managers with favoured preferences to articulate new schemes which they participate in consciously / unconsciously through sensemaking, whilst making sense of events on a daily basis. They then attempt to influence other participants' sensemaking through sensegiving (Gioia and Thomas 1996; Tillmann and Goddard 2008).

Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) conducted an influential study on sensegiving, which has enhanced our understanding of the topic whilst encouraging other studies to be conducted on sensegiving in a variety of contexts. Sensemaking will need to be examined alongside sensegiving in this study because sensemaking and sensegiving are interrelated. Rouleau (2005, p. 1415) argues that "sensemaking and sensegiving are two sides of the same coin" implying that sensemaking and sensegiving are two concepts so closely connected, that they both are merely two separate parts of the same thing. Additionally, the close link between sensemaking and sensegiving, has enabled it to be developed into literature on strategy (Hill and Levenhagen 1995; Gioia and Thomas 1996; Dunford and Jones 2000).

"Sensegiving is defined as the process of attempting to influence the sensemaking and meaning construction of others toward a preferred definition of organisational reality" (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991, p. 442).

The process of sensegiving is predominantly an interpretative process involving leaders and organisational members, who use narratives, language or other sensegiving strategies, to help shape the sensemaking of members so as to reach an intended definition of reality (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Bartunek et al. 1999; McNulty and Pettigrew 1999; Dunford and Jones 2000; Snell 2002; Corley and Gioia 2004; Maitlis 2005; Maitlis and Lawrence 2007). Further, Johnston (1994) and Bartunek et al. (1999) suggest four types of persuasive approaches to sensegiving, including analysing the sender's integrity by looking at behaviour and good sense, utilising the use of benefits and punishment, enabling the receiver to visualise a sensible and rational message and taking into consideration the receiver's principles and standards.

Sensegiving is different from sensemaking because sensemaking is the 'making of sense' whereas sensegiving is an attempt by an individual to 'give sense' or to influence other people's perceptions and interpretations of actions towards a selected definition of organisational reality (Kraft et al. 2015; Anderson and Galavan 2016). Sensegiving processes attempt to influence how individuals construct meaning and is important when there are sensemaking gaps and organisational ambiguity amongst organisational members (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Weick 1995; Maitlis and Lawrence 2007; Robert and Ola 2020).

As managers often have their own values and meaning system, these values transform into strategies that managers wish to impart on the organisation (Bourgeois 1984; Hambrick and Mason 1984). Managers need to 'make sense' of new decisions themselves and then decide how it will fit into a meaning system (Ranson et al. 1980; Bartunek 1984). It is also vital for managers to gain knowledge of the external and internal environment and evaluate if it will accommodate the decision that they wish to implement in the foreseeable future (Thomas and McDaniel Jr 1990). By doing this, managers are in a better position to be ahead of the competition and may also continually work to alter their strategies to best suit the business environment in which their organisations operate.

A revision of the original vision / decision is made, factoring in the environmental aspects through sensemaking (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991). Members of the organisation are made aware of this new decision, in an abstract form through the process of sensegiving (Whetten 1984). Organisation 'symbolism' is usually used to communicate this 'altered' value system of the organisation, which has the unnerving effect of upsetting the status quo of the organisation whilst forcing members to 'make sense' of this new prospective decision (Poole et al. 1989). The existing scheme is replaced by a new prospective decision which creates an opportunity for the manager to communicate their favoured new scheme to the organisational members who partake in a sensemaking process of their own (Ranson et al. 1980).

Sensemaking and sensegiving are both essential processes for successful sensemaking, (Balogun and Johnson 2005) with sensegiving by managers playing a specific role owing to their hierarchical position as managers in the organisation (Mantere et al. 2012). Hence, during periods of organisational uncertainty, sensegiving has been regarded as a "fundamental managership activity" (Maitlis 2005, p. 22). In theory it is possible to differentiate sensemaking from sensegiving at any one time but in practical terms, individuals engage in sensegiving processes constructed from their sensemaking processes (Maitlis 2005).

A review of the extant literature on sensegiving, revealed that sensegiving is more common amongst people in positions of power or managership roles (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Bartunek et al. 1999; Corley and Gioia 2004; Schildt et al. 2020) although it may also be utilised by other stakeholders including organisational members (Balogun 2003; Maitlis 2005; Klein and Eckhaus 2017). Manager sensegiving has a significant impact on shaping employee attitude and therefore has received significantly more research attention from various scholars in recent years, striving to uncover vital information pertaining to sensegiving in organisations (Maitlis and Lawrence 2007; Foldy et al. 2008; Humphreys et al. 2012; Sharma and Good 2013). However, preceding studies have mainly dealt with the sensegiving participants

themselves including the nature of the sensegiving strategies utilised, and as a consequence leaving considerable gaps and unanswered questions in the research undertaken thus far (Maitlis and Lawrence 2007). Specifically this study, focuses on seeking answers to the following questions below which are produced from an analysis of the literature: -

1. How and why does the influence through the sensegiving process, vary over time?
2. What is the effect of the influence on individuals and the organisation at different phases of the sensegiving process?

This section begins with a general overview of how sensemaking and sensegiving are interrelated with an explanation of how both processes are linked to decision-making in organisations, as this forms the crux of my thesis. The extant literature on sensegiving is examined with a focus on the material most applicable to this study. The reader is taken through the process of sensegiving, with its various interpretations by scholars along with the seminal work by Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991). Sensegiving and framing is then examined to learn how individuals use it to navigate through the sensegiving process. The influence of managers and middle managers are explored as they are most often responsible for imparting messages to organisational members. This section concludes with a discussion on the limitations of sensegiving.

2.4.2 Sensegiving process

In a study by Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991), a new university president facilitated change at the university he joined by utilising sensegiving strategies. The president announced these proposed change efforts by conducting meetings with staff to inform them of his vision, and additionally held meetings with top stakeholders to advise them of the upcoming changes through “hypothetical scenario presentations” (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991, p. 443). By doing this, the university president had communicated

the vision for the university, the reasons why they wished to proceed with these ideas and the results they wished to derive from the change. They had provided the stakeholders with a practical interpretation of their new reality and had influenced them to adopt these new changes as their own. They had now persuaded others in the organisation by effectively making sense on their behalf by providing them with a workable interpretation of the new changes. The stakeholders made their own interpretations based on the sensegiving efforts of the president and consequently, the president was able to progress with his new changes.

Sensegiving is intended to provide a plausible interpretation of reality and persuade people to accept them as if they were their own (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991). Their study of a new university president inferred that sensemaking and sensegiving are sequential processes that evolve through four stages. The four stages below help us comprehend how sensemaking and sensegiving work in sync to produce an output. These four stages are explained below and illustrated in Figure 2.2.

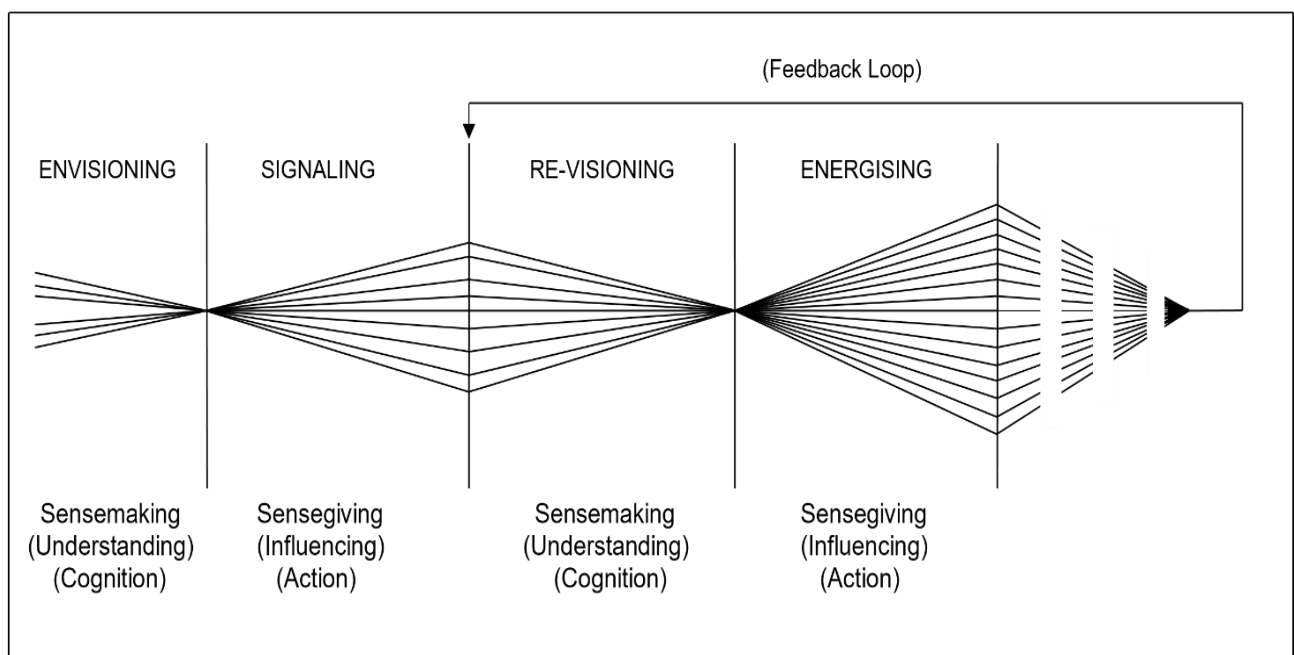


Figure 2. 2 - Strategic Change Process - (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991, p. 444)

In the envisioning stage, the president sets to take on the new role three months before formally assuming the new term by diligently working with administrators (sensemaking) to establish a new strategic vision for the university. The signalling stage commences a month after starting his job. The strategic change effort is announced while challenging established ways of thinking with new ideas into an otherwise stable environment at the university (Neumann 1995). The re-visioning stage instigates stakeholders to revise their initial understanding of the situation (sensemaking) as communicated to them by the new executive and this phase lasted for approximately six months. There is opposition from stakeholders as they try and envision what the proposed changes will entail. Finally, the energising stage enables stakeholders to work towards influencing (sensegiving) the rest of the organisation based on their revised understanding of the strategic planning venture.

The feedback loop shows that the different stakeholders are also involved in the sensegiving process which leads to some changes to the original vision. The feedback loop is connected to Weick (1993, p. 635) in which he states that “the basic idea of sensemaking is that reality is an ongoing accomplishment that emerges from efforts to create order and make retrospective sense of what occurs”. However, it was argued that a manager’s sensegiving may not emerge exactly the same as the receiver’s sensemaking, concluding that the process was a convoluted one “achieving acceptance of a vision is likely to be a complex process that involves multiple, perhaps conflicting, and evolving understandings” (Bartunek et al. 1999, p. 67).

Another study highlighted the importance of sensegiving conveyed by stakeholders who were not managers in the organisation. In Heller (1998), middle and lower level employees influenced decisions through the creation and circulation of issues in committees. Additionally, subordinates participated in “issue selling” to try and influence the organisational agenda by invoking their superiors to take notice of an issue of importance to them (Dutton et al. 2002, p. 355). It is worth emphasising that

sensegiving in organisations is not just ‘top-down’ but also ‘bottom-up’. Research on ‘bottom-up’ sensegiving approaches have become more prevalent in recent times as evidenced in Hope (2010), Kannan-Narasimhan and Lawrence (2011), Kezar (2013), Degn (2015), Kraft et al. (2015) and van der Steen (2017). It has also been shown that sensegiving forms an important activity for board members who are involved in shaping the strategies and the processes that evolve through testing ideas or highlighting issues (McNulty and Pettigrew 1999).

Maitlis and Lawrence (2007, p. 80) studied the triggers and enablers of sensegiving and concluded that for managers, “sensegiving was triggered by complex sensemaking environments - those that were ambiguous and unpredictable and that involved numerous stakeholders with divergent interests”. Conversely, stakeholders engaged in high levels of sensegiving when they perceived that their important issues were prevalent, and managers were not competent enough to address them appropriately. They also argued that sensegiving was enabled by a blend of facilitators, (procedures and practices) with discursive ability, allowing individuals to construct coherent accounts of the world. A study of an orchestra conducted over a two-year period, shows how varying the processes of sensemaking and sensegiving result in minimal, restricted, fragmented and guided sensemaking outcomes (Maitlis 2005). Distinct forms of organisational sensemaking emerge from managers and stakeholders engaged in sensegiving efforts with conclusions drawn that too much manager sensegiving and too little employee / stakeholder participation, gave rise to detrimental effects.

The concept of ‘framing’ is a useful concept in strategic change because it provides an understanding of how through sensegiving, a particular version of reality is framed by organisations and imparted to stakeholders, securing support and understanding. This concept is examined next.

2.4.3 Sensegiving and framing

Sensegiving is described as a 'framing process' by Fiss and Zajac (2006). A frame is an interpretative scheme (Bartunek 1984) or knowledge structure that individuals use to "represent their information worlds and thus facilitate information processing and decision-making" (Walsh 1995, p. 281). Individuals use framing to interpret events involving different audiences (Snow et al. 1986; Benford 1993; Benford and Snow 2000; Crosby and Bryson 2005). The effect of framing is to simplify the outside world "by selectively punctuating and encoding events in order to render them meaningful" (Fiss and Zajac 2006, p. 1174), keeping some views hidden while exposing others (Williams and Benford 2000). The use of framing in this manner may leave open the possibility that a conflict situation may arise because different individuals promote their own vision of what they perceive reality to be with different audiences (Benford 1993; Coles 1998).

The concept of framing may provide an explanation and a better understanding of sensegiving especially when a highly controversial change is in play. This would mean that when strategic change is framed, a particular version of reality is framed, securing the understanding of stakeholders and thereby promoting their new strategic position (Benford 1993). The concept of 'framing' was further explored by Foldy et al. (2008), involving a study of non-profit organisations. Here, a 'cognitive shift' proposal was made to further comprehend the process of sensegiving, which involved taking a closer look at how an organisational audience understood vital elements of the work that the organisation did. They viewed cognitive shifts as a desirable outcome for leadership who were involved in the task of sensegiving in organisations. Making a clear indication of 'framing the problem' and 'framing the solution' is often overlooked in the literature with the exception of Crosby and Bryson (2005), who infer that the 'solution' suggested, usually refers to organisational members being persuaded to follow in their manager's 'vision' for the organisation.

A better way of addressing issues in organisations, would be to motivate individuals into thinking of new ways to address the problems (Zaccaro et al. 2000; Reiter-Palmon and Illies 2004). Mumford et al. (2000) argue that managers are instrumental in managing the different 'problem solving' styles of their team members in their organisation and in doing so, can have a significant impact on the performance of the organisation. They stipulate further that effective managers will work to coordinate different styles of sensegiving whilst promoting creativity, which allows implementing new solutions for new problems discovered. This is particularly useful in organisations as problems and solutions are part and parcel of the daily work of organisations. Managers who are able to 'frame' new 'solutions' for their organisational problems are also in effect able to reframe the problems faced effectively (Gong et al. 2013).

2.4.4 Sensegiving and middle managers

The role of middle managers in this study will be examined because of the significant role that they play in organisations in general. There are various definitions associated with the term middle managers but for the purpose of this study, the term middle managers is defined as the interpretation adopted by Nonaka (1988, p.14) which regards middle managers as "functioning as mediators between the organisation's strategy and day-to-day activities". Middle managers have been recognised as important actors who actively seek to develop, promote and implement strategy or decisions to achieve organisational goals (Hogan et al. 2011; Burgess and Currie 2013; Elliott et al. 2020). Their unique perspective gives them an added advantage as they are in positions between top management and operational levels within the organisation which enable them to be recipients as well as drivers of decisions and strategy (Mantere 2008). Accordingly, middle managers act as representatives who act as a "starting point in actions to put forward", having a negative or positive effect on the results derived from the action taken (Arıcıoğlu et al. 2020, p. 344).

The organisation researched is a medium sized charity organisation and the role of middle managers is therefore different from the role that middle managers would play in a corporate, private sector setting. The structure in the charity organisation researched, has a CEO, a team of SMT members and team leaders. There is less of a hierarchical system or organisational structure that is more commonly found in large corporations. Managers in smaller organisations might find themselves working in close proximity with all other employees, which could either promote more or less employee satisfaction, depending on the degree of positive or negative interaction (Tsai et.al.,2007). Wapshott and Mallett (2016) state that the way smaller organisations operate, tends to promote informal working employment and practices, where tasks are distributed in an impromptu manner, rather than clearly defined, which enable employees to respond to challenges in a flexible manner. Working practices from larger organisations should not be applied to smaller organisations, as practices from smaller organisations are “the outcome of everyday negotiations” and must be clearly understood and implemented accordingly (Wapshott and Mallett 2016, p.143).

Research on the strategic sensemaking and sensegiving from middle managers who are regarded as influential respondents of decisions handed down by executives, has also been conducted by Westley (1990), Floyd and Wooldridge (1994), Dutton et al. (2001), Buchanan (2008), Yang et al. (2010), Rouleau and Balogun (2011) and Kieran et al. (2020). The important role that middle managers play, requires proficiency in dialogue through listening, talking and explaining (Pye 1995; Maitlis 2005; Wooldridge et al. 2008). Skills in utilising the right language and handling conversations pertaining to issue selling to senior management have been researched by Dutton et al. (2001), Sonenshein (2006), Mayer et al. (2019), Randel et al. (2019) and Buchanan and Badham (2020). If there are any barriers to the two-way conversation between middle managers and senior management, this may harm the reciprocal effects and process of sensemaking and sensegiving, necessary for successful decision implementation (McKiernan and Mackay 2017). Middle managers are dependent on their inclusion and recognition by senior management, to carry out the task of actively engaging with other employees within the organisation, to successfully champion decision-making processes (Mantere and Vaara 2008).

Rouleau and Balogun (2011, p. 954) emphasised that the focus of their study was not limited to 'issue selling' (Dutton et al. 2001) by middle managers, but the ability to influence all "multiple stakeholders, upwards, downwards and horizontally" within the organisation by adjusting their everyday routines to align with the new decision or initiative. 'Issue selling' as stated by Dutton et al. (2001) states that it is a process where middle managers seek to influence others in the organisation, especially senior management pertaining to factors that impact organisational performance. In a separate study on sensegiving and the role of middle managers, Smith et al. (2010) concluded that due to the ongoing daily sensegiving activities of middle managers, workers were able to relate and exert a positive sentiment to any changes that were to take place in the future, owed to feelings of being valued and appreciated.

2.4.5 Reflexive sensegiving

Reflexive sensegiving is a term where managers are able to use reflexivity in sensegiving to incorporate participants' sensemaking and is defined as "an open-ended and undetermined process where participants are encouraged to contribute" (Robert and Ola 2020, p. 1). Reflexive sensegiving is a relevant consideration for this study because it is in line with what one of the several issues examined, i.e. participant inclusion in sensemaking and sensegiving processes. There are gaps in the literature on sensegiving because there has been a greater emphasis in the literature on the use of power by managers to influence organisational members (Schildt et al. 2020) or where organisational members are persuaded by the most logical and coherent contexts which impact their sensemaking (Rouleau 2005; Rouleau and Balogun 2011). There is a lack of current literature that examines situations whereby organisational members and managers seek to integrate an individual's own perception of what they understand of the organisation and how it functions, and in doing so, reducing top-down sensegiving influences.

Previous literature which explored sensegiving in organisations, highlighted the role of leaders in determining the content as well as the power assumed by agents entrusted with the task of dispersing these sensegiving messages throughout the organisation (Robert and Ola 2020). The idea of using reflexive sensegiving through purposeful actions by providing challenging ideas to organisational members has been further explored by Sandberg and Targama (2007) and Schildt et al. (2020). Further, Strike and Rerup (2016) introduce a novel concept called ‘mediated’ sensemaking whereby the actions utilised by mediators enable adaptive sensemaking, when there is doubt on sense made. Kraft et al. (2018, p. 71) revealed that their study was able to provide a systematic framework whereby leaders could successfully respond to the needs of their employees in each of the different change phases with the use of “discursive and symbolic sensegiving strategies”.

2.4.6 Limitations of sensegiving

Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) identified four stages of the sensegiving process, namely, envisioning (sensemaking), signaling (sensegiving), revisioning (sensemaking) and energising (sensegiving). Kezar (2013) tested the Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) stages and argued that the sensemaking and sensegiving processes progressed in a smooth and linear fashion, mostly occurring simultaneously, while moving forward in the process, in contrast to what was presented by Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991). However, the sensemaking stages, enabled individuals to progress through envisioning and revisioning stages, as indicated in the Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) model. Further, when a ‘bottom up’ change was initiated, the model presented by Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) worked differently, whereby persuasion was first introduced and followed up with gaining support and removal of barriers. This was different from the signaling and energising phase, therefore cementing the notion that the Gioia model was only effective for ‘top-down’ changes in organisations.

Smerek (2011) argued that because there were numerous interpretations to the term sensegiving, this created a difficulty with the term. This is highlighted in a case by Neumann (1995), where a new college president's chosen interpretation and that of his faculty members were out of sync. Corvellec and Risberg (2007, p. 322) further argue that imparting an intended meaning to another party is risky because that party e.g. senior management, owns an interpretation that is then passed on to organisational members with a "sender-centric view of sense" which didn't make any sense. Sensemaking refers to interpretation of meaning, and in this instance, interpretation had been removed. They reiterated that sensegiving was an activity which involved the persuasion of others into a preferred direction - if focus were directed on the activity itself, then this took away from it being evaluated, if the audience had absorbed a specific meaning.

During the course of a change process, the connection between organisational members' sensemaking and managers' sensegiving remains unclear even though the connection between sensemaking and manager sensegiving is well documented (Shamir 2007). Oreg (2006) argued that resistance to change is greatly reduced if organisational members were given comprehensive information, (through sensegiving) prior to any change taking place. A case study on sensegiving of a nascent innovative project, revealed how innovators succeeded in gaining their manager's approval by using strategies that sought to reframe their organisation's perceptions such that the decision-makers were able to envision a good fit (Kannan-Narasimhan and Lawrence 2011). It was suggested in the literature, that often, choices were made to either preserve or reframe the organisation's schemata (Dougherty and Heller 1994). However, upon close examination, it was discovered that innovators were also able to demonstrate that their innovations provided a good fit for strategy and resources whilst still being distinct. Nevertheless, it has been acknowledged that changing the schemata of organisational decision-makers is no easy task (Fiske and Goodwin 1994). To counter this, innovators sometimes resort to preserving the schemata of decision-makers whilst reframing them incrementally, if necessary (Lounsbury and Glynn 2001).

2.4.7 Summary

For the purpose of this study, sensegiving seeks to frame and influence decision-making processes of others in the organisation of which they are a part of. In order to answer the research questions posed earlier, there is a need to evaluate the decision-making process through a sensemaking and sensegiving lens. The sensegiving literature presented has provided a perspective on how sensemaking and sensegiving work in conjunction with each other to create meaning. Sensegiving is the process of changing how individuals think, regardless of whether the intended meaning is grasped or not. The theoretical framework utilised for this study, may appear to treat sensemaking and sensegiving as two separate processes, but in reality, these two processes are interrelated.

Through sensegiving efforts, organisational members challenge managers to shape their vision and as time goes by, to undergo further adjustments or to abandon it altogether. After this stage, the managers may make final adjustments and push for the realisation of the decision. Therefore, the aim of decision-making processes in organisations, is for managers to develop a scheme, serving as an interpretative agenda for the proposed decision and working out a strategy from which the decision may be influenced and executed, despite having to deal with resistance (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991).

Given the conventional research done on sensemaking and sensegiving, together with the insights that they can clearly provide for decision-making, this thesis is going to set out and explore the importance of sensegiving. Doing so will generate new insights into decision-making processes whilst providing a valuable contribution to the field of organisational and management studies.

2.5 Sensereceiving

2.5.1 Introduction

This literature review started out by looking at decision-making and explained why it is important to organisations. Sensemaking was examined and it was determined that it is a social process involving others, constructed through a conscious effort, to try and understand events as they unfold. Having established that sensemaking is helpful to understanding decision-making, we then see how people in organisations, attempt to influence that, who tend to be leaders or managers. Sensegiving portrays how actors can attempt to purposefully alter the way people think i.e. where stakeholders might persuade others to comprehend their own sensemaking ideas. The issues raised will be addressed and evaluated as to why this varies over time. One way to understand decision-making is through sensemaking and sensegiving.

However, there are limitations with sensemaking and sensegiving that lead us to sensereceiving. Sensereceiving is a relatively new concept that adds to our understanding of sensemaking processes and decision-making. However, the information on sensereceiving is limited and that makes comprehending decision-making difficult. Therefore, this study will examine the process of sensereceiving, unlocking the relevance of sensemaking and sensegiving, which forms part of the decision-making process. In doing so, three questions will be addressed: -

- i. why do we need to understand sensereceiving?
- ii. how might sensereceiving influence sensemaking?
- iii. what is sensereceiving's position within decision-making?

This section will begin with an overall perspective of the interpretation of the term sensereceiving as supported by several academics in the field of strategy. An examination is made of the connection between sensereceiving and the Shannon-Weaver 'information theory model' (Shannon and Weaver 1949). To thoroughly

understand how sensereceiving and decision-making interconnect, it is fundamental that the concept of bounded rationality as advanced by Simon (1972) is explored. Further, the transitional period between sensegiving and sensereceiving is scrutinised, examining insights from Polanyi (1967) on 'sense deprivation'.

This will be followed by revisiting a previous seminal study on strategic change by Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) for the purpose of analysing its reference to a specific phase of the sensegiving process which, in this study has an effect on sensereceiving. Two case studies from scholars who developed sensereceiving in their case analysis will be introduced and discussed, because it will provide insights from their study whilst making comparisons to this research. The three theories that informed sensereceiving, will be assessed to evaluate if they are indeed a good fit for this research. This section concludes with a scholarly understanding of how sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving processes occur, having gone through all the various phases discussed, requiring engagement from individuals involved in the decision-making process.

2.5.2 Sensereceiving process

Sensereceiving is a relatively new concept without extensive prior empirical study and as such, this study will develop the concept using information theory, bounded rationality and sense deprivation, as a means of building on existing theory to enhance our understanding of the concept.

“Sensereceiving is described as the receptiveness of an individual or group of individuals to the sensegiving messages of others. It is a mental attitude that, according to the degree that it is exhibited, influences the cognitive processes and decision-making of an individual or group” (McKiernan and Mackay 2017, p. 2).

This means that sensereceiving is a mental state encompassing feelings, values and beliefs that influence cognitive processes, and acts as a regulator to either allow or prevent the inflow of messages through the sensemaking messages of others. The next section will begin with an introduction to an essential factor in organisations, communication.

2.5.3 Shannon-Weaver's model of communication

Understanding communication is important because of its impact on every aspect of our lives, including interactions between humans, technology and as a form of organisational control (Al-Fedaghi 2012). Communication may be studied with the use of models (Adetan 2007). Models systematically represent objects or events in abstract forms, where abstraction of specific details ensue whilst highlighting essential factors. In communication, models offer a framework by which problems or issues in the communication process may be debated.

A model of communication was developed by Shannon and Weaver (1949) as a method of transmitting information with the perception of its common sense everyday usage. The Shannon-Weaver model of communication was touted by Fiske (1982, p. 6) as “widely accepted as one of the main seeds out of which Communication Studies has grown”. Although originally intended for the purpose of technical communication rather than human communication, Shannon and Weaver's theory nevertheless led to a new concept called ‘Information theory’. Five elements are present in the Shannon-Weaver model consisting of an information source producing a message, a transmitter encoding messages into signals, a channel where signals are adapted for transmission, a receiver which reconstructs messages and a destination where messages arrive (Al-Fedaghi 2012). The Shannon-Weaver model signified that three levels of communication problems were present depicting accuracy of the message transmitted, precise meaning conveyed and the behaviour effects of the received meaning. The theme of the model is simple, applicable in a general sense and measurable, making it the most used, low-communication model in communication research (Dobra and Popescu 2008).

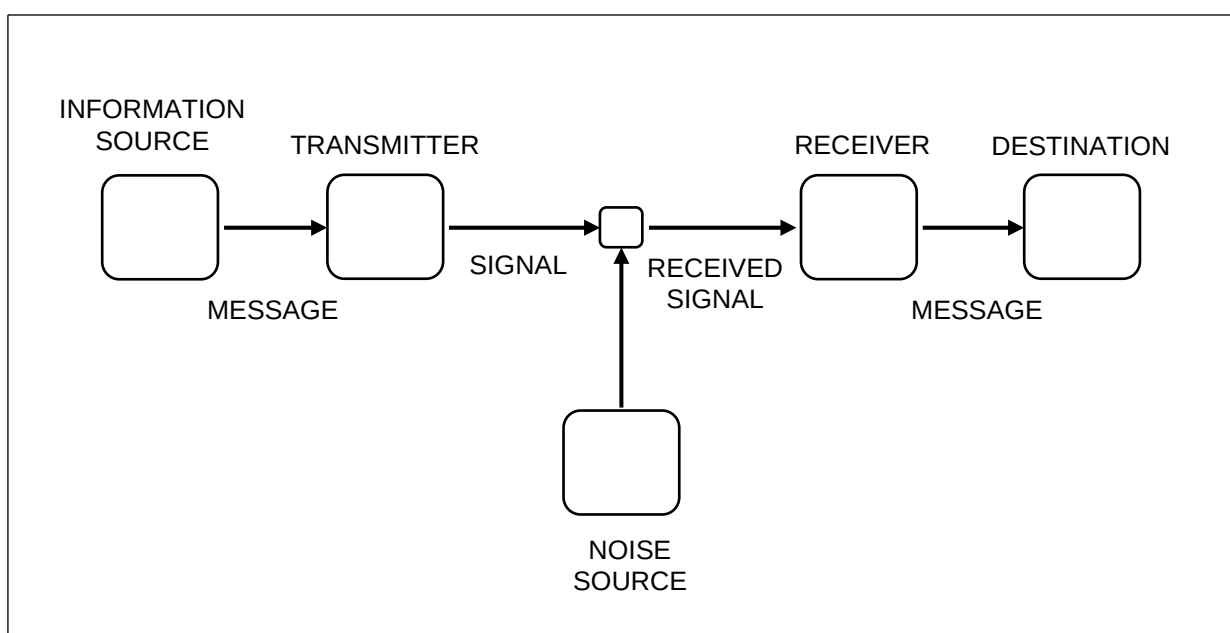


Figure 2. 3 - Inspired by the Shannon and Weaver schematic diagram of a general communication system adapted from Al-Fedaghi (2012)

The use of the Shannon-Weaver model is best illustrated in the form of a hypothetical example. I am a sender and encode a message in 'word' into my mobile phone that says, 'let's get a dog' (sensegiving). I send this message to my husband who is the receiver of the message (sensereceiving). He reads the message 'let's get a dog'. If we were using the Shannon-Weaver Model, this would indicate at this point in time, that communication had occurred, as communication occurs when a message sent has been received. Noise is an element (e.g. from the environment etc.) that sometimes interferes with the message sent / received, leading to a distorted message.

A distorted message might occur because people may choose to interpret messages differently. Noise, is any type of interference which has the ability to distort the transmitted messages from being understood between the sender and receiver (Patriotta 2016). Patriotta (2016, p.558) refers to the issue of noise by relating it to the way in which individuals view the world on a daily basis, stating that "noise evokes the experience of disorder, multiplicity, dissonance, movement, unfamiliarity, interruption,

and irregularity". Van Maanen (1979) argues that the same noise experienced by different individuals, i.e. the person observing and the observed varies, because of the importance in emphasis placed on the order of the interpretation.

The limitations of the Shannon-Weaver model in this instance might be that the message fails to capture the face-to-face dynamics of the communication or the non-verbal communication, which is a big part of our lives. Also, the notion of feedback is unaccounted for. Feedback may be implied in the model but is not directly a part of it. Therefore, when a message has been sent and received, my husband gets the message 'let's get a dog' but I am unaware of what his thoughts are, (sensemaking) due to the fact that feedback is not built into the original model. Although the model is simplistic, individuals are complicated. In this example of the message to my husband, imagining what he may be thinking and what my thoughts are on the dog issue may be completely different. I was thinking of getting a 'Pembroke Welsh Corgi' and he had his heart set on a 'Labrador Retriever'! Thus, he may respond to the message in a totally unexpected way.

Reddy (1979) criticised the model, arguing that information and meaning only arose when listeners actively made sense of what they heard, implying that meaning was constructed and not extracted. Further, it was argued that the model was too linear. Senders of messages were perceived as active decision-makers who determined the message meaning to the receiver, who were submissive targets, with no provision made for feedback from the receiver (Umeozor 2020). Feedback would allow for suitable adjustments to be made in line with the responses received. Additionally, there is the assumption that meaning is contained in the message itself rather than the use of interpretation, which considers expectations and attitudes of communicative circumstances. Carey (2008) argued that the Shannon-Weaver model is tailored towards manipulating a receiver, with the use of the idea of communication of messages to people over distances transmitted for control purposes. Finally, the Shannon-Weaver model ignores the differences in power of senders relaying messages to receivers, as is often the case in top-down management in organisations.

To sum up, the Shannon-Weaver model is appropriate for the basic kind of information exchange or communication between sender and receiver, (sensegiving and sensereceiving) making provisions for feedback whilst checking for receiver comprehension of the message in the intended meaning (sensemaking). The Shannon-Weaver model seems like a logical fit with its simplistic sender-receiver-feedback exchanges, examining the processes of sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving.

There are a host of reasons restraining complex decision-making from taking place on a techno-economic basis in organisations, including bounded rationality, conflict in goals and differing levels of aspiration (Cyert and March 1963). I argue that bounded rationality, adopts the role of regulating sensereceiving in organisations and thereby put forward an explanation explaining how it functions.

2.5.4 Bounded Rationality

Decision-making is regarded as a rational process where the best choice is selected based on the available information. We begin by using the theory of bounded rationality to enhance our understanding of how sensereceiving works. Bounded rationality is a concept first used by Simon (1972) to illustrate the idea that individuals have limited rationality when making decisions. This describes whether individuals faced with various boundaries either decide to move forward with their transaction or not.

When faced with making a choice, Simon (1972) stipulate that an individual is hindered by three essential limitations. They are as follows: -

1. Information availability - the individual possesses a certain amount of information and must proceed with the transaction based on this information. Additionally, this information may not always be reliable enough to provide a rational case for or against going ahead with the transaction.

2. Cognitive limitations - these may emerge as we possess limited knowledge of facts which in turn decrease our ability to decide rationally on certain issues. Moreover, individuals tend to fill in the gaps of their cognitive ability especially when using their own instincts or opinions to make sense of the world around them.
3. Time limitations - this is especially applicable when decisions have a time frame attached to them which isn't adequately long enough for individuals to emerge with a rational solution.

These limitations enable decision-makers to act as 'satisficers', meaning that the decision reached is 'satisfactory' rather than an optimal one (Simon 1972).

2.5.5 Bounded Rationality - How sensereceiving is regulated

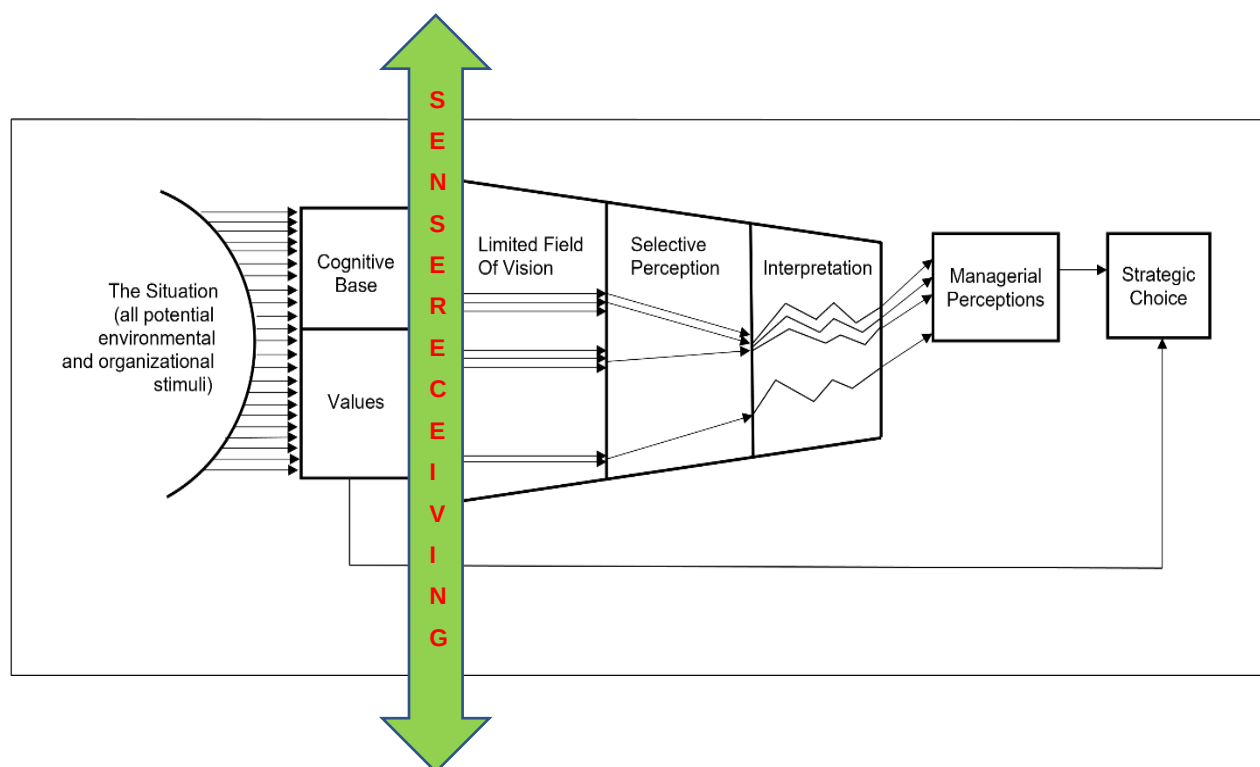


Figure 2. 4 - Adapted from Hambrick & Mason (1984) - Upper echelons: The organisation as a reflection of its top managers

Cyert and March (1963) argued that behavioural rather than economic factors play a dominant role in decisions which are complex in nature. Strategic decision-making involves a strategic choice of options available to the decision-maker who in their own right may have certain preferences (givens) which affect their decision-making. Strategic choices are decisions made that may determine the future strategic plans of an organisation and this can be contrasted with non-strategic choices which are sudden and unplanned. Choices may take the form of internal and / or external choices which are continuously updated.

As illustrated in Figure 2.4, a complex situation is created and the decision-maker has far too much information that they are capable of dealing with and instead utilise their cognitive base and values, creating a filter between the situation that was created and the resulting perception of the situation (Hambrick and Mason 1984). Hambrick and Snow (1977) explain that the process that ensues can be visualised sequentially by arguing that the manager's field of vision is somewhat restricted as they are unable to scan the whole environment. Sense-receiving plays a vital role at this point, which acts as a regulator that influences the extent to which bounded rationality comes into play, limiting the field of vision for the decision-maker or for the sense-making processes. Further, as the manager only selectively perceives a limited amount of information at any one time, only a portion of the information is included in their field of vision.

To illustrate this, a hypothetical example will be used. A manager has asked a member of her team to compile a list of 'best practices' that the organisation may adopt in the near future. The employee proceeds to do her best to produce a comprehensive list. In the meantime, the manager is faced with another problem. She has been given a 'procedures violation notice' by the safety inspector and must get all violations fixed in a short period of time. It is a complex procedure and involves coordinating efforts from a large group of employees. The manager feels that she must act on the 'procedures violation notice' immediately, despite not having all the information required to make

an informed decision, regardless of the consequences. This limited information has put the manager at a disadvantage to make the best rational decision about the best way to fix the problem. Additionally, the manager is faced with a limited time frame during which the violation must be fixed.

Here is how sensereceiving works: -

Let's look back at how the manager set about to make a decision requesting that a 'best practices' list be compiled and the manner in which they attended to the violation problem. The manager is unable to scan all the information (environmental and organisational) stimuli and therefore uses their cognitive base and values, creating a filter. The extent to which information is received through the filter is an indication of sensereceiving. What is scanned and to what extent the information makes it through the filter is the level of sensereceiving - (high or low sensereceiving). Time pressures seem to be the biggest impact on the extent of the filter in the example above, causing low sensereceiving. This may mean that the manager may choose to disregard information offered by her team member, making them feel unappreciated. At this stage, sensereceiving can again affect the decision made because a manager's perception of the situation and values that they possess could either affect the choice made or conversely reject it in favour of one based on their own values e.g. age, hierarchical level, education etc. within the organisation. "Sense receiving highlights the point at which sensegiving has occurred and 'new' sensemaking begins" (Hoyte 2015, p. 191). Further, they argue that the link between past sensemaking and sensegiving is sensereceiving. By this they mean that sensereceiving is a vital process that completes the processes of sensemaking and sensegiving.

2.5.6 Sense deprivation

Sense deprivation is a concept introduced by Polanyi (1967) in his article on sensegiving and sensereading. In this article, he describes sense deprivation as being the opposite of sensegiving. He explains that the changes in appearance of external things occur when meaning is endowed on them whereby their bodily character is lost and becomes transparent. The focus of attention has shifted from it “to something else which has become its meaning” (Polanyi 1967, p. 305). Sense reading appears similar to sensereceiving and an example will be used to introduce this concept.

An example used by Polanyi (1967) to explain sense reading is through the jury system. Juries utilise circumstantial evidence from appropriate legal sources to draw conclusions on legal cases enabling them to make decisions on whether various suspicious activities establish the guilt of accused individuals beyond a reasonable doubt, or should they be dismissed as being mere coincidences. Sensereceiving in this example would be the willingness to receive information / sensegiving from defence and prosecution sources. Making such decisions require powers of perception which allow recognition and creation of meaning in words (Polanyi 1967).

To explain this further, sense deprivation describes how individuals who constantly make sense of the world, unconsciously incorporate external aspects to their corporeal sensing, choosing to only retain “subsidiary awareness of the external nature of sensing aids” (McKiernan and Mackay 2017, p. 9). Paton et al. (2014) describe sense deprivation as an enhanced level of consciousness of an individual’s relationship to others, becoming the focus of attention rather than the actual reason for the interaction in the first place.

Polanyi used the example of how the meaning of a sentence is construed by the string of words that were used to form that sentence. However, the sentence itself is even more meaningful than the words which were used to construct it (Polanyi 1967). For example, if an individual were equipped with a hearing aid, they would not be

conscious of wearing the hearing aid, apart from being aware that it gave them the ability to hear better. However, if sense deprivation came into play, the individual would direct their thoughts towards the presence of the hearing aid in their ear, rather than the objective of the hearing aid itself. In other words, this would replace thoughts of its primary function of enabling the individual to hear rather than thinking or being aware of the physical presence of the hearing aid itself. Paton et al. (2014) argue that our relationship with others becomes the focus of our attention whilst the reason for the interaction in the first place, remains in the background.

Sense deprivation would offer a significant explanation of how sense-receiving works in an organisational context. When there is no shared meaning making, between managers and organisational members, i.e. when members experience not being listened to by their managers and vice versa, this would trigger sense deprivation. At that point, organisational members become more aware of their relationship with the management team / organisation, which is normally in the background. For example, sense deprivation caused by managers may occur because managers may not give any credibility to their members' feedback and are solely intent on making their own opinions heard, expecting members to merely implement handed down decisions.

Sense deprivation will further explain why members choose not to participate in any feedback or in the worst-case scenario, intentionally / wilfully not execute the decisions handed down to them through sense-giving, as intended. A continuous cycle of low sense-receiving from managers as well as members in the organisation will cause a state of sense deprivation to arise, causing individuals who are afflicted by these circumstances to focus on the nature of their own relationship within the organisation, to that of their managers. Therefore, they are not paying as much attention to the sense-giving messages of important decisions, as they should. Sense deprivation will act as an obstruction to shared meaning making, as a result of low sense-receiving, having long term damaging effects on the relationship between managers and members.

2.5.7 Applying sensereceiving to the Gioia and Chittipeddi phased model

With regards to Gioia and Chittipeddi's (1991) concept of sensegiving, if it were to be applied to sensereceiving theory in this study, it is possible that sensereceiving would have to occur during the feedback stage if applied to the management team. It would also apply between sensegiving and sensereceiving to the organisational members who are the object of the management sensegiving. This would mean that during the revisioning phase of the Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) model, feedback received through sensereceiving from other organisational members is ignored by managers. Similarly, the low sensereceiving by managers triggers low sensereceiving from the organisational members, which mean that the sensegiving messages from their managers is equally ignored.

However, if sensegiving messages in the form of feedback from organisational members were sent to managers in the form of sensegiving and received by them through high sensereceiving, this would send a message to the organisational members that their opinions mattered and that they were valued. This would enable the process to transition to the energising phase. This would mean that sensereceiving is a vital process enabling progression from the revisioning phase to the energising phase. High sensereceiving of messages from members received by managers, equally triggers high sensereceiving of messages from organisational members. Conversely, low sensereceiving of messages from managers, triggers low sensereceiving from organisational members.

2.5.8 Case studies from literature review

Empirical studies on sensereceiving are sparse and if sensereceiving is included, it is used as part of the sensemaking processes and does not receive much analytical attention. Hoyte et al. (2019) explored the processes of sensemaking utilised by four diverse entrepreneurs when shifting between venture ideas to venture formation. It was stated that prospective entrepreneurs utilised sensemaking as a “conceptual

bridge between venture ideas and venture formation” (Hoyte et al. 2019, p. 269). It was stipulated that the role of ‘other’ sensegivers, played a crucial role in the entrepreneurs’ support network. Pertaining to sensereceiving, after the entrepreneurs had iteratively shifted from sensemaking to internalising the messages of others through sensegiving, they were able to evaluate which venture ideas put forward were novel and met a need in the current market (Kirzner 1997). The entrepreneurs used social interaction with other sensegivers to refine ideas and to eventually make a decision whether to move forward and continue with sensereceiving whereby high sensereceiving means that they seek out the view of others. That is the effect of sensereceiving i.e. they are receptive to the ideas of others means that sensegiving ‘sits well’ with them.

The study by Hoyte et al. (2019), pertaining to receiving feedback in the form of sensegiving from other individuals with regards to the venture idea, was vital to the sensemaking processes. Being open to the sensegiving messages of others is an example of ‘high’ sensereceiving, which regulates the inflow. They argued that unlike most routine sensemaking processes, their context of sensemaking processes for the purpose of transitioning from venture idea to venture formation, left entrepreneurs with a disrupted experience. Therefore, it was suggested that sensereceiving in varying degrees, appropriately reflects the internalised feedback received from others, before being integrated with the formerly accomplished sensemaking and sensegiving processes pertaining to the opportunity in question. Making a decision on how / whether to act regulated by the sensereceiving level of the entrepreneur, will consequently affect any future sensemaking and subsequent future sensegiving.

A conflict arising out of sensereceiving, i.e. when secondary sensemaking and initial sensegiving were at odds with each other, resulted in the founders of the study taking suitable action to balance sensemaking and sensegiving of the opportunity presented. However, in cases where there was balance between sensemaking and sensegiving, sensereceiving validated the sensemaking and sensegiving opportunity.

Sensereceiving may serve as a motivator for entrepreneurs to question, discuss and reevaluate their earlier assumptions which they had extracted from prior cues and to make appropriate adjustments deemed necessary (Hoyte 2015). The study by Hoyte et al. (2019) concludes with the assertion that sensereceiving may play a particularly vital role in an 'entrepreneurship context', due to its ability to go back and forth, receiving feedback from others, and thus to re-evaluate new assumptions which may offer enhanced benefits.

A case study examining sensereceiving and sensegiving by McKiernan and Mackay (2017), explored strategy execution performance by varying the sensereceiving attitudes and sensegiving activities between hierarchical levels in an organisation. The study sought to build comprehension around how organisations might avoid strategy execution failure by exploring the impact of communicative methods. It was suggested that one-way communication of organisational strategy messages, resulted in a misleading sense of security among top management team members, assuming that their messages had been sent and received in the manner intended (Sull et al. 2015). Only when the execution fails, the top management realised that their strategy messages had been miscommunicated.

The findings from the case study led to the conclusion that high sensereceiving attitude from top management resulted in non-management team members willingness to share in the meaning making experience. Non-management team members were encouraged to share their ideas which further gave rise to improved strategy execution performance. Conversely, when a low sensereceiving attitude was displayed by the top management team, non-executive employees, limited by not being able to share in strategy meaning making, reacted by diverting the focus away from the meaning of the intended strategy execution, causing it to fail. Low sensereceiving from executive managers and non-executive managers were continuously being ignored by each other, impacting the feedback process and caused frustration amongst the managerial groups. The executive managers then expressed a need for more formal means of communication.

The non-executive group voiced their anger at not being heard by their managers and thus were closed to sensegiving messages from them. The non-executive members suggested that they were in a low sensereceiving attitude because their executive managers did not engage with them, failed to share meaning with them and as a result, a hostile and unreceptive atmosphere was created. The ability to knowledgeably share meaningful and engaging messages with an audience is vital for gaining credibility within an organisation (Rouleau and Balogun 2011). Middle managers are as much in this critical role of initiating change in organisations as top management teams and must be able to influence others in the organisation through refined sensemaking abilities as well as a mastering of dialogue in listening, offering explanations and talking (Pye 1995; Wooldridge et al. 2008).

The key points from these two studies suggest the following: - sensereceiving will subsequently affect any future sensemaking and sensegiving in organisations. The role that sensereceiving plays in organisations is as a regulator for organisational members to participate in the decision-making process through their valuable feedback. Having the ability to discuss and question prior potential decisions through feedback enables managers to re-evaluate new findings and make better decisions with appropriate adjustments. These would lead to benefits for organisations as well as its organisational members. High sensereceiving attitude from managers led to high sensereceiving of messages from organisational members (McKiernan and Mackay 2017). A willingness to share in the meaning making experience led to a rise in strategy execution performance. However, low sensereceiving from managers led to low sensereceiving from organisational members also, leading to a failure in strategy execution. My study built on this by examining how leadership style was responsible for activating sense deprivation issues amongst organisational members as well as determining the importance of sensereceiving in the decision-making process.

2.5.9 Summary

Drawing from the different approaches to understanding sensereceiving and its role, insights about how the concept of sensereceiving forms the vital link between sensemaking and sensegiving, shaping the decision-making process, will be outlined. Without sensereceiving to moderate the influence of sensegiving on sensemaking, understanding of these processes is incomplete. The theoretical framework for this study will consist of several concepts drawn from existing knowledge to support this research. Triangulation method using multiple theoretical schemes will be used to develop a comprehensive understanding of the concept of sensereceiving. Using Shannon-Weaver's basic information theory, I am able to set up a simple form of communication with some feedback to establish a sender who makes sense of the information and delivers it (sensemaking and sensegiving), as well as a receiver (sensereceiving) who receives the information (Shannon and Weaver 1949). The feedback received, serves as a mechanism to check if the messages sent through the process of sensegiving, has been received in the manner intended.

With regards to sensereceiving, the reason why I have chosen to utilise bounded rationality to explain how sensereceiving plays a vital role in organisations is because of the factors noted below. An organisational decision-maker encounters varied experiences within an organisation making their situation difficult to grasp. March and Simon (1993) reiterated that decision-makers bring their own set of cognitive bases, different values and preferences to the situation encountered or their own 'givens'. This creates a barrier between the situation and their own prospective thoughts on the matter. The cognitive base would include knowledge about future events, knowledge of alternatives and knowledge of consequences pertaining to alternatives.

These 'givens' are present at the same time a decision-maker encounters external provocations either internally within the organisation or externally independent from the organisation. The 'givens' are continuously being updated and information filtered until they reach a stage where the decision-maker's perception is altered / distorted when deciding on alternatives to the situation encountered (Hambrick and Mason 1984). Therefore, sensereceiving could regulate the flow of information from external sources which would then affect the sensemaking process. The individual's field of vision may be limited (bounded rationality) due to low sensereceiving. This may be how sensereceiving regulates information from external sources including views from employees during the sensemaking process. Thus, sensereceiving could influence the degree to which the field of vision is restricted by bounded rationality.

The concept of sense deprivation is utilised to describe situations of low sensereceiving leading to a failure in shared meaning making between managers and organisational members, where low sensereceiving shapes the process. Low sensereceiving reflects why an individual becomes more consciously aware of their relationship to other individuals in the organisation rather than focusing on the actual sensegiving messages delivered to them through sensereceiving. Sense deprivation would allow an individual to become consciously aware of a supplementary external object of which they were initially not fully conscious of (tacit knowledge), through their thought processes, and in doing so, alter our meaning making altogether. Sense deprivation highlights the effectiveness of listening in terms of managers in formal positions of power. When sensereceiving is low, sense deprivation may increase. In other words, the individual at the receiving end of the messages, thinks about what the lack of acknowledgement or receptiveness to their ideas mean to them, leading to a loss in the communication content. Sensereceiving acts as a 'regulatory' role - 'high sensereceiving' is experienced when employees are 'acknowledged and feel valued'. In contrast to this, 'low sensereceiving' is achieved when employees feel 'rejected and unappreciated'.

The barriers to sensereceiving may be caused by the lack of professional support, for example in training. There could be different forms of therapy offered to organisational members. This will raise interesting questions such as what are the best solutions available and accessible to all members in the organisation. So far, there have been 'bits' of therapy available in the form of meetings or discussions held at regular intervals - however, these remain mostly ineffective. Low and high sensereceiving is key but we do not fully understand what shapes this or how this effects sensemaking and sensegiving or the decision-making process.

2.6 Chapter Conclusion

A fundamental purpose of this study thus far, has been to review the literature on the influence of sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving on organisational decision-making. Literature on decision-making indicate that decision-making processes are fraught with complexity and difficulty due to the uncertainty of human behaviour and ambiguous environments. Decision-making is an essential skill in the business environment, and in particular for managers in leadership positions. Despite the creation of various models by practitioners, these models and theories offer a limited lens specifically addressing decision-making through the perspective of sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving processes of which this study is based.

Sensemaking has been espoused as a lens through which decision-making processes commence and offer a window through which the behaviour of managers engaged in complex decision-making processes, may be examined in detail. The concept of bounded rationality serves as a useful tool in understanding decision-making in organisations because it clarifies decision-making as an act that considers the human aspect of making a choice between various alternatives. When individuals are deprived of perfect information, contextual or otherwise, there is an inability to pre-determine the consequences of their decisions. Decision-making in organisations is usually made under the presence of limited information where managers and stakeholders negotiate with varied interests and preferences.

Further, organisations have the additional function of placing its members in such a psychological environment that it enables them to adapt to the choices made that fit organisational goals, by simply 'providing information' that enables them to do so. As a consequence, when operating in uncertain conditions, managers choose alternatives that are 'satisficing' to resolve conflicts whilst pursuing organisational goals. Identifying and understanding cognitive biases experienced by managers, gives insights into how and why errors in decision-making occur. Cognitive biases have the ability to disrupt and alter thought processes, by the addition of influences into the decision-making process, affecting judgement. Sense deprivation offers a significant explanation as to why and how sense-receiving works in organisations when shared meaning is lost.

The limitations presently encountered prior, during and after the decision-making process, will be addressed so that they may provide a richer understanding of the micro aspects that affect organisational decision-making. Sensemaking gives us insights into decision-making processes and offers an understanding of managerial behaviour in organisations. Further, examining sensegiving permits us to unpack and reveal the building blocks used by managers when contending how to use their influence and knowledge to influence others in the organisation. Through the concept of sense-receiving, we are finally able to understand why a comprehension of sense-receiving is vital to the sensemaking processes together with what might its position be within the decision-making process. The Literature Review presents the bases for the research questions. The Research Questions are the key output from the literature review, developed on the basis of the literature reviewed and the gaps, limitations and the problems identified.

The following chapter will present a description of the empirical methods utilised for the gathering and analysis of data pertaining to the processes of sensemaking, sensegiving, sense-receiving and decision-making for the purpose of this study.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

“I want to understand the world from your point of view. I want to know what you know in the way you know it. I want to understand the meaning of your experience, to walk in your shoes, to feel things as you feel them, to explain things as you explain them. Will you become my teacher and help me understand?” (Spradley 2016, p. 34).

Spradley’s quotation describes the goal of qualitative research and the affiliation between researcher and their participants. It is the core approach that has guided the following design for this study.

3.1 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to explore the ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods adopted for this study. It will commence with a description and overview of the philosophical underpinnings of social science research. I then proceed to a discussion of a pilot-study, followed by the chosen methodology and research design employed in the study. Justification for the method of analysis will be provided, concluding with a discussion on ethics together with the limitations and validity of the study.

What follows, is guided by these two research questions: -

1. How do sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving influence decision-making in organisations?
2. How do sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving relate to each other?

3.2 Philosophy and Research Paradigm

“Whether we are aware of it or not, we always bring certain beliefs and philosophical assumptions to our research” (Creswell and Poth 2018, p. 15).

Creswell and Poth’s quotation suggest that as a researcher, it is important that my philosophical stance be revealed, as there are many different ways in which knowledge is acquired when research is conducted. This is done for the purpose of making the reader aware of why certain choices were made pertaining to the study, as well as being able to identify how my chosen methodology and methods relate to my assumptions and findings. A paradigm refers to a specific set of concepts or beliefs which are widely accepted. The components of a research paradigm are ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods. Each paradigm is founded on its own ontological and epistemological expectations and act as a foundation for how we approach a research question.

Ontology according to Crotty (1998, p. 10) is “the study of being” and is concerned with “what is, with the nature of existence, with the structure of reality as such” or what can we know about the world (Snape 2003). Different kinds of research are founded on different beliefs about what we think truth is. What we think reality is, will shape what we can know about reality. Philosophy about reality can be divided into different ways - the two types of ontology that are opposites of each other - realism and relativism. This study will be based on the concept of relativism where multiple versions of reality exist and are shaped by context. Truth evolves as well as changes, depending on our experiences and may be used for other similar contexts.

“Epistemology is concerned with the nature and forms of knowledge” (Cohen et al. 2013, p. 7). There is a concern as to how knowledge is created or what it means to know. Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 108) state that epistemology queries the nature of the relationship between the “would be knower and the what can be known”. Since all paradigms are based on an opinion or conclusion formed on incomplete information,

the philosophical underpinnings of each paradigm cannot be disproven or proven. Simply put, what the researcher believes about the nature of reality will dictate what kind of relationship the researcher should have with the topic of study. There are two basic beliefs as to how knowledge should be gathered, with some researchers believing that it should be gathered in an objective way while others believe that it must be done in a subjective way.

Methodology is the plan of action that enables knowledge to be discovered and analysed in a systematic way (Crotty 1998). Methodology refers to the philosophy of how knowledge should be gathered. Therefore, “methodology is concerned with the why, what, from where and how data is collected and analysed” (Scotland 2012, p. 9). *Methods* relate to “the techniques or procedures used to gather and analyse data related to some research question or hypothesis” (Crotty 1998, p. 3). Either quantitative or qualitative data may be collected and at any one time either one or both may be used for analysis. Different approaches lead to different results although the researcher may have been faced with the same phenomena that can be traced back to the researcher’s ontological and epistemological positions (Grix 2019).

Interpretivist paradigm

The paradigm adopted for this study is the interpretivist paradigm. The interpretivist paradigm seeks explanations about the individual’s stability of behaviour through ongoing processes of meaning making through experiences, rather than the use of measurement-oriented methodologies to understand the nature of the world as well as individual behaviour. Morgan and Smircich (1980) state that the interpretative paradigm understands the social world as being precarious in its ontological stance, whereby social reality doesn’t really exist but rather are the experiences (subjective and inter-subjective) of individuals in society. The viewpoint of the participant in action rather than an observer is considered when attempting to understand society. The interpretivist seeks to understand instances when shared multiple realities emerge, sustain or change, believing that there is some sort of order in the social world (Morgan and Smircich 1980).

Relativism is the ontological position of interpretivist where the view taken is that reality differs between each individual and is therefore subjective (Guba and Lincoln 1994). Our senses direct the way in which our realities are formed “when our consciousness engages with the objects which are already pregnant with meaning” and this in turn enables different individuals to construct different meanings when faced with the same phenomena (Crotty 1998, p. 43). Interpretivist methodology seeks to comprehend phenomena from an individual point of view, investigating the cultural, historical and social interactions that occur between them and others (Creswell and Creswell 2017).

Interpretivist theory is generated from the data (inductive) and therefore the research questions associated with them, tend to be broad in nature (Cohen et al. 2013). An interpretivist accepts that value free knowledge is not possible and as a result it is up to the researcher to assert their beliefs in their choice of research undertaken as well as the manner in which they interpret the data collected (Edge and Richards 1998). When interpretivist methods are utilised, the participants perspectives and insights are sought so as to understand their behaviour (Scotland 2012). Interviews and observations were utilised to provide a subjective relationship between myself and my participants. The methodology adopted for this study was case study research which included an in-depth study of sensemaking processes which led to decision-making processes.

The reason for utilising the interpretative paradigm for this study is because there is a need to comprehend the process of how the actions of managers and organisational members impact decision-making processes. The subjective and intersubjective experiences of managers and organisational members through sensemaking, sensegiving and sense-receiving, allow them to have individual as well as collective multiple realities whilst being in a social world. The cognitive processes of managers and organisational members participating in the decision-making process will also be explored as there is a need to be fully aware of what they perceive their reality to be.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE	To understand how sensemaking processes relate to each other as well as influence organisation decision-making
	Explanation
ONTOLOGY (Relativism)	WHAT CAN WE KNOW • Multiple realities exist • Different human experiences exist causing different social realities • Exploration of the way in which individuals make sense of the social world around them through social interaction with others
EPISTEMOLOGY (Interpretivist)	HOW CAN WE KNOW • Collection of data is personal and interactive • Interviewer and participant continuously interacting through talking and listening • The initial processes of interaction are how events are comprehended
METHODOLOGY	HOW CAN WE FIND OUT • Case study research
METHODS	WHAT TOOL TO USE • Semi-structured critical incident technique interviews conducted • Direct observation • Documentation

Table 3. 1 - Research objective and interpretivist paradigm adopted for this study

3.3 A Case Study Methodology

I have chosen to use the case study approach for my research because it is deemed an effective methodology, able to investigate and comprehend complex matters in real world situations. It is also useful when boundaries between the context and issues, contain a multitude of variables which are indistinct (Creswell and Creswell 2017). Understanding sense-receiving and analysing why the relationship between sense-making and sense-giving might vary at different times depending on context, involves unclear boundaries between issues and therefore using case study research will help unravel the tensions raised when these processes are triggered. The aim of this study was to generate a theory from the case study approach and to do this, I clearly defined the two research questions in broad terms (Eisenhardt 1989). A well-defined focus was essential for systematically collecting data from the organisation researched, whilst ensuring that I would not become overwhelmed by voluminous data (Mintzberg 1979).

An advantage of using the case study approach for my research, is that my research involves a single case study, and would mean that explanation is sought from only an episode involving a single case to establish causal inference rather than being generalised beyond the case (Gerring 2006). Further, this would also enable me to develop a specific methodology that doesn't involve explanations utilised for other traditional methodologies. Using the case study approach for my research, will enable me to carry out rigorous analysis on the multiple processes within the case for the purpose of developing a hypothesis that would help explain the case more thoroughly (Bennett and Checkel 2015).

Criticisms of single case study analysis include the fact that it lacks a systematic procedure in the way research is conducted because there are no methodical guidelines to follow (Yin 2014). Maoz (2002) argues that the case study method adopts freeform research and therefore removes any type of methodological considerations from the researcher. Another issue that is a concern of case study research concerns the reliability and the replicability of single case studies mainly due to how intangible objective concepts are interpreted to gain an understanding of meanings presented (Hennink et al. 2020). King et al. (1994) put forward the argument that more observations were necessary to formulate the issue of generalisability because single case studies only offered a limited amount of explanatory range.

Flyvbjerg (2006) argued that there are certain misconceptions which tend to portray case study research in an unfavourable light. He argued that the misunderstanding regarding the value of “general theoretical (context independent) knowledge” being “more valuable than concrete (context-dependent) knowledge” is incorrect (Flyvbjerg 2006, p. 3). He recapitulated that expert activity is borne from context-dependent knowledge and experience whereby learning processes enable individuals to move from a beginner level to a more advanced level. If, however an individual was only engrossed in context - independent knowledge, they would only stay at the beginner’s level and not progress to higher levels, because of the lack of learning experiences derived from the practicality of dealing with cases, particularly valuable to researchers.

Further, it has also been perceived that case study research contain biases pertaining to verification, enabling a researcher’s preconceived notions to be confirmed. Flyvbjerg (2006, p. 21) argues that “the case study contains no greater bias toward verification of the researcher’s preconceived notions than other methods of inquiry” and “that experience indicates that the case study contains a greater bias toward falsification of preconceived notions than toward verification”. By this he means that the use of case studies, enable researchers to partake in intense observations which offer valuable insights on learning and discarding predetermined ideas and theories.

Case selection is based on the purpose and conditions of the study, involving a host of issues including decisions about organisational behaviour, social processes etc. Eisenhardt (1989, p. 537) stresses that population is an important aspect of building theory from case studies due to the reason that “the population defines the set of entities from which the research sample is to be drawn”. For the purpose of this study, a rigorous single case research design was utilised to explore ‘how sensemaking processes influenced organisational decision-making’, because novel effects were being examined. My single case is an organisation and I adopted the embedded case study methodology as advocated by Yin (2003) as it allows for a more detailed and thorough inquiry level. Additionally, the embedded case study design enables a more detailed mode of enquiry where the case “is faceted or embedded in a conceptual grid” which further facilitates identification of mechanisms which consider the human and / or environmental systems (Scholz and Binder 2011, p. 25). By using this particular mode of enquiry, I was able to combine various sources of information including interviews, documentation and observation.

‘Critical incidents’ were my unit of analysis for the main study i.e. cases of decision-making processes. This concept will be explained further, shortly. I commenced my research on theory building with the ideal that there was no theory being considered, beginning with a research problem containing some important variables and set out to explore the relationship between established theories. However, by using the case study approach, there were a couple of difficulties defining the case and outlining the objectives of the case, and to counter this, I ensured that my research questions accurately identified the focus of the issue being studied and refined boundaries, clearly reflected in the research design (Stake 2013). Furthermore, bounding the case was important and involved selecting adequate parameters of the case, which included participants location as well as the allocated timeframe for the study.

I wanted to conduct my research on a non-profit organisation rather than a profit driven organisation because non-profit organisations provide essential public services whilst helping to create and bolster networks that fortify community bonds. The organisation's mission was one that sparked my initial interest and upon further investigation, realised that the organisation's goals and objectives fit with my own interests and values. Additionally, conducting research on a non-profit organisations would help bolster and reform current operational deficiencies which may potentially be preventing it from reaching its maximum potential.

The organisation's flat structure was designed in such a way so as to encourage decision-making to be as close as possible to the people it supported. The organisation has four localities and each locality is supported by a manager. The approach adopted by the organisation is perceived to support a responsive service and encouraged the development of positive relationships between carer and their clients and in doing so, enabled communication to be transparent with clear lines of accountability. I made a decision early in the research to only use a single case study because by doing so, I was able to conduct an in-depth analysis of the individuals who were in their own environments, absorbing their emotions and thoughts. Additionally, by conducting a single case study, I could fit as many details as I deemed important into building my theory from the intricate details of the case whilst gaining unusual access to the organisation. Theoretical sampling would enable me to collect and analyse the data while I decided on what data to collect next, ultimately seeking to develop a theory as it emerged. I felt that this specific approach was particularly informative, enabling me to answer my research questions as well as to adequately meet the objectives of my research (Saunders et al. 2019).

3.4 Pilot study

A pilot study was conducted for my research which was in essence, a pre-run of a full-scale study or feasibility study on a small-scale adopted in preparation of the main study, executed at a future date (Van Teijlingen and Hundley 2001). Pilot studies are not conducted so that they may produce results and it is for this reason that they are mostly underreported as they are predominantly deemed unsuitable material for publication purposes (Watson et al. 2007). Conducting a pilot study enabled me to highlight that the proposed study was planned and intentional from the very beginning of the actual inquiry (Lancaster et al. 2004). The view to conduct a pilot study before the main study has been recommended by De Vaus (2013), who stipulates that it is best to proceed carefully by conducting a pilot study before a main study and not take any risks which could result in the failure of the main study. Pratt and Yezierski (2018, p. 417) stated that “the use of a pilot study to test the method and interview guide further adds credibility and dependability to the study” whilst indicating that the use of pilot study interviews were used predominantly “to build researcher expertise in using / troubleshooting the interview platform” (Pratt and Yezierski 2018, p.15).

Doing a pilot study beforehand prepared me for the challenges that may have potentially arisen in the main study, thus allowing me to be more confident in the way data was to be collected. Further, weaknesses in the pilot study would allow for appropriate adjustments to be made, enhancing the quality of the research undertaken in the main study (Malmqvist et al. 2019). Doing a pilot study prior to the main study also enabled me to make any changes to the data collection and thereby permitted me to think of ideas that I might otherwise not have included if not for the pilot study, thus making the findings clearer in the main study.

It has been asserted that pilot studies increase the quality of research by enabling researchers to obtain rich data as well as enhancing the reliability and validity of the research undertaken (Van Teijlingen and Hundley 2001; Gudmundsdottir and Brock-Utne 2010). Poggenpoel and Myburgh (2003) and Chenail (2011) emphasise that other issues of importance may arise during the pilot study, such as the management of any biases which may emerge. They suggest that the threat to trustworthiness may be counteracted by spending time improving interviewing techniques so that researchers may be adequately prepared when conducting the main study.

Van Teijlingen and Hundley (2001) argue that there are limitations associated with pilot studies which must be addressed. They suggest that there is the possibility of predictions inaccurately made based on data from pilot studies. Further, they state that despite offering indications on findings from the pilot study, success of a pilot study doesn't necessarily guarantee equal success in the main study. The reason for this is because what was done on a smaller scale may not necessarily be a reflection of a study done on a grander scale. Additionally, issues or problem may not arise in a smaller scale but may emerge when conducting a larger study.

Peat (2002) argue that if problems arose during the pilot study with the research tool, and modifications made, this could mean that the data could potentially be inaccurate when applied to the main study. Van Teijlingen and Hundley (2001) further argue that inclusion of pilot study participants into the main study is a concern. This is due to the reason that pilot study participants have already been exposed to the study and may respond differently than participants who are experiencing a novel procedure. Conversely, excluding such participants from the study may be an issue especially if they are part of a specific group or cluster e.g. schools, hospitals etc. and including them may mean that the sample size decreases considerably.

Participants for my pilot study interviews were selected on the basis of theoretical sampling, a specific case of purposive sampling involved in analytic induction. I selected participants who were employed by the University and who were involved in decision-making processes in some way, on a daily basis. This was acceptable just for the purpose of practical access reasons for the pilot. The participants for the pilot study were a mix of administrative / professional personnel who had held management positions at some time or other in their prior / current employment positions.

Twelve participants in total, consisting of six potential participants were initially identified for the pilot study, while another six were through referrals from other management staff who were willing and able to participate in the pilot study in the stipulated time frame. Some others had heard about my study from their colleagues and volunteered for the interview, as they wanted to share their meaningful experiences with me. The study sample of the pilot study as suggested by Connelly (2008) should be 10% of the main study. This was contested by Isaac and Michael (1995) who stipulated that having 10 to 30 participants in a pilot study was adequate, Julious (2005) suggested that 12 was an appropriate number whilst Hill (1998) said that 10 to 30 participants was acceptable for internet survey research projects. Thus, having 12 participants for my pilot study seemed appropriate for my main study which consisted of 41 participants.

Formal verbal permission and ethical approval was sought from the Head of Operations at the University before the commencement of the pilot study for the initial six participants and on an ongoing basis as participants were identified. The objective of the pilot study was to facilitate myself with the experience of conducting semi structured interviews, testing the interview questions and to assess their appropriateness for the context of the study. I strived to build a good rapport with all my participants so that they were at ease during the interviews, thereby enabling me to extract better responses from them. Additionally, I hoped to make them feel comfortable enough that they could ask any lingering questions that they might have had about the study (Jacob and Furgerson 2012). The interviews were conducted in the English Language and no questions were asked in any particular order but rather dependent on the flow of the conversation.

The semi-structured interviews for the pilot study were conducted from March 2019 till April 2019. Semi structured interviews were conducted with each participant with the duration of each interview varying between one hour and one and a half hours. In choosing in-depth interviewing, I was aware that all my participants were a vital source of information, their personal feelings and language were of primary importance because what they said reflected their mental worlds and experiences (Patton 2002). Having decided that in-depth interviews were the best method to be used in this study, I set about determining the appropriate level of structure for the interviews as well as determining their relatability to the overall systematic plan to build on the knowledge obtained from participants. Additionally, this helped me determine which domains to explore further, which aspects required in-depth probing and the potential recruitment of the remaining participants (Goodman 2001).

Eleven (11) of the semi-structured interviews were conducted in private offices within the University premises, sometimes requiring movement between the various campuses. One (1) interview was conducted via skype and all interviews were recorded using two digital recorders. The reason for two recorders was in case one recorder failed, the conversations would be captured in the remaining recorder. Upon completion of all the participant interviews for the pilot study, I began the task of analysing and managing the data collected.

Receiving feedback from participants helped provide me with valuable insights, allowing me to test the interview questions which would be potentially utilised for the upcoming main study (Bryman 2016). The pilot study enabled me to determine if some of the interview questions needed to be more precise in their wording, highlighting the focal point of the study, rather than participants being unsure of what the focus of my study was and talking about work life imbalances or job dissatisfaction issues. The manner in which the questions were asked varied substantially with the personality of the participants interviewed. To make allowances for this discrepancy, I revisited my interview protocol and adjusted the scope of the enquiry to include four sub-questions which would allow for this disparity. The pilot study permitted me to self-evaluate my commitment and preparedness to conduct qualitative research (Beebe 2007), uncovering any ethical and practical issues that may have otherwise stalled the research (Kelly 2007).

Furthermore, the pilot study assisted me with the development of the two research questions and the proposed research plan. My rationale for committing to a pilot study was to enable me to determine the extent of information required for the study, as the topic of research was relatively unexplored. Further, it enabled me to determine if the interview questions, constructed with the two research questions in mind, were significant enough to achieve the overall aim of the research undertaken. Conducting the pilot study highlighted the necessity of keeping a reflexive journal to record valuable thoughts and insights pertaining to body language along with a general demeanor of all participants, to ascertain whether what they were expressing was a true reflection of their thoughts. By keeping the journal, it enabled me to minimise researcher bias, which could have affected the research when gathering, reporting and analysing of the data. With a reflective journal, I could describe situations, meanings to events or passing thoughts that added more depth to my analysis.

To sum up, conducting the pilot study gave me a clear definition for the focus of my study involving the sensemaking and decision-making processes. Additionally, the pilot study conducted also ascertained if the research protocol was workable and realistic. In essence, the pilot study permitted me to determine if the research protocols used were adequate for the study, and to identify any potential problems that emerged, thus enabling any adjustments to be made, ensuring success of the research.

3.5 Data collection

Case study research encourages the use of multiple methods for data collection and analysis purposes, as these provide a complete view of the issue considered (Merriam and Tisdell 2015; Denzin 2017; Fusch et al. 2018; Natow 2020). Triangulation of methods is usually undertaken to include data from interviews, observations, focus groups, interviews, surveys, questionnaires etc. Evidence gathered may be qualitative (e.g. words) or quantitative (e.g. figures) or in some instances, a combination of both (Eisenhardt 1989). For the purpose of this study three (3) different sources are utilised (Yin 2014). The three selected sources of information for my research are semi-structured interviews, documentation and observations.

The research focused on 'decision events' - instances of managerial decisions being made and implemented. Interview questions with participants, reflected decision events, structured around the following core concerns: -

- i) what was the main process by which the decision was made?
- ii) what were the main influences that enabled the process to take place?
- iii) were any strategies utilised in deciding and communicating outcomes?
- iv) was the decision implemented as anticipated / what were the outcomes?

Data collection primarily used semi-structured interviews (using the Critical Incident Technique discussed below), documentation and observations in relation to decision events as they occurred. The process involved going back and forth amongst the numerous participants, formulating new interview strategies and questions, in order to gather rich data about each decision event, and the associated sensemaking and decision-making processes.

The interview questions were constructed with my research questions in mind and how I could best answer them by identifying all the areas that I needed to explore with regards to the sensemaking and decision-making processes. I purposely set about designing interview questions which were simple so that it didn't detract from the topic or create any misinterpretation of the questions, deliberately avoiding developing multiple-part interview questions that may have confused the participants. Additionally, I refrained from formulating questions which asked for opinions on behalf of participants team members or other groups in the organisation. All interview questions were reviewed by my supervisor to ensure clarity of meaning, language and relevance to this study and was given the approval to proceed with the interviews. These questions set out the basic structure with follow ups where needed.

Three different sets of questions were formulated for my interview participants, one for organisational members, one for board members and another for the Chief Operating Officer (CEO). Five primary interview questions were formulated for the organisational members, together with other probing questions, exploring the views from participants, where additional clarification was required. The specific interview questions were formulated so as to understand and to gain insights into the decision-making process utilising sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving. The purpose of conducting the interviews was to allow the participants to tell their own stories on their own terms. The interview guide was created to act as a prompt and as a reminder to myself to cover the necessary topics to be explored as well as the areas that would enable me to probe further.

Open-ended semi-structured interviews using Critical Incident Technique (CIT) were selected as a means to capture the sensemaking and decision-making processes of all organisational members (Hopf 2004). Semi structured in-depth interviews were suitable for use in this study because the focus of interviews were predominantly on the cognition and behavioural processes of individuals (Yin 2014). Further, the

flexibility of semi structured interviews for my study, allowed me to change the style, pace and question orders to extract the maximum response from my participants (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). By conducting semi-structured interviews, I was able to understand how managers and organisational members created meanings through their jobs and their environment, as well as to gain insights on what influence they had on decision-making processes. Initially participants were selected for the semi-structured interviews by the Senior Management Team members but as the interviews progressed and I was getting a feel of what kind of data I would need for my research, I set about scheduling all future participant interviews myself. The duration of all the interviews ranged in length from one hour to one and a half hours and were recorded with the consent of all participants.

There were forty-one cases identified from all the interviews. Each of the forty-one cases represented a decision-making process. I interviewed forty-one participants and this number ensured that 'category saturation' was reached. My participants were a range of people from different areas and levels with different responsibilities as well as from different hierarchical levels in the organisation. They encompassed the Chief Executive Officer, 1 Board Member, Senior Management Team members (hereafter referred to as SMT), Area Leads, Support Advisors and Personal Development Workers. The interviews were held at the Organisation's Head Office as well as all their various branches in the UK. The interviews were conducted from May 2019 till July 2019.

Table 3.2 illustrates the forty-one (41) participants interviewed, their designations and the areas where their business was conducted.

PARTICIPANT PSEUDONYM	GENDER	POSITION	AREA OF BUSINESS
Amelia	F	SA	Regional Office No. 3
Ava	F	PDW	Regional Office No. 1
Charlotte	F	PDW	Regional Office No. 2
Emma	F	SMT	Head Office
Lily	F	SMT	Regional Office No. 2
Mia	F	PDW	Regional Office No. 2
Peyton	F	AL	Head Office
Suzanne	F	AL	Head Office
William	F	AL	Head Office
Jade	F	SA	Head Office
Joshua	M	AL	Regional Office No. 2
Maya	F	SA	Head Office
Michael	M	PDW	Regional Office No. 3
Chloe	F	PDW	Regional Office No. 1
Evelyn	F	AL	Regional Office No. 1
Noah	M	PDW	Regional Office No. 3
Belinda	F	SA	Head Office
Ella	F	PDW	Regional Office No. 1
Emily	F	SA	Regional Office No. 2
Rose	F	SA	Head Office
Jakob	M	PDW	Regional Office No. 3
Layla	F	SA	Regional Office No. 2
Benjamin	M	PDW	Regional Office No. 2
Ethan	M	AL	Regional Office No. 3
Isabella	F	SMT	Head Office
Jim	M	SA	Regional Office No. 3
Andrew	M	AL	Regional Office No. 3
John	M	BOARD	Head Office
Lana	F	SA	Regional Office No. 3
Leah	F	AL	Head Office
Liam	M	PDW	Head Office
Lucas	M	PDW	Regional Office No. 3
Madison	F	SMT	Head Office
Naomi	F	SMT	Head Office
Olivia	F	SMT	Head Office
Rick	M	AL	Regional Office No. 2
Riley	F	SMT	Head Office
Sara	F	PDW	Regional Office No. 1
Sophia	F	SMT	Head Office
Theresa	F	SMT	Head Office
Zoey	F	AL	Regional Office No. 1

SMT	Senior Management Team
AL	Area Lead
SA	Support Advisor
PDW	Personal Development Worker

Table 3. 2 - All 41 participants, designations and area of business

3.6 Critical Incident Technique (CIT)

While the pilot interviews confirmed the general approach to exploring sensemaking processes and decision-making through semi-structured interviews, a lack of focus in the accounts of these processes led me to adopt the Critical Incident Technique (CIT) for the main study. Critical Incident Technique hereafter referred to as CIT has been proposed as having outstanding potential for aiding in the resolution of workplace problems, because it is a practical hands-on technique that allows for adaptable, open-ended data collection and analysis in a range of disciplines (Cunningham et al. 2020; Roque et al. 2020). CIT is defined as “a set of procedures for collecting direct observations of human behaviour in such a way as to facilitate their potential usefulness in solving practical problems and developing broad psychological principles” (Flanagan 1954, p. 327). This technique is suitable for use with my semi structured interviews because I required detailed descriptions from a representative sample of a target behaviour (decision-making).

The main advantage of adopting the CIT in my study is that it enabled me to comprehend behaviour in complex circumstances in and within different groupings (Flanagan 1954). Through the use of narratives, CIT allowed me to discover and analyse behavioural problems of individuals where there are a myriad of problems or crisis that are often problematic for individuals to deal with (Andrews et al. 2009; Helkkula and Pihlström 2010). These issues may remain unresolved because the true nature of the crisis is not addressed, where descriptions outlining what had actually happened are highlighted rather than why the crisis had occurred in the first instance (Breunig and Christoffersen 2016). Here is where CIT fits in, allowing my participants to identify incidents and share their experiences, reasoning and possible explanations for the incidents. The thick descriptions offered by participants with regards to critical incidents, allowed for a much deeper understanding of the details and contextual factors that accompanied such behaviours. Examples of decisions discussed were ‘the payroll system’, ‘recruitment’, ‘the on-call system’, ‘training’ and ‘making of a video’ to name a few.

Before the study began, it was important that I clarify what I meant by the term 'critical incident' to all my participants and hence adopted the explanation put forward by Flanagan (1954) who stated that a critical incident was a human activity that was observable and complete in itself to offer inferences about the person performing the action. Additionally, in order for the incident to be regarded as critical, the situation from which the incident occurred must be clear to the participant and the consequences of which are definitive. From the extant literature, there have been debates on whether the critical incident itself should be positive or negative (Kaulio 2008; Pina e Cunha et al. 2009) or a requirement that both positive and negative incidents be included in the discussion (Bryman et al. 1996; Lapidot et al. 2007). The explanation offered by scholars is that when participants are asked to recall critical incidents, they often refer to negative incidents mostly, because negative incidents appeared to be stronger than positive ones and were at the fore front of their minds (Baumeister et al. 2001).

For my study, I commenced the semi structured critical incident interviews by requesting a positive incident of a decision-making case followed by a negative incident of a decision-making case, so that I was aware of a range of experiences and challenges (Wolff et al. 2002). I found that the use of semi structured critical incident interviews served the purpose of my study well, because the data obtained from participants had to be initially categorised without any reference to existing theory (Bradley 1992). A two way conversation ensued throughout the interviews and enabled me to 'probe' deeper into the incidents discussed without leading the participant in any way to minimise bias or contamination (Silverman and Marvasti 2008).

The use of probes has been seen as beneficial in CIT because it enables the researcher to inject a certain amount of clarity and dialogue into the interview process without raising any issues pertaining to response bias (Schluter et al. 2008). In all the interviews conducted, I observed that the use of CIT appeared to aid in setting up a good rapport with my participants, who were at ease when imparting sensitive information from critical incidents (Chell 2004). Face to face interactions enabled me to explain to the participants the confidentiality of the results obtained with clarity and answer any questions that they had, instantaneously.

Interview protocol

In Yin (2014), the importance of having a case study protocol are highlighted. This is because having a protocol in place means that there are sets of rules and procedures that must be followed through, which lead to enhanced reliability of the case study research. Additionally, a distinction is made pertaining to different Level 1 and Level 2 questions. During the interview I had two things that I focused on. Level 1 followed my own line of inquiry from the interview protocol which reflected my own verbal line of inquiry. I followed this with Level 2, which were conversational questions. I used this mental line of inquiry to probe further and deeper, but in an unbiased and unthreatening manner. I operated on two levels simultaneously. I put the participant at ease by asking relevant open-ended questions in Level 1 while satisfying my line of inquiry questions in Level 2. To illustrate this better, Becker (2008), explained that asking a participant a 'why' question may appear confrontational and threatening, therefore to counter this effect, the participant is asked a 'how' question instead.

Table 3.3 below identifies each of the sensemaking processes in my analysis. This was identified through my interviews, identifying if various narratives were sensemaking, sensegiving or sensereceiving. This will enable the reader to comprehend and differentiate between the different sensemaking processes or in simple terms, to see what is classified as sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving.

For example,

“We needed to think of ways in which information could be used in the potential system so that it worked within our organisations” is classified as *sensemaking* because individuals needed to ‘make sense’ of the information that was relayed to them.

“Once that was sorted out, I would advise my colleagues on the changes that would come about” is classified as *sensegiving* because it provides a plausible explanation of reality whilst persuading others to accept their views as their own.

“Ideas flow through the organisation - If I had an idea, I would chat with my colleagues first and see the feedback received. Once that was sorted out, I would advise my colleagues on the changes that would come about” is classified as *sensereceiving* because of the exchange of information and feedback received between individuals in the organisation who were receptive to receiving information.

Examples of sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving narratives

We had a team of people who looked at various systems and decided to go with the Mitrefinch system.	Discussions were had to ensure that information was properly assimilated throughout the organisation.	Most ideas were basically feedback - lots of them through meetings etc.
I would look for clarity about what is the goal of a proposed project - capacity to see it through and what was required for us to contribute as a team.	The communication during this period was very 'chaotic' If I were to do this again, I would have a communication strategy to ensure that I had a plan in place.	Ideas flow through the organisation - If I had an idea, I would chat with my colleagues first and see the feedback received. Once that was sorted out, I would advise my colleagues on the changes that would come about.
We needed to think of ways in which information could be used in the potential system so that it worked within our organisation.	Once that was sorted out, I would advise my colleagues on the changes that would come about.	Lessons learnt here will definitely be used to improve the communication strategy for the new CRM which will be coming soon.
SENSEMAKING	SENSEGIVING	SENSE RECEIVING

Table 3. 3 - Extract from interviews - classifications of sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving

Table 3.4 below illustrates the case study interview protocol related to the sensemaking processes, using semi structured critical incident interview probes, which form the theoretical framework for this research, involving sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving processes.

Identity	S e n s e m a k i n g	• How much do you think your contribution to the organisation is valued? • Are you able to identify with the goals and aims of this organisation? • How do you feel working here? • Do you compare yourself to others in the organisation?
Retrospective		• Could you kindly reflect on 2 or 3 projects that you have been involved in over the last 6 months? • If you were doing it again what would you change? • What worked well and what didn't? • What are you most proud of in the organisation?
Ongoing and Cues		• Only through close monitoring / observations.
Enactment		• Do you have a business plan? • How do you conduct your workshops? • Why did you step down from your Area Lead role?
Social		• Who did you discuss the issue with? • Who did you ask? • How did you hear about the initiative?
Plausibility		• What works well in terms of opinions? • What were the issues and opportunities?
Sensegiving		• How well do ideas flow in the organisation? • Who gets listened to? • How do they get listened? • What is the format of communication?
Sensereceiving		• What did you first understand about the initiative? • I would be really interested to hear where do you think the final decision / solutions emerged from? • How well do you think that ideas flow in the organisation? • Where do ideas come from? • How do you process organisational information and make decisions around it? • How did you contribute to the initiative?

Table 3. 4 - Interview Protocol encompassing Sensemaking, Sensegiving and Sensereceiving

3.7 Additional sources used for data collection

Documentation is a relevant aspect of my case study and took on various forms. The types of documents that I used for my study were emails from participants (both personal and official), official organisation memos, letters, progress reports and internal documentation such as meeting minutes and written monthly reports.

Additionally, I obtained articles from magazines and newspaper clippings. A total of twenty-two (22) pieces of documentation were obtained from organisational members. The reason for the small number was because many of the documents contained highly confidential medical information about their clients which was not available for viewing and the organisation had just moved to new premises with most of their previous documentation still being held at a storage facility.

Yin (2014) stressed that the use of documentation in case study research must be used in corroboration with other sources of evidence as they may be used to authenticate correct spelling of names of individuals and organisations used in the interviews as well as providing specific information for corroboration with additional sources. If I encountered contradictory information it invoked me to probe further into the topic. Further, inferences obtained from documents were also useful but I only treated them as clues rather than conclusive findings because some of the leads were incorrect. However, the use and search for documentation was time consuming and I avoided relying on them too heavily for fear that some of them may contain misleading evidence.

Table 3.5 shows the types of documents used for this study.

TYPES	NUMBER
Internal Memos	2
Meeting minutes	2
Meeting Agendas	2
Personal Emails	7
Progress Reports	2
Event Agenda	1
Organisation Brochures	3
Care Inspectorate Report	1
Organisational Structure	1
Housing Support Service	1
Total	22

Table 3. 5 - Types of documents used for this study

Observation of participants occurred on four occasions at meetings. Observations were implemented because I wanted to add to the richness of my data and because my research questions focused on the interactions between organisational members, and therefore was a good way to watch and listen to them (Saunders et al. 2019). The observations were informal and unstructured and although I had a broad sense of what I was observing, the focus of my observation was flexible. I observed the setting in which discussions occurred as well as the individuals involved, what they did in the organisation, how interactions took place between members together with the emotional responses that it invoked (Spradley 2016). This led to my own reflection about all the observations which I recorded as field notes.

An important element for theory building in case studies is the frequent overlap of data analysis with data collection. Van Maanen (2011), stated the importance of writing field notes as it was a way to achieve this overlap. Through my field notes, I was informed about what was happening in the research by means of a commentary of both analysis and observations. This overlap of data collection with data analysis enabled me to take advantage of the flexibility in data collection and make appropriate adjustments as needed. In Harris and Sutton (1986), this flexibility in data collection allowed adjustments to be made to data collection instruments by adding interview questions to an interview protocol. These adjustments to the data collection methods resulted in surprising circumstances which I pursued further by looking at other pieces of documentation, which afforded me a clearer perspective. Although it could have seemed that the approach taken was unsystematic, the additions to the methodology may have allowed more flexibility of providing novel theoretical insights (Eisenhardt 1989).

I initially observed participants at two monthly meetings where all participants from various groups met, planned and discussed performance from the prior month prior along with plans for the foreseeable future. The other two meetings were formal in nature between external stakeholders and senior management team members with discussions about the financial stability of the organisation as well as the many volunteer opportunities available. I also observed four meetings which ranged from all day discussions to ones which were 3 hours long. These were with the Senior Management Team, Area Leads, Support Advisors and a high street bank.

Yin (2014) stressed that there was no single source that was regarded as being better than the others but sought to complement each other, instead producing data that was rich and rated most highly in terms of their quality. By using multiple sources of evidence, I was able to develop appropriate channels of inquiry. Further, the conclusions drawn using multiple sources of evidence led to data triangulation, thereby being more accurate and convincing than if only one method of evidence were used (Yin 2014, p. 120). Table 3.6 illustrates the three sources of evidence used, highlighting their major strengths and weaknesses of each method utilised.

Source of Evidence	Strengths	Weaknesses
Documentations	• UNOBTRUSIVE - not created as a result of the case study • PRECISE - names, events and context • EXPANSIVE - able to cover different events over a long-time frame	• RETRIEVABILITY - can be difficult to find • BIASED SELECTIVITY - if collection is incomplete • REPORTING BIAS - reflects (unknown) • ACCESS - may be deliberately withheld
Direct Observations	• ACTUAL - covers events in real time • CONTEXTUAL - can cover the case's context	• TIME CONSUMING • SELECTIVITY - board coverage difficult without a team of observes • REFLEXIVITY - actions may proceed differently because they are being observed
Semi Structured Critical Incident Interviews	• TARGETED - focuses directly on case study topic • INSIGHTFUL - explanations provided together with personal thoughts and feelings	• BIAS - due to properly articulated questions • RESPONSE BIAS • INACCURACIES - due to poor recall • REFLEXIVITY - interviewee gives what interviewer wants to hear

Table 3. 6 - Strengths and weaknesses of all 3 sources of evidence used for this study adapted from Yin (2014)

3.8 Using the Rational Decision-Making Model to analyse data through a deductive approach

A deductive research strategy enables logical thinking and meaningful decisions to be made based on the conclusions reached, by taking general assumptions and turning it into specific ideas or action. The initial stage was identifying and developing the case studies as well as the empirical material used in the rational decision-making model.

Different questions were considered pertaining to decision-making processes when examining the data, including: -

- What were people attempting to accomplish and what they were doing to achieve them?
- What strategies were being utilised?
- How did the organisational members make sense of what was actually happening?
- Did the organisational members make any assumptions based on what they perceived was happening?
- How did the organisational members characterise and discuss decision making processes at the organisation?

The results were evaluated through the use of different cases (decision-making processes) until theoretical saturation was achieved.

The interview material was examined by utilising the rational decision-making model which was used to determine the participant's experiences, opinions, and feelings to the situation. The interview material / data was analysed step by step. These were developed into content analytical units. Text interpretation which closely followed the two research questions were categorised and revised throughout the analysis process. Rather than technique, subject reference (decision-making processes) was of primary importance for content analysis of my case study, showing that the procedures used for content analysis were not fixed but instead adapted to the subject matter.

The data for my research was focused on decision-making events which used the critical incident technique for my semi-structured interview questions. Each case was a decision-making process. The use of a *summary* reduced the material whilst preserving the vital content, so as to make the data more manageable. Text was either quoted, abstracted or generalised. The purpose of the interviews involved going back and forth to gather rich data about the numerous decision-making processes, which always explored the sensemaking and decision-making processes. The main objective of the case study analysis was to derive appropriate conclusions from the data, whilst keeping a clear chain of evidence. The case study's unique strength is "its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence - documents, artifacts, interviews, and observations" (Yin, 2003, p.8).

A sequential model of qualitative content analysis was put forward with three specific analytical procedures which were used in combination (Mayring, 2002, p.115; Titscher et al., 2000, pp.62-64). The Rational Decision-Making Model was used to describe the steps employees would take when decisions were made. The steps are designed to reduce biases and increase decision quality. To show that a problem existed, (Decision Identification) data insights from the participant interviews were evidenced.

Explication of material dealt with the explanation and clarification of material before being narrowed to a more specialised context. After this, an 'explicatory paraphrase' was determined and examined in reference to the whole context (Kohlbacher 2006). Finally, *structuring* took place which is a crucial technique of content analysis. The text was structured according to content and form, where the units of analysis were determined based on the decision-making processes. After this, the results derived were analysed and processed.

Ample data from each participant was gathered regarding decision-making processes in the Information Gathering stage. The aim of the deductive analysis was to use the Rational Decision-Making Model to code the interviews. This enabled a reflection of the deductive process and their ease or difficulty in the coding process as well as the codes and code descriptions. The use of the Rational Decision-Making Model and the deductive approach also showed if the employees were proactive in decisions.

It gave an indication if the employees had problem-solving skills and were able to focus on the solutions or goals. It highlighted whether decisions undertaken were predetermined goals and if emotions were marginalised.

I had 25 different cases and used the Rational Decision-Making Model to illustrate the decision-making process as reflected from the data collected. Each case contained information about decision-making processes as relayed to me by all 41 of my participants. However, some of the cases discussed contained similar elements of critical incidents but were from a different perspective. These incidents were categorised under the same cases and this is why 41 semi-structured interviews were narrowed down to 25 cases. This clearly showed the Sensemaking, Sense-receiving as well as Sensegiving processes through their decision-making journey in the Organisation researched.

Forty-one (41) interviews were conducted and out of them, twenty-five (25) cases / decision-making processes were categorised as follows: -

1. A Lack of Support
2. A Loss of Contract
3. Communication Breakdown
4. Core Values & On-Call
5. Designing of New System
6. Disregarded
7. Geographical Map
8. Harassment
9. High Turnover of Staff
10. Living Wage Implementation
11. Making of Video
12. Mismanagement of Business
13. Mitrefinch Payroll System
14. New Contracts
15. Not Having A Voice

16. On Call
17. Overpowering Leader
18. Pay Shortages
19. Recruitment
20. Strategic Plan
21. Strategic vs. Operational
22. Ticket System
23. Training
24. Underutilised
25. Voluntary Demotion

The Rational Decision-Making Model was used as a starting point from which all data from decision-making events were categorised into Sensemaking, Sensegiving or Sensereceiving processes. The Rational Decision-Making Model used had seven (7) stages which comprised of: -

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|---------------------|
| 1. Decision Identification | - | Sensemaking (SM) |
| 2. Information Gathering | - | Sensemaking (SM) |
| 3. Alternatives Identification | - | Sensegiving (SG) |
| 4. Alternatives Evaluation | - | Sensereceiving (SR) |
| 5. Choice of Best Alternatives | - | Sensereceiving (SR) |
| 6. Decision Implementation | - | Sensegiving (SG) |
| 7. Decision Evaluation | - | Sensemaking (SM) |

Data from the interviews were divided into either sensemaking, sensegiving or sensereceiving processes. Apart from the interviews, additional sources of data were used including various types of documentation as well as observations. All of them highlighted sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving data. I then analysed each case individually and related them directly to the Rational Decision-Making Model which was created in conjunction with my Literature Review.

Data from 'Making of video' applied to the Rational Decision-Making Model.

1. *Decision Identification* - Sensemaking

In the coming months, the organization decided to take a hands on approach to recruitment, and I had been asked to think about making a video for the organization where it would show how I would interview potential candidates for the job.

2. *Information Gathering* - Sensemaking

I hadn't had any training with regards on how to recruit but I used my prior experience from my former job to put the package together.

3. *Alternatives Identification* - Sensegiving

My colleagues and I explored various alternatives to recruitment which was being implemented and other similar organisations such as ours and we exchanged this information with others in the organisation.

4. *Alternatives Evaluation* - Sensereceiving

I set up a meeting where we reviewed all the different recruitment styles / policies and discussed which ones would best suit the unique style of business that we were involved in.

5. *Choice of best alternatives* - Sensereceiving

We evaluated the other 3 alternatives and came up with a package that was unique to our organisation as we had such specialised clients. We came to an agreement that this particular package would enable us to explain to potential employees the kind of work we did and how we placed such importance on how we always put our clients first.

6. *Decision Implementation - Sensegiving*

The day arrived when we tried out our new recruitment package on a couple of potential employees. It seemed to be working really well and we carried on implementing it for 3 weeks.

7. *Decision Implementation - Sensemaking*

We were very pleased with the results from the recruitment package that we had worked collectively to create. The new employees that we had hired were doing very well as they totally were able to comprehend the scope and nature of the work involved.

Figure 3.1 shows the 7 stages of the rational decision-making model used for a change in the recruitment policies / method at the organisation researched.

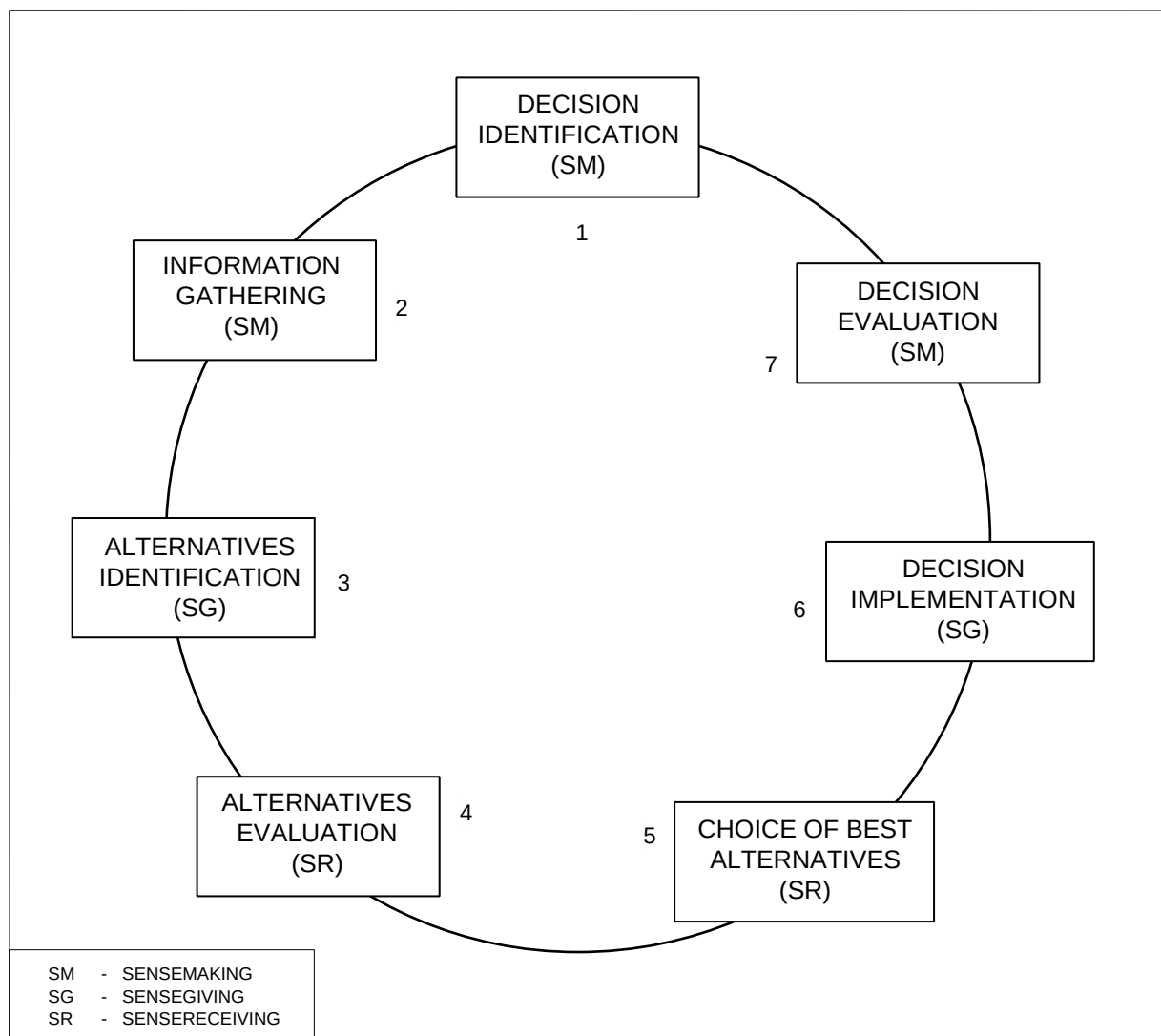


Figure 3. 1 - Sample Analysis of Recruitment Data

The stages of the decision-making processes need not follow a linear order, although all my cases did. It was vital that I made sense of my data first by thoroughly understanding what my participants were telling me with regards to their interpretation of the decision-making process in their organisation. Coding involves representing aspects of data by assigning labels to them. As the data collected from my participants were 'descriptive' in nature, the use of 'focused coding' was the best way to understand the multiple layers of meaning and to identify recurring themes that emerged pertaining to how decision-making processes occurred in their organisation. It was also important that ultimately my findings would represent all the data that I had collected. Based on the 25-case study, this can now move to an inductive element where I then explored the relationship between the sensemaking processes (sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving) and decision making, utilising thematic analysis.

3.9 Method of analysis

Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis has been regarded as a process that identifies patterns within qualitative data (Braun and Clarke 2006). Many authors have stated that thematic analysis ought to be a separate method on its own instead of being a process that is merely used by other qualitative methods (Holloway and Todres 2003; King 2004). The objective of thematic analysis is theme identification which means that important and interesting patterns in the data are extracted, addressing the research or study dealing with a specific issue. The starting point of my analysis was driven by my two research questions: -

1. How do sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving influence decision-making in organisations?
2. How do sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving relate to each other?

I used the six step guide advocated by Braun and Clarke (2006), to provide a framework for conducting my analysis.

STEP 1 - Familiarity with data

I listened to all my recorded interviews and took down extensive notes for all my forty-one interviews, ensuring that I was familiar with the data. On my journey home on the train after each interview, I would go through the recordings and made a list of any words I felt could be misinterpreted in a different context. These terms were used by participants during our conversations and to ensure that they were not misinterpreted in any way, I noted down their exact meanings as intended by the participant, while the conversations were still fresh in my mind. The observations and analysis of documents helped with this. A sample is included below in Table 3.7.

<i>Frustration</i>	Asked to poke her nose into critical things but when the information was delivered to the employees, it wasn't received well.
<i>Wrong culture</i>	Feeling that her thoughts and ideas went ignored / unappreciated by her peers.
<i>Naïve</i>	Being totally mistaken about the way the organisation worked.
<i>Professional manner</i>	Encouraged to listen to suggestions / criticisms and to follow through.
<i>Unprofessional behaviour</i>	People took things 'personally' and ideas did not work - therefore behaviour was unprofessional.
<i>Flat structure of organisation</i>	No hierarchy in the organisation.
<i>Socializing</i>	Not much happening at work apart from work.
<i>A drift in the organisation</i>	People don't communicate well and there is a lack of information sharing.
<i>Congruent</i>	Reading the body language of colleagues and deciding if we are in agreement / harmony all the way through.
<i>Impervious</i>	Unable to change one's mind - set in her ways and thinking.
<i>Put my big girl pants on</i>	An expression of 'fear' and 'rejection'.
<i>Role of moderator</i>	Trying to dissolve the tension within the organisation.

Table 3. 7 - Theresa - Interpretation of terms used

STEP 2 - Initial codes generated

I was now ready to organise my data in a systematic and meaningful way. I wanted to ensure my two research questions were always at the forefront of my mind while I did my coding. Focusing the analysis was helpful because it allowed me to constantly think of how I could answer my research questions with clarity and precision. I began the coding process by coding each section of data that seemed relevant or thought-provoking (Boyatzis 1998) to my research questions, specifically pertaining to decision-making. I utilised open coding whereby no pre-set codes were used, codes were instead modified and developed throughout the entire coding process. My coding was data driven and I was coding to see if there were any particular features that emerged from the data set. I initially started coding manually by using 'post it' colored notes to see if any repeated patterns would form from the data. I coded as many themes as possible from the data, whilst keeping in mind the context from which it was collected. There were some inconsistent themes that emerged from the data, but I did not ignore them but instead coded everything. I transferred all the data onto a software program so as to maintain the salience and context of all the data from my forty-one interviews.

Table 3.8 illustrates a set of sample codes which were applied to the textual data extracted from the interviews.

DESCRIPTIVE CODES	TEXTUAL DATA
Top down decision-making	"Isabella is the 'driver' for most things - she makes most of the decisions"
People don't understand	"What we are finding out is that people don't understand 'why' - they may have heard from others 'why we do what we do', but they don't know for sure"

Table 3. 8 - How codes were applied to some textual data

I used a descriptive code for the first text as 'top-down decision-making' because it reflected the type of decision-making where the Senior Managers were responsible for all decision-making in organisations. For the second text, it is the head of the organisation who predominantly makes all the important decisions for the organisation and members are not given reasons why things are done in a certain way. Not understanding why and how things are done creates another problem for organisational members whereby they are unable to problem solve and make day to day decisions as they are unsure of what is acceptable and what is not.

The two codes are different because the organisational members are describing two different sets of circumstances - one where they are not permitted to participate in decision-making processes because decisions are always made from the top of the organisation and hence coded as top-down decision-making. The second code is describing a situation where members are unsure of how to deal with different circumstances as they arise because all they have heard is 'hearsay' but despite that, they are unsure of how to deal with problematic situations as they have not been taught to problem solve.

STEP 3 - A search for themes

Themes are patterns that capture fragments of information that are interesting or important about the data and research questions. All the codes were organised into different themes and were related to the research questions in one way or another. I worked to sort out the codes and collated them into prospective themes. The themes generated were descriptive in nature and relate to the research questions (decision-making) as indicated in Figure 3.1. By this stage, I was starting to analyse my codes and seeing how they fit with the other themes, how were they linked and what were their principal themes. A thematic map was created so as to aid in the formation of relationships between each other. No codes were discarded at this stage even though there were some that didn't appear to fit in with the rest of the themes. For the purpose

of these codes, I termed them as assorted. For example, I coded “Isabella is the driver of most things - she makes the most decisions” as ‘top-down decision-making’ because their behaviour is most predominantly prevalent in organisations where decisions are only made by top executives / management.

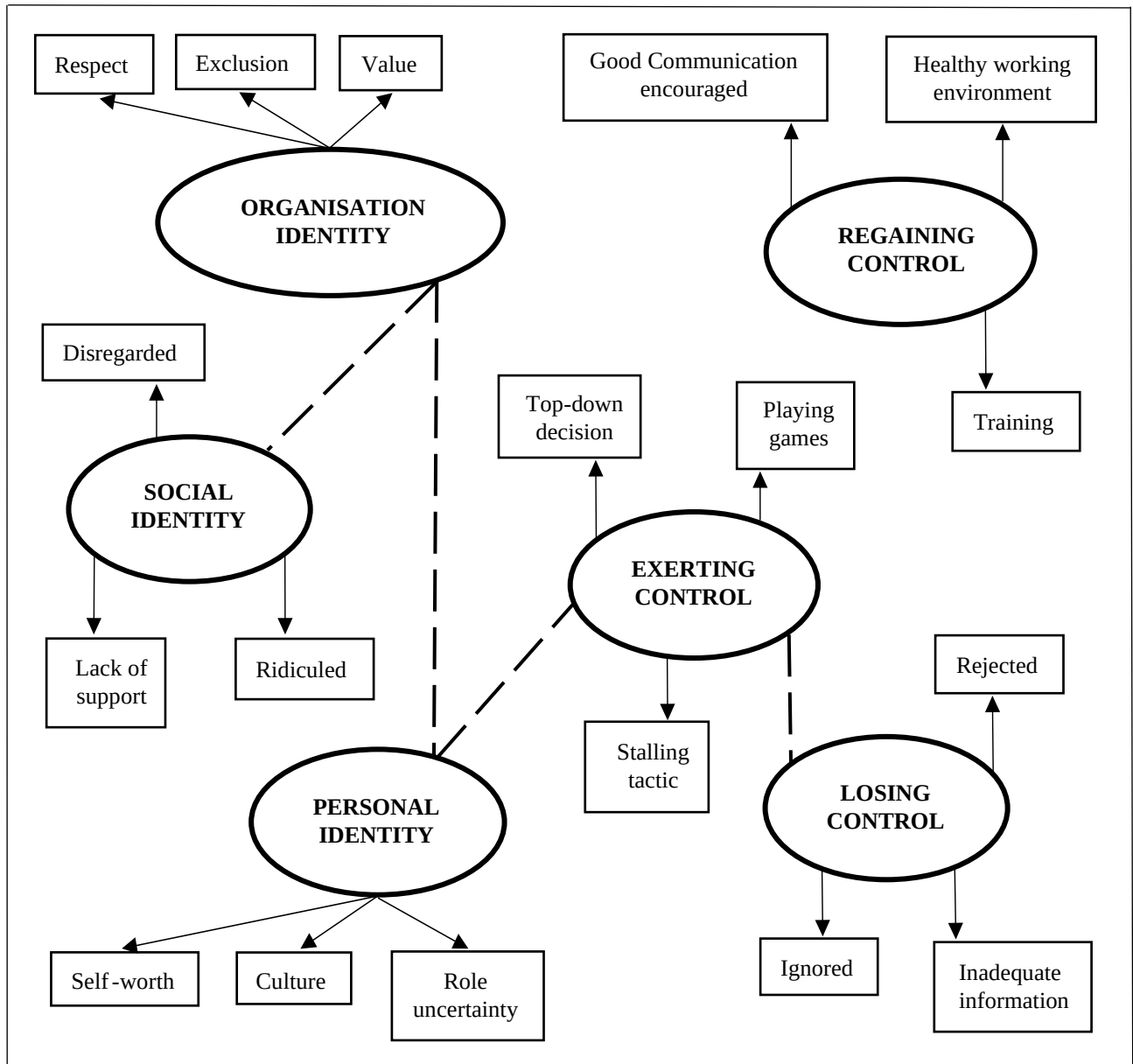


Figure 3. 2 - Initial codes and themes generated

STEP 4 - Review of themes

This step enabled me to review all the initial themes in step 3, and in doing so, develop and amend them further, all the while thinking about if the themes created made sense to the research questions whilst gathering all the data into their respective themes. It was at this stage that some codes were eliminated as they did not contribute any meaning to the overall themes or have any kind of significance to the other themes. I read through all the data linked to each of the themes as well as thought about the context of the data set to see if the data was supported and came to the conclusion that it was good fit. My understanding from the observations and documents helped with this.

Additionally, I considered how the themes reflected the contents and context of all my critical incident interviews and resolved that the themes made sense and the data supported them. All the data within the themes created, bound meaningfully but nevertheless had clear distinctions amongst them. I began a methodical review of all the themes by reading through all the data extracts to further evaluate if they formed a comprehensible pattern. It was at this stage that some codes were eliminated as they did not contribute any meaning to the overall themes or have any kind of significance to the other themes. Figure 3.2 reflects the refinement of these themes.

I then progressed to the next level of coding where I reread all the data to consider their rationality of each individual theme created with relation to the entire data set and to also gauge if the thematic map correctly reflected the meaning associated with them. I then looked at my data set to see if any codes had been missed, to record them if needed. I did identify a couple of new themes and coded them accordingly. After doing so, I decided that there were no more refinements that I could have carried forward and stopped the coding process. I looked at all the themes created and made a note of how they connected to each other and how the data clearly provided a description of an unfolding story.

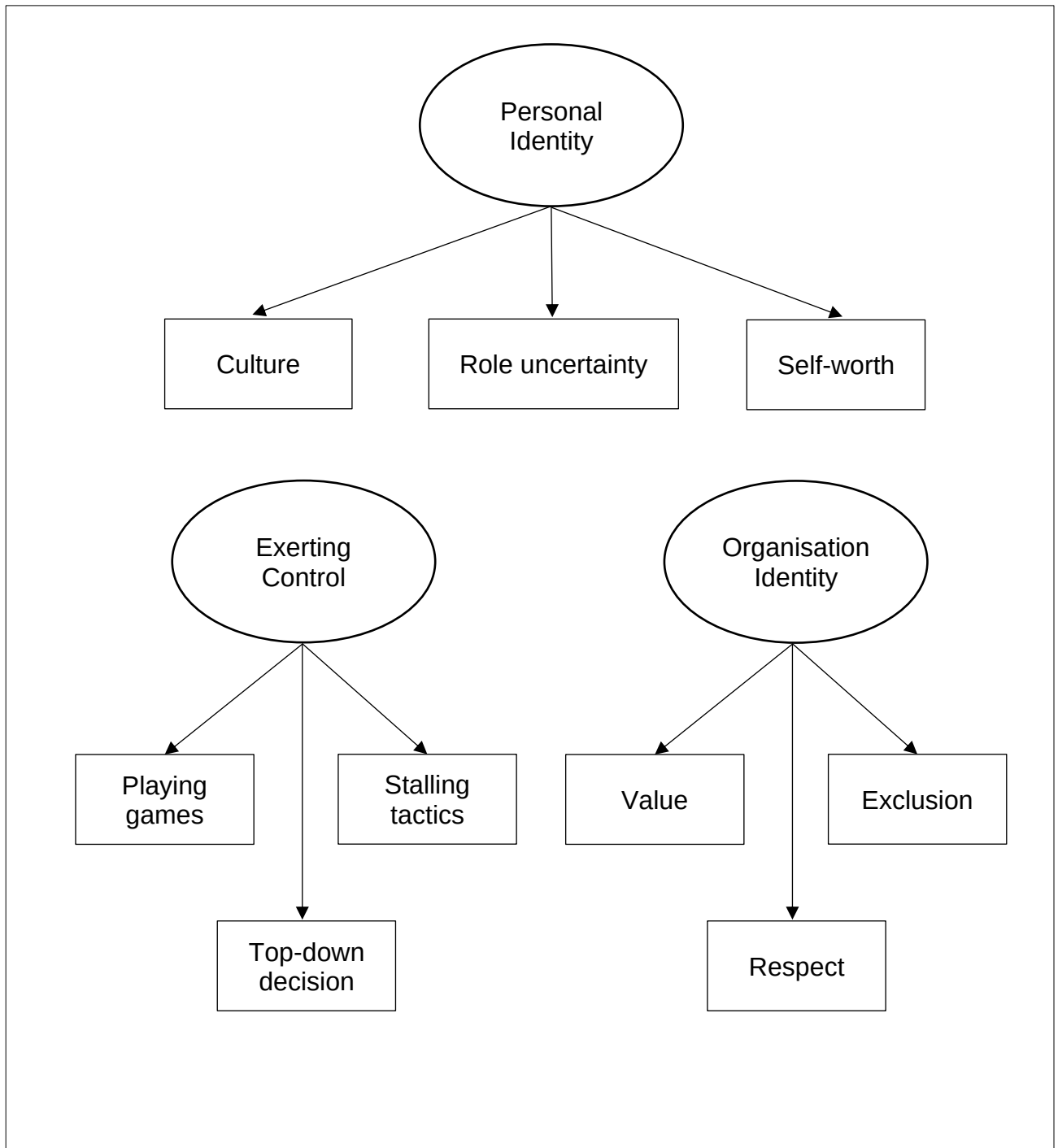


Figure 3. 3 - Refinement of themes

STEP 5 - Defining and labelling themes

By this stage, a thematic map of the data is presented, consisting of further improvements made to the themes which are now ready for in depth analysis. Analysing how each theme represents the data requires diligent organisation of the gathered data together with the narrative, in a systematic and coherent way. I made notes of why I found the data interesting as well as how they related to the bigger 'story'. Additionally, comprehensive notes were made, ensuring that they related to the research questions. A final thematic map was created as illustrated in Figure 3.3 and the two dominant themes were 'sense of control' and 'sense of identity'. Within each of these themes, two sets of sub-themes were also recognised - for 'sense of control', the sub-themes highlighted were exerting control, losing control and regaining control. For 'sense of identity', the sub-themes were organisational identity, social identity and personal identity. Subsequently, what emerged from the data were 70 descriptive codes, 20 analytical codes and 2 themes. I used NVIVO to help in organising and managing my data.

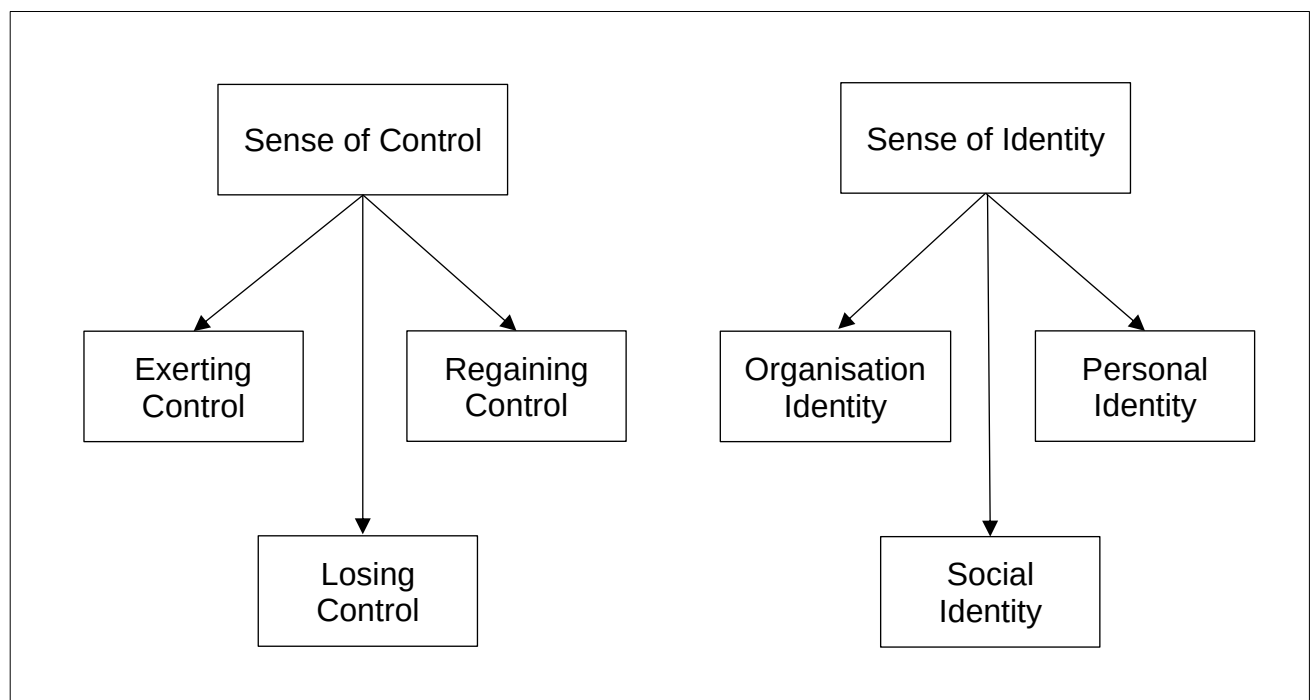


Figure 3. 4 - Final Thematic Map

STEP 6 - Report generation

This step commenced when I was satisfied that I had fully established the two aggregate dimensions (Gioia et al. 2013) and thereafter set out to write up a detailed analysis of my findings so as to inform the reader how I derived the results from the data. I was sure to be as precise as I could so as not to leave any gaps in my explanation whilst keeping it simple and coherent, logical and interesting. Additionally, I used examples to explain how I had come up with the themes as well as diagrams and tables to show a logical sequence of analysis. What emerged from the data were two distinct yet diverse themes, 'sense of control' and 'sense of identity'. These two themes will be analysed in detail in Chapter 5.

Table 3.9 depicts a sample extract of codes, textual data and themes taken from a participant's interview.

DESCRIPTIVE CODES	TEXTUAL DATA	ANALYTIC CODES	THEMES
Top-down decision-making	"Isabella is the 'driver' for most things - she makes most of the decisions"	Exerting	S e n s e o f C o n t r o l
Decision-making mostly always exercised by the head of the organisation	"It takes courage to control Isabella - she is reluctant to even listen to advice but almost always makes decisions single handedly"	Control	
No compromise for decision-making	"Although Isabella is a great & compassionate boss, when she disagrees with you, she can be very 'impervious'"	Losing	
Unwillingness to participate in any form of decision-making	"Having experienced Isabella's behaviour previously, Olivia & Emma are somewhat reluctant to partake or make any significant decisions for fear that it is the 'wrong decision'"	Control	
"People don't understand"	"What we are finding out is that 'people don't understand 'why' - they may have heard from others 'why we do what we do', but they don't know for sure	Lack of explanation	
A change in behaviour	"I also have to 'get smarter' in the way I say things to people. I am not very tactful	Self-doubt	S e n s e o f I d e n t i t y
Fear and anxiety of having ideas rejected	"Isabella has acknowledged her 'impervious' nature when I spoke to her and said, I have had to put my 'big girl's pants' on and be consciously brave to come to you to 'voice my opinion'"	Lack of support	
A stalling tactic with no real outcome	"Isabella then responds by pulling herself together and saying 'let's think about this'"	Unclear direction	
Not good at communicating with their teams	"I think that this happens because SA's are not good at working with the teams in that kind of way i.e. coaching way"	Unwilling participation	

Table 3. 9 - A sample extract of codes, textual data and themes taken from a participant's critical incident interview

3.10 Validity and reliability of the research

Patton (2002) argued that both reliability and validity concepts should be accounted for when designing and analysing a study. Validity as suggested by Creswell and Miller (2000), is concerned with the researcher and their own perceptions of validity in the study along with their choice of paradigm. Without rigor in research, the research loses its value and becomes worthless. The term rigor in research applies to discussions about validity and reliability but the way in which rigor is evaluated must be in line with the kind of research and methods utilised (Davies and Dodd 2002). Further they argue that reliability of data is based on the consistency and transparency of research practices together with reliability in the analysis as well as the conclusions reached. Due consideration must also be given to the limitations and partiality of the research undertaken. In writing my Methodology and my presentation of the analysis, I have sought to be transparent as to the steps taken and why.

The rigor of the study in qualitative research is concerned with the verification, i.e. the mechanisms that are used during the research process to increasingly contribute to reliability and validity of the research assumed to eventually construct a substantial product (Creswell and Creswell 2017). By doing so, would allow for correction of errors being built into the model that is being developed, enabling achievement of reliability and validity, ensuring rigor.

Verification strategies employed, as highlighted by Morse et al. (2002) during this research process ensured that validity and reliability of data was achieved.

Methodological coherence safeguards the compatibility between the research questions, the mechanisms of the method undertaken, the data and analytic procedures. Whilst conducting the research, the research questions did change through the process whilst leaving the methods and sampling unchanged, fitting in with the data to logically meet the analytic goals. The sample chosen for the research was appropriate as the participants chosen possessed the best knowledge of the research topic. Sampling adequacy was reached with optimal quality data, resulting in saturation of data and replication. I did think theoretically, which enabled me to realise

new ideas that emerged from the data to eventually build a comprehensive foundation. Theory development ensued where I was able to ensure that the theory was developed from the data gathered through the research process to a theoretical comprehension. All of the above strategies ensured that the goal of rigor was met throughout the research process.

3.11 Ethics

With regards to my study, the central ethical concern was to avoid reputational damage to any participant through the release of personal commentary that would be traceable back to them (Easterby-Smith et al. 2008). As a researcher conducting open interviews, I was aware of the significance of the questions being asked and the control of data. Managers, although not professionally trained investigators, are able to deduce from conversations with researchers, the nature and source of information obtained. Therefore, my aim, was to provide comprehensive information through my consent components and carefully manage that data, to fully mitigate these risks.

In communicating with participants, firstly, I introduced the nature of my research activities. This explained the purpose of my study, its duration and the procedures involved. Secondly, I introduced my role as the researcher, and explained what their role of participants involved, as well as why they were chosen for the research. Thirdly, I provided a detailed description of how I would maintain their confidentiality, anonymity and privacy at all times. I communicated to my participants, how data collected from them would be stored by the use of appropriate security measures. Fourthly, I offered to answer any concerns that any participant may have had and who they should contact if they had any lingering questions. An explanation was also offered as to what would happen with my findings and how it may be utilised. Finally, in the event that any participants wished to withdraw their consent, I explained that they could do so at their free will and would be allowed to discontinue from the research.

The University of Stirling requires that research data is securely preserved in an appropriate format for a minimum of 10 years, or longer if specified by the funder. Information will be held only in restricted areas of the University network and protected with secure credentials. Participant consent forms were also given to all participants to ensure that potential participants had adequate information to make an informed decision about whether to take part in my research or not. The General University Ethics Panel (GUEP) approved the ethical approaches to my study before I commenced my data collection. Additionally, I completed a Research Integrity Training Session at the University of Stirling prior to my field work. Paper copies will be limited and, when not being referred to, held in locked storage. All paper documents will be shredded and audio recordings will be permanently erased upon the completion of my PhD.

3.12 Limitations

There are numerous issues pertaining to my research methods which may limit their validity (Maxwell 1992). These will be addressed in this section. The first limitation discussed is memory recall. When interviewing all my forty-one participants, their memories at times were not as clear as it could have been, as there was a lapse in the time frame from when the critical incidents occurred to the time that they were being interviewed. The sensemaking process through which participants relayed their critical incidents may not have been as clear or as straightforward as they portrayed. The reason for this is that it is difficult for individuals to retrospectively retrace their logical thought processes (Weick et al. 2005). It is argued that individuals who are faced with unexpected situations modify their cognition from automatic processing to active thinking (Louis and Sutton 1991). By this they meant that organisational members rely on 'habits' to conduct their behaviours, failing which, they resort to 'active thinking' which helps them to avoid similar future discrepancies.

The limitations of using CIT in my interviews was due to the fact that there were some instances where participants were slow in recalling past events. This has been noted as a flaw of CIT which may affect reliability and validity of the research done (Gremier 2004). At the start of the interview, some participants appeared lost recalling critical incidents that had occurred in the past six months. I did extend the time frame to one year in these instances (Druskat and Wheeler 2003; Kvarnström 2008). Tempted as I was, to ask the participants to think about the critical incidents they wished to discuss at the interviews, I refrained from doing so. The idea of sending participants open ended questions by email one week prior to the interview was highlighted in Schluter et al. (2008), whereby participants who were interviewed had difficulty in recalling critical incidents to discuss, resulting in a loss of interview time.

Another limitation associated with the CIT is that of 'accuracy'. Hardt et al. (2013) argued that human memory tends to deteriorate with time, resulting in 'memory gaps' which is then facilitated by inferences, guesswork and plausibilities to fill them (Nahum et al. 2012). Further, it was easy to introduce 'false memories' into a conversation between participant and interviewer, thus invoking a false memory that the participant felt that they truly experienced. Finally, the order in which the CIT interview questions were presented offers different viewpoints. Kohles et al. (2012) suggested alternating positive and negative questions so that the CIT incidents did not always end on a negative note. I did follow this practice and found that because recalling critical incidents was often an emotional event for participants, ending on a positive note ensured that the participants left the interviews happy. Additionally, alternating the order of interview questions, reduced the possibility of order bias.

Direct observations do possess some limitations when used, because participants are aware that they are being observed and this may invoke them to change their behaviour accordingly (Waddington 2004). This has been called 'observer's paradox' and is said to make the interview process ineffective (Cukor-Avila 2000). I did spend a substantial amount of time observing participants either individually or during group meetings and discussions, finding them beneficial, although some of the time spent during observations did not involve any critical incidents.

Starbuck and Milliken (1988) argued that individuals appeared to regard retrospective events (in sensemaking) as reasonably ordered when compared to events that were current or prospective. This would mean that the semi-structured interviews conducted on all participants may have revealed their rational thought process accounts rather than the day-to-day ambiguity of life. Additionally, 'probes' to coax the information out of respondents by 'cues' used throughout the interview, may have placed undue pressure on them to include events that did not really occur. I was especially careful in not allowing this to happen, using minimum probes and allowing the participants to take their time and carefully think about critical incident events as they were being relayed to me.

I assured all participants that confidentiality and anonymity were exercised at all times throughout the write up process. When interviews were conducted with the Senior Management Team members, I was aware that participants may have social desirability bias and only wished to share positive events and memories that portrayed them as competent management team members. I continued to reassure all participants that confidentiality was of utmost importance and did my level best to put them at ease to gain their trust and build a good rapport with each and every one of my participants. Weick (1995) stated that it was important to ensure that what individuals tell us is in sync with what they were actually doing, as there may be discrepancies in their actions. This kind of detachment, where contrasting theories described as espoused theories and theories in use are utilised to study professional practices. "Espoused theories are those that an individual claims to follow. Theories-in-use are those that can be inferred from action" (Argyris et al. 1985, p. 82). This idea was originally postulated by Argyris and Schon (1974) where it was explained that individuals possessed mental maps which guided their actions rather than the theories they adopted.

3.13 Conclusion

This section will conclude with the a summary of arguments that have been developed in this chapter. The utilisation of a single case study approach ensured a more comprehensive understanding of the decision-making processes. The pilot study was conducted to primarily address any challenges that may have arisen and to adjust accordingly so as to accommodate the main study. Semi-structured interviews using the Critical Incident Technique (CIT) enabled the collection of direct observation of human behaviour and also in-depth probing of information which required further elaboration. Thematic analysis was effectively used to identify various themes and patterns from the extracted data pertaining to sensemaking processes which led to decision-making. Having discussed in detail the methodology and methods utilised for this study, we now proceed to the initial case study findings in preparation for the in-depth analysis that ensues in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4. INITIAL CASE STUDY FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will be organising and summarising the initial findings from the study, to prepare for in-depth analysis. In Chapter two, we established that the organisational decision-making framework is a collaborative decision-making process utilising sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving involving leaders and organisational members. I am looking to learn about the decision-making process, specifically analysing the concept of *sensereceiving* which emerges as a crucial part of my thesis.

The research questions for this study are: -

- 1) How do sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving influence decision-making in organisations?
- 2) How do sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving relate to each other?

Managers try to give sense to their organisational members by continuously trying to shape their sensemaking that is a part of the decision-making process. My main contribution and focus of my insights are on understanding sensereceiving as these are important factors that determine high or low sensereceiving of organisational members. Low sensereceiving in terms of the decision-making process means that sensegiving activities of managers are impacted and may be ineffective when directed at organisational members.

I begin with a detailed history of ABC, the organisation researched. I then introduce the decision-making framework and apply decision-making processes, one with low sense-receiving and the other with high sense-receiving. Figure 4.1 shows how low sense-receiving influences the decision-making process during the decision-making process. In Figure 4.2, I used an interview where the participant experienced high sense-receiving to show how it affected the decision-making process. I conclude this chapter with a summary of all the novel concepts introduced and establish how sense-making, sense-giving and sense-receiving influence decision-making in organisations. Doing so enables me to answer the first (1st) research question.

4.2 ABC organisation - history, mission and values.

ABC is a UK based organisation established by the current CEO and founder with approximately fifty (50) people at the outset. It has since grown to a workforce of approximately two hundred and fifty (250) people. It is a non-profit organisation, originated more than fifteen years ago and was specifically designed to individualise support arrangements for people with a wide assortment of needs. Specialised arrangements are built around individuals enabling innovative self-directed support. Initially, ABC only focused on individuals who required specific support but gradually shifted their support to include all individuals who aspired to move into their own homes. This allowed all individuals to better connect with their local communities and experience an enhanced quality of life. The primary focus was to provide creative and flexible support on a personal level to clients with changing needs. The organisation has continuously developed personalised support for their varied clients who have learning disabilities and mental health issues, with the aim of enabling individuals to experience positive changes in their lives.

As time evolved, the organisation has learnt to apply growing knowledge and experience to develop practice and skills, therefore benefitting individuals in spite of their personal circumstances or age. Clients were empowered to actively participate in the community at large, living life to maximise their potential. ABC plays a supporting role by listening, advising and planning their clients' lives. ABC works on the principle that clients are instrumental in directing their own support and it is the duty of their supporting teams to exercise flexibility with their clients changing needs. This requires a strong bond between clients and their individual support teams. The values of the organisation emphasise that each and every individual has the right to be heard, be involved in decisions that affect their lives and be active participants in their communities, leading meaningful lives.

ABC has a flat organisational structure, where a large number of people in the organisation are supervised by individual managers in accordance with their location. Each manager possesses substantial responsibility in directing their teams and offers help and support, limiting the guidance from superiors because there are only a limited number of superiors above the managers. The structure of the organisation encourages decision-making to be as close as possible to the clients that they service. The location manager's task is to implement a responsive service, develop positive relationships, local identity as well as transparency and accountability between clients, colleagues and themselves.

Support for all frontline staff is provided by Support Advisors who continually spend quality time with their own teams to ensure that the needs of their clients are being met and therefore allowing them to direct their own support the way that they see fit. All the work done by ABC is guided by their fully inclusive board of directors who are comprised of a panel of distinguished members who dedicate their time, effort and expertise to continuously recommend and implement improvements to the organisation. There is also an Improvement Council which is made up of a forum, run for the people the organisation works with.

Some of the key players are Isabella, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and several of the Senior Management Team (SMT) members, Olivia, Emma and Theresa, Sophia, Riley, Lily and Naomi and Madison. Isabella, the CEO is an active supporter and campaigner for equality and social justice, regularly writing articles to champion the rights of individuals with different disabilities and sits on the board of multiple organisations supporting disability rights. She possesses extensive practical hands-on experience, actively promoting supported decision-making and is a passionate public speaker. Emma and Olivia have been at ABC since the beginning of its inception and only welcomed the newest SMT member, Theresa, two years ago. According to Theresa, their welcome of her has been quite frosty, making her feel very much an outsider and struggling to fit in.

4.3 Analysis overview

I now direct the reader to the decision-making processes to explore how high and low sensereceiving affect decision-making processes in organisations. The analysis of the decision-making process presented below is driven by theory using the sensemaking and decision-making processes together with the data that was derived through interviews, documentation as well as observations. The seven properties of sensemaking as identified by Weick (1995), i.e. (identity, retrospective, social, enactment, ongoing, plausibility and cues) were drawn out in the preliminary analysis.

The events presented were interpreted as part of the sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving processes. It has been suggested that the analysis of data comprises the problematic part of theory building using case study research. However, for the analysis of data, two ways have been suggested by Eisenhardt (1989), whereby a cross case analysis and within case analysis may be utilised. There is also the issue of the amount of data gathered and this may be overwhelming especially with open ended research questions, but with the use of within case analysis, coping with the amount of data is easier (Pettigrew 1990).

Now, we turn our attention to my analysis of the interviews with participants of ABC organisation. I identified twenty-five different decision-making processes that the participants talked about. These twenty-five decision-making processes (some participants chose to talk about critical incidents that were current and therefore there were overlaps in the subject matter and hence classified under the same topic) were critical incidents identified by the participants themselves. I interviewed forty-one participants and this number ensured that 'category theoretical saturation' was reached. My participants were a range of people from different areas and levels with different responsibilities as well as from different hierarchical levels in the organisation. I interviewed all of them about decision-making.

Here, I apply the sensemaking processes to analyse and interpret the decision-making processes. Doing so will allow me insights into why / how low and high sensereceiving shape the outcome of the decision-making processes.

4.4 Application of the decision-making process.

Decision-making process (No. 1) - Low Sensereceiving - The 'Payroll System'

A detailed look at one example allows an in-depth analysis, showing the connection between different phases of the decision-making process. It shows the decision-making process when SR is low and for this, I utilise the example of the Payroll System. This example of a decision-making process was undertaken to put in place a payroll system which would calculate the amount owed to organisational members based on factors such as the time they worked, their salary, hourly wages or vacation time utilised.

A meeting was held inviting all organisational members to give their thoughts on the introduction of a new system which was to be rolled out on a gradual basis. Figure 4.1 illustrates the decision-making process. The decision-making processes include interpreting the actions of organisational members and management teams. The numbers indicated below, (1 - 7) are the seven phases of the decision-making process. I will discuss a particular decision-making process in detail to illustrate the various processes identified in my analysis in a way that does not lose the richness of the context.

1. Decision / problem identification

Several SMT identified that the current payroll system needed to be changed. Therefore, a decision / problem identification was highlighted, with the realisation that a decision needed to be made pertaining to the current payroll system. Individual team members enact their environments by using narratives and dialogue, helping them understand what they think will form their individual experiences which in turn predict future events. The enactment process in sensemaking represents the notion that actions of individuals are brought into existence when they bring in structures and events that set them in action. Enactment seeks to provide a link between the environment and the cognitive processes of individuals. An enacted environment provides individuals with a perception of how consequences are the result of certain actions. Therefore, it is the concept of schema which enables individuals to have certain expectations about future events.

The SMT were involved in the sensemaking process. By this I mean that SMT participated in a process of interpretation whereby managers used and shared different kinds of information pertaining to the problems faced in order to reach some form of consensus. This process helped them manage their organisation effectively.

The quotation below from Naomi is an example of how enactment occurs. **Naomi**, a SMT member from the Head Office explained the initiation of the Payroll System,

The Payroll System was initiated some years ago and was in part created so that people could access information quickly. The current system was outdated and information in terms of work hours, overtime and vacation hours, was not handled adequately to reflect real time information. As a result people were not being paid correctly and getting that amended was a real problem. It caused hardship for people who needed their wages on a consistent basis for bill payments and support of their families. It was time for us to put our thoughts together and come up with a solution.

A problem was identified with the current Payroll System, allowing the SMT to start discussions on the selection of a new payroll system. Decision identification was vital for the choice alternatives because only when they received the adequate feedback from members who were involved in using the current system, could they look for a system which could deal with these flaws.

Madison, another SMT member from Head Office said,

We as a SMT group agreed 4 years ago, that an IT Team should be formed because the team at ABC was growing larger and had a dispersed workforce. The previous payroll system was very manual and there were huge issues in manually processing payroll. The aim of the new payroll system was to simplify the payroll process in real time information.

This part of the sensemaking process identifies individuals in the SMT who discuss ideas and agree that a resolution must be sought with regards to the payroll system. Serious thought was put into finding a suitable Payroll System because the SMT realised that there were problems which could have not been handled by the current system. Collective sensemaking processes were put into motion and a consensus reached. As a group comprising the SMT, they were in agreement that there was a

need for a new Payroll System. The SMT engaged in discussions about decision-making involving the payroll system. This relates to the starting point of my analysis whereby sensemaking is a process that involves others and is really helpful in understanding decision-making.

The sensemaking process was triggered when the SMT encountered a problem with the current system. In the following, I will be able to trace the sensemaking process, noting discrepancies which occurred, causing disruptions to the flow of comprehension, subsequently affecting individuals who were uncertain of how to act. For this study and for understanding such processes, sensemaking adds value as an analytical concept. The SMT needed to comprehend any changes that might be made in the organisation in a manner that made sense to them and in doing so, set about to understand the internal and external organisational environment in which the intended change would be taking place. They set about defining a revised perception of the organisation through the sensemaking process during the envisioning phase.

2. Information gathering

This information about the quest for a new payroll system was relayed to the organisational members in the form of sensegiving during the signalling phase. Through the process of sensegiving, SMT created an opportunity whereby their vision was articulated to the organisational members who then made sense of this preferred vision through sensemaking. Doing so injected ambiguity into the stable environment of the organisation, creating some level of anxiety for all the organisational members who were concerned about this potential change and how it might effect their daily lives. They started talking about this new preferred vision for the payroll system and became excited to be included in the decision-making process. They made sense of the newly reframed conceptions and eagerly took part in discussions that would make positive changes to the obsolete payroll system.

Charlotte, a Personal Development Worker (PDW) from Regional Office No. 2 said,

Information was sent via emails, memos as well as through their inhouse newsletter asking for suggestions, ideas and insights. We were very excited that we were to be included in the decision to introduce a new Payroll System.

Additionally, **Mia** another Personal Development Worker (PDW) from Regional Office No. 2 said,

There were also peer support meetings and staff discussions to look for a new system. It was important for organisational members to know why the organisation was initiating the project. We were very excited that we were to be included in the decision to introduce a new Payroll System.

Organisational members were enthusiastically involved in the process of sensemaking and brainstormed ideas amongst their own team members, with the hope that changes would be implemented in a reasonable manner and in an appropriate timeframe. Sensemaking in this instance was 'enriched sensemaking' which took place during the information gathering phase of the decision-making process. Enriched sensemaking occurs when there is ample 'back and forth' information exchange between all parties, actively participating in the communication process. The organisational members had high sensereceiving to the messages from their SMT. High sensereceiving led to enriched sensemaking.

She continues,

We waited anxiously to be included in the meetings that were being held at the Head Office - we could see that discussions were clearly taking place but unfortunately, we were never involved in any aspect of the payroll system. I am not surprised - we are rarely consulted on anything. We had no control over what was happening. It was really disappointing and we felt deflated. We did not feel included and felt that we did not want to listen to the outcome of the meetings.

Decision-making is an ongoing process as demonstrated in the quotation which allows individuals to continuously shape and react to their environments through sensemaking, learning how to adapt their own identities by either trying to gauge their own identities from the behaviour of others towards them or by trying to influence this behaviour altogether. The organisational members were excited and experienced high sensereceiving that their input was sought for the potential payroll system. As time elapsed, they realised that they would not be asked to contribute their ideas. This led to low sensereceiving because their ideas were not being considered by the SMT members. Low sensereceiving led to sense deprivation where the relationship between organisational members and SMT was highlighted.

For example, low sensereceiving is indicated by the following quotation: -

We did not feel included and felt that we did not want to listen to the outcome of the meetings.

What we can see here is that the organisational members experienced a real level of frustration because they felt that they should have been included in the decision-making process. For example, frustration from organisational members was reflected in the following two quotations: -

1. *It's very difficult and frustrating when you're asked about 'what you'd like to do about a particular issue and when you take the effort to put something really concrete together and then see that 3 years later, nothing has changed, that really gets to you.*
2. *There are bottlenecks in this organisation where information doesn't flow throughout the organisation. I don't know why things are not done in a way to benefit both the staff and their clients - seems so frustrating and unreasonable not to do it this way.*

What this tells us about the organisational members is that they initially had high sensereceiving because they anticipated that they would be able to contribute their ideas to the SMT, allowing them to absorb and internalise the messages from their organisational members. Low sensereceiving led to sense deprivation. Sense deprivation describes an enhanced conscious awareness between the organisational members and their relationship to the SMT. When performing their daily tasks, organisational members were not consciously aware of their status within the organisation. However, when it became apparent that their opinions and ideas were not worthy of being considered, it was then that their relationship to others was highlighted. Therefore, by signalling to organisational members through low sensereceiving that their ideas and opinions were not of value, made organisational members acutely aware of their status within the organisation.

This meant that the organisational members were not focused on the messages that were being relayed to them. The role that they held within the organisation, previously only a secondary thought was now becoming acutely dominant in their day-to-day dealings with the SMT. The actions of the SMT had sent a signal to the organisational members that their ideas and feedback were unimportant, making them feel that their place in the organisation was unworthy of the SMT attention. This also caused the status of the organisational members to be at the forefront of their conscious thoughts, not making them feel valued in the organisation. Sense deprivation experienced by the organisational members would explain the reason why there was a lack of meaning making, leading to a breakdown in the sensemaking process.

3. *Alternatives Identification*

Lily, a SMT member from Head Office stated that various alternatives were also identified. She said,

We had people come in from different organisations to share their views on various payroll systems, where alternative systems were also identified.

The SMT members were involved in the re-visioning phase where there was constant feedback between the members of the SMT team as well as external members from different organisations. Various problems were encountered when dealing with the CEO, including not reaching an agreement on the budget to be allocated for the new system as well as opposition from existing SMT members. They argued that the proposed system was too complex and would involve extensive training and this would not be possible because of the complexities involved in the day to day running of the business. A compromise was reached amongst the SMT members and a shortlist of three (3) potential systems was created.

In the wider context, individuals favour plausibility over accuracy by considering contexts and events in the organisation filled with different interpretations and conflicting interests. Being a member of the SMT, they had the advantage of reviewing other options from other organisations who had also implemented alternative systems. In this context specifically, various other options for the selection of the payroll system were being considered. However, one which was assigned the most reasonable in terms of the cost and value to the organisation was considered. Conversely **Amelia**, who was not consulted on the potential project said,

They were talking about it for over a year - we were never consulted about what requirements were needed for the system. They didn't consult us and perhaps they should have because lots of us younger staff are quite computer literate and we definitely would have been able to put our heads together and come up with something a lot better than the system that is in place now. I didn't feel valued because my opinion wasn't sought and we are literally the people who would be using the system the most.

How organisational members view themselves in the organisation, shapes their organisational identity, as well as how they interpret and enact events around them. The organisational member was clearly disappointed that their views and feedback were not being considered, especially since they were the ones who would be using the system the most. Low sensereceiving on the part of SMT members to ideas and feedback from organisational members led to them feeling that they were not valued. The function of this quotation is to emphasise that the organisational members were happy to participate in the sensemaking process, thereby problem solving and coming up with a solution for the potential system. The quotation tells us that because they were not invited to share their ideas in the decision-making process, the message being sent to them was that their ideas were unwelcome and unimportant. Sense deprivation had forced them to experience low sensereceiving, thereby contributing to poorly understood messages from the SMT.

Ava a Personal Development Worker (PDW) from Regional Office No. 1 said,

Despite being repeatedly told that our ideas were needed for choosing a new payroll system, our feedback was not considered at all.

This feeling of rejection was experienced by other organisational members as well and this in turn caused them to also exercise low sensereceiving to the sensegiving messages of their managers. Organisational members were not included in any part of the decision-making process.

4. *Alternatives Evaluation*

Pertaining to alternatives evaluation, **Olivia** a SMT member from Head Office said,

The information from the other organisations regarding the Payroll System was imparted onto us. We went to these organisations to see how the system worked.

Additionally, **Emma**, another SMT member from Head Office said,

In hindsight, I think that we could have done a better job in including everyone of our members in our decision-making on choosing a new system. We didn't and now we are in this mess.

5. Choice of Best Alternatives

Eventually, the choice for best alternative was made and **Riley**, a SMT member from Head Office said,

We had the '12 benefits' like the '12 days of Christmas' to inform people how the new system would make their lives much easier. People didn't really believe us, the meetings we held for training purposes were poorly attended and it's like that they were waiting for it to fail. They probably felt that they didn't have all the information they needed to make a success of it. It was a disaster.

The SMT members eventually did realise that because they were unreceptive to the feedback of their organisational members, and failed to include them in the decision-making process, this resulted in low sensereceiving from organisational members as well. Here I am describing the interpretation from a few organisational members who stated that they were uninterested in the new system and had no vested interest in its success. SMT members collectively tried to sensegive information on the implementation of the new chosen system but the organisational members had low sensereceiving. The attitude and behaviour from the SMT sent a message to their organisational members that their ideas were unimportant, and thereby causing the organisational members to be equally unreceptive to the sensegiving messages from their SMT.

Amelia, a Support Advisor from Regional Office No. 3 said,

The SMT were solely responsible for choosing the system. I was not able to voice my reservations with the new system. We'd got to a point where it was too late to turn back and cut our ties with the new Payroll System but unfortunately I was not able to 'voice' my opinion because the decision was already made. Other people feel the same way but are too afraid to express their opinions because we are all cautious of dealing with very strong SMT members because we have had problems in the past, that have not ended well. So we would rather just keep quiet than get into trouble for speaking out against the system.

From the evidence above, Amelia and the other organisational members extract cues from the environment surrounding them, participating in discussions which involve their work life as well as the organisation. Sensemaking focuses on extracted cues because it is not practical to consider all the experience from the entire organisation. Instead, the organisational members focus on specific aspects of their experience with SMT members and then generalise about the entire experience. These cues provide a point of reference whereby the organisational members link their ideas to a broader context of what may be happening in the organisation. Amelia was aware that she had been excluded from the decision-making process and even though the new system had flaws that she could clearly highlight, she felt that she could not voice her opinions because it would be ignored.

As for the other organisational members, their present experience with the SMT allowed them to make a broad assumption that they would be excluded from the decision-making process. Feelings of rejection as well as a fear of getting into trouble with the SMT, were experienced by organisational members forcing them to have low sensereceiving which led to sense deprivation. Sense deprivation allowed Amelia as well as the other organisational members to become consciously aware of their status within the organisation as well as their relationship to the SMT. Through their low

sensereceiving, SMT were signalling to the organisational members that their opinions and ideas did not matter. This in turn forced Amelia and the organisational members to have low sensereceiving towards the messages from their SMT.

6. *Decision Implementation*

Decision implementation occurred within a year and **Emma**, a SMT member from Head Office said,

I felt that the training was quite disjointed because the training was being rolled out while the changes were still being made to the system. There should have been more of a 'testing' of the system beforehand and when that was perfected, the training of staff should have commenced. The training was a mess because noone wanted to be trained on an untested system and they were resentful because we had not evaluated their feedback. We should have listened to what our members were trying to say, as this would have eliminated some of the massive problems that we experienced.

The energising phase occurred during the decision implementation stage of the decision-making process. Only ideas from other SMT members were being evaluated and revisions made. When the decision implementation was carried out, organisational members felt badly let down. Expressing regret that they had not listened to their organisational members, the SMT acknowledged that they had experienced low sensereceiving in terms of the feedback from their organisational members. As a consequence, this led to a failure in training members and implementing the new system effeciently. The organisational members were not on board and did not 'buy into' the new system.

Peyton, an Area Lead from Head Office said,

I did 'voice' my concerns early on when we were discussing the whole Payroll System but no one from the SMT wanted to listen to me. They seemed to think that they had the whole system figured out and that it was going to work flawlessly. I was even told point blankly that 'this problem' that was plaguing us was 'the least problem' that they had anticipated.

Even organisational members who voiced their concerns were ignored - this was due to low sensereceiving on the part of the SMT.

7. Decision Evaluation

When evaluating the decision, **Emma**, a SMT member from Head Office said,

If I could change something during that time it would have been to 'say more loudly' that the information we got and chose to believe was only one sided and didn't have any feedback from the people who would be using it the most.

Emma, was aware that the information that they chose to go along with was inadequate as this information was severely limited. If they had been open to the feedback from their organisational members and did not have low sensereceiving, they would be in a better position than they were in currently.

Suzanne an Area Lead from Head Office said,

The tools that people had were not fit for the purpose but the SMT still went ahead and changed the whole system. It would have been a very 'small cost' compared to the devastation that all this 'misinformation' and 'miscommunication' that this has caused.

Jim, a Support Advisor from Regional Office No. 3 stated,

I can't help thinking that this could have been avoided in the first place if the SMT had just taken the feedback from their staff. They could have just asked us - 'what are your plans, how are you planning to roll it out, how might you make it work, etc. There was no consultation with us whatsoever. I refused to listen to what they were saying because I just didn't care anymore.

Jim had experienced low sensereceiving on the part of the SMT. No feedback was sought from their organisational members and this made the sensegiving messages from the SMT ineffective because of their attitude towards them. Low sensereceiving from the SMT when they refused to take their members ideas into consideration further led to low sensereceiving on behalf of Jim and his colleagues. Low sensereceiving had led to sense deprivation whereby Jim became aware of his status within the organisation which meant that the messages from the SMT had been forced into the background.

Additionally **Charlotte**, a Personal Development Officer (PDW) from Regional Office No. 2 said angrily,

If the SMT has something in the works, they should have a meaningful conversation with us (in groups) to find out what our needs are because as it stands, they have 'no idea'. The SMT would definitely need to work harder to 'flatten' the organisation and ensure that there is no hierarchy in the organisation as they always claim doesn't exist!

There are opportunities for the organisational members and SMT to participate in the decision-making process through social means i.e. meetings, forums and discussions with others, but their ideas and suggestions are not considered by the management team. Here, the organisational member has expressed the view that they had not been consulted in any way, as to what the current needs of their members were. They are also angry at the lack of inclusion in the decision-making process and expressing a dislike for the way the hierarchical structure in the organisation excludes different groups.

The numerous quotations demonstrate feelings of frustration amongst the organisational members because they were not being listened to by the SMT members. As organisational members, they were disappointed that their feedback was not being considered. Although in their own respective groups they had engaged in sensemaking, they were excluded from the decision-making process as they were not invited to present their views. This caused sense deprivation to occur whereby the organisational members were not focusing on the sensegiving messages of their SMT members but rather on their status within the organisation. There is a disruption / breakdown in the circuit which shows that it breaks down initially because of the management style of the CEO and some of her SMT members.

Subsequently the decision-making process breaks down because of their response. The response received from the SMT and CEO, caused the organisational members to experience low sensereceiving, which led to sense deprivation, whereby they focused on their position or status within the organisation rather than on the messages imparted to them by the SMT. The decision-making stages encountered several processes and where there was a breakdown, it became disrupted which caused sense deprivation, where the messages from SMT were poorly received. The SMT members had already made their decision on the new system and when they tried to sensegive these ideas to the organisational members, trying to convince them to absorb their own sensemaking, the organisational members resisted. Low sensereceiving had already occurred.

Leah, an Area Lead (AL) from Head Office said,

I feel that it is 'useless' to bring up 'fresh ideas' because it is not at all received well. My staff all tend to 'shut out' instructions from the organisation because they don't feel 'connected' to the 'values and aims' of the organisation. Initially, I myself did feel connected to the organisation but have felt disconnected from it, for some time now. When you cut corners with people, they will slowly start to feel not so valued. There is a total lack of information throughout the organisation and this causes a tremendous amount of discord between the different groups in the organisation.

The organisational member who happens to be an Area Lead, expressed her thoughts that her staff members were reluctant to share their views with the SMT members because they felt excluded from the decision-making process. They felt that their connection with the organisation had diminished because their ideas were not well received due to low sensereceiving from the SMT.

Theresa, the newest SMT member from Head Office said,

The management team did not place any importance on working with the ideas and feedback from their organisational members. Keeping their team members uninformed of the progress made with regards to the Payroll System was detrimental to them because without substantial information available to them, they were in the dark and were excluded from the decision-making process. They didn't seem to care too much about how to make improvements to the new system - they just seemed to be unresponsive to the whole situation.

Theresa realised that not being able to include the ideas from organisational members had led to undesirable effects on the organisation and the new system as a whole. Exclusion from the new system (in terms of information) had allowed organisational members to feel that their feedback didn't matter and therefore making them feel unvalued in the organisation. This was a vicious cycle as low sensereceiving on the part of SMT members promoted the same low sensereceiving from organisational members. This idea is captured in Figure 4.1.

Theresa continues by saying,

If ideas were thrown out to me by my staff, I would call out to the Training team and see what the reaction was. Any ideas not introduced by management were usually ignored. Feedback of any nature was discouraged. Nothing good comes out of meetings with the management because we are fearful of confronting them or asking questions because we will be 'shot down' in an embarrassing way. So, we just don't bother anymore. I have put forward several proposals on the implementation & training for the payroll system, but it has gone unacknowledged by management. Ideas come from everyone but only the ideas from SMT members who have been here the longest, get utilised. So now, everyone has the attitude of 'why should we even bother listening to them'?

Even as a newer member of the SMT, her feedback and ideas from her staff to her other colleagues of the SMT went unnoticed. Further, feedback was discouraged, sending a message to the organisational members that their views were unimportant. The organisational members experienced low sense-receiving when they tried to express their ideas to the SMT. Organisational members had low sense-receiving when sense-giving messages from the SMT needed to be considered.

Leah's and Theresa's perspectives from the interview excerpts show that the focus of the decision-making process is on sense-making, sense-giving and sense-receiving. Organisational members often give meaning to their experiences through these three processes. In the interview excerpts, as I traced the decision-making process, there were discrepancies between reality (as reported to me) and the expectations of organisational members. This in turn caused disruptions to the flow of understanding the process. Organisational members experienced confusion because of this disruption and were uncertain of how to act. This was evidenced by their statements.

Figure 4.1 shows the following: -

1. CEO suggests that there are problems with the payroll system and needs to be replaced - Decision Identification. She relays the information back to her team and they have high sensereceiving because they feel that they are included in the decision-making process.
2. Organisational members, hereafter referred to as employees, collaborate to sensemake and produce different ideas which are sent to the CEO - Information Gathering. She has low sensereceiving and these ideas are ignored.
3. We have a degree of back and forth where the CEO frames her sensemaking and decision-making process. The CEO identifies alternatives and proceeds with sensemaking this information - Alternatives Identification.
4. The CEO considers different alternatives without consulting or exchanging ideas with her employees. These alternatives are imparted to her employees through sensegiving. In doing so, she is attempting to pass on her sensemaking to others in the organisation - Alternatives Evaluation. The employees are disappointed that their ideas and suggestions have been ignored - this disrupts the process of sensegiving, whereby the information from the CEO is received with low sensereceiving. Her messages are not getting through because of low sensereceiving that leads to sense deprivation.
5. The CEO carries on with her own ideas regardless of the ideas shared from her employees and she sticks with her own ideas. The choice of best alternatives will be very limited because of her low sensereceiving and she doesn't benefit from receiving the ideas and suggestions from the organisational members - Choice of Best Alternatives.

6. The CEO decides to implement her decision after looking at the other choices and sensegives this decision to her employees - Decision Implementation. What the CEO did is detected from her employees who interpret it as low sensereceiving, and as a consequence cause sensereceiving from her employees also be low as they feel that their ideas are disregarded, and they don't feel valued.
7. After the decision is implemented, it is evaluated by the CEO and her employees. The results are not good and not what the CEO had hoped for. There is resentment amongst her employees, and they are unwilling to contribute any ideas to help improve the system or the situation - Decision Evaluation.

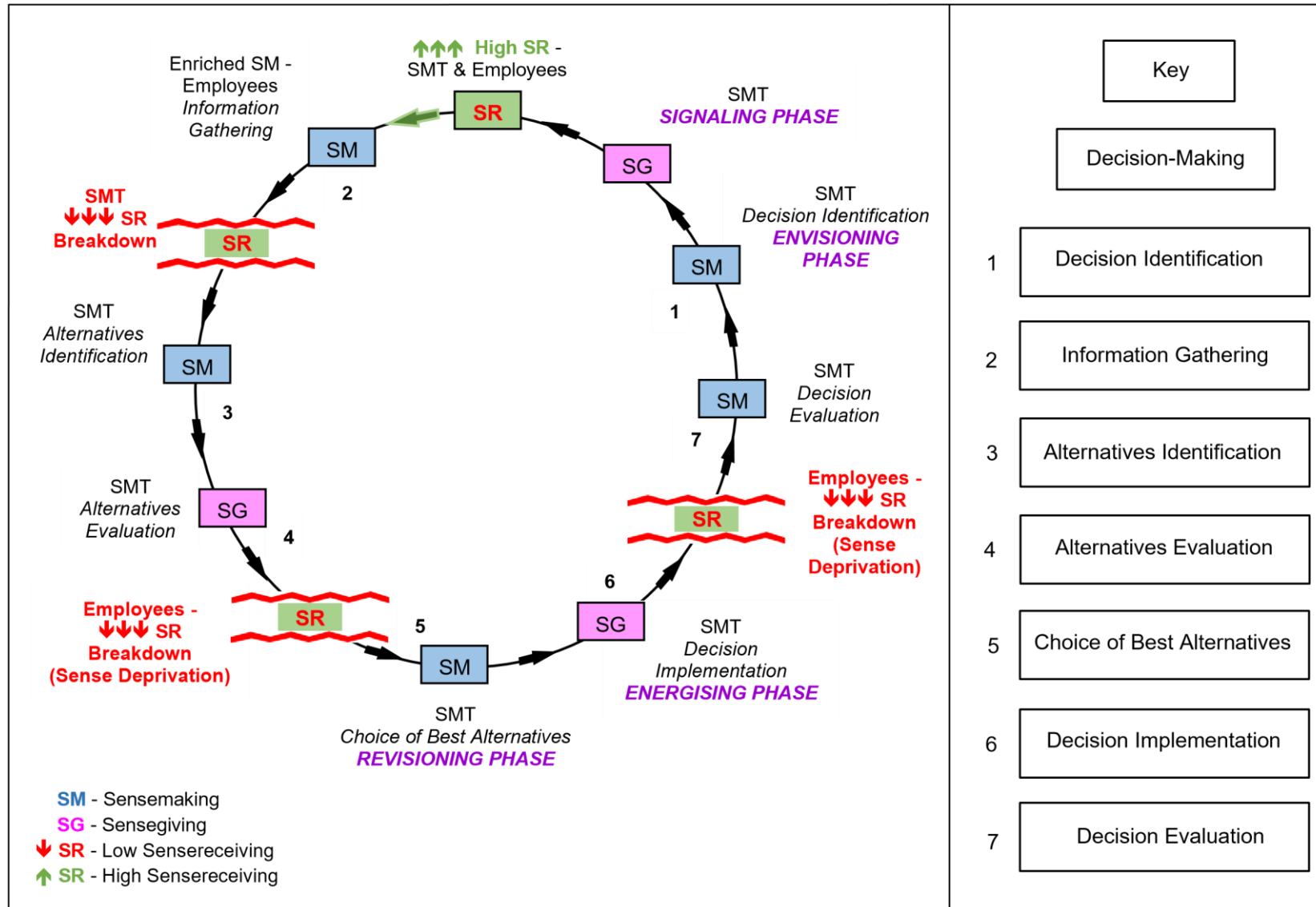


Figure 4. 1 - Timeline of the Payroll System Decision-making Process (Low SR)

To properly analyse the decision-making process further, we will look at a decision-making process when sensereceiving is high as shown in Figure 4.2 below.

Decision-making process (No. 2) - High Sensereceiving - The 'Payroll System'

Olivia, a SMT member acknowledged that there were issues with the payroll system and suggested that it needed to be replaced. Sensemaking is triggered, a problem / decision identification is highlighted and there is agreement that a new payroll system should be brought in as soon as possible. During the envisioning phase, the SMT used their own interpretative schemes to seek out a vision for the potential payroll system. They held meetings amongst their other SMT members and had a general idea of how this new system might evolve. The following excerpt is from Andrew, an organisational member who has been working at ABC for over ten years.

Andrew said,

I received an email from Olivia, one of the SMT members and was asked what my thoughts were on the current payroll system that we were using. I was asked if I wanted to get involved and of course I said YES. I replied immediately as I have always been communicating with this particular SMT from the commencement of my job at ABC and they had always been supportive of myself, the challenges I had faced over the years and how I had overcome them through my perseverance.

In this instance, Andrew has had continuous communication with a specific SMT member from the time he joined ABC. The message to Andrew that there was a problem with the payroll system was relayed to him by Olivia, a SMT member. The SMT were in the signalling phase where they had expressed a need for a change of the payroll system. Although this meant that there was going to be some form of ambiguity taking place in the organisation in the near future, this was also an opportunity for the SMT to influence these changes. The email from Olivia invited him to contribute his ideas for the choice of the new payroll system. Andrew experienced high sensereceiving and was receptive to the sensegiving messages from Olivia in the signalling phase.

Sensegiving establishes sensemaking as an iterative process which influences decision-making processes. Sensegiving is intended to give a plausible interpretation of reality, persuading people to accept them as their own.

He continues,

I have also been used as a 'poster person' for ABC and have even been asked to attend a couple of board meetings to talk about my success story with my clients. I also spoke at 2 Annual General meetings (AGM) to talk about my journey at ABC.

Andrew is regarded as an individual who is highly regarded by ABC. They are proud of his success in managing his clients. This is telling us that Andrew experienced enriched sensemaking which emanated from high sensereceiving, when he was invited to participate in discussions with the SMT. In effect, they were saying to him, we invite you to contribute your ideas and these ideas will contribute to the success of the decision-making process. It was a positive experience for him and he will be happy to contribute his ideas in the future.

Andrew addresses the Payroll System issue by saying,

I was asked to attend a meeting with other SMT members, which would be held in our Head Office and would include discussions about the problems of the current Payroll system and how to best select a new system that would eliminate most of the flaws associated with the current system. I have to be honest with you - I was absolutely thrilled to be asked to participate and contribute my knowledge, experience in dealing with the current system as well as ideas that I might have in the selection of a new one.

Andrew is regarded as a valued member and he felt that he had good communication with a particular SMT member. He was invited to contribute his ideas and this enabled enriched sensemaking to take place. The SMT members listened to Andrew's contribution and sensegave their ideas and suggestions as well. High sensereceiving was experienced by both parties. This occurred in the information gathering stage.

High sensereceiving led to enriched sensemaking for Andrew as well as the SMT members. Andrew is being listened to and is aware of his role within the organisation but unlike the scenario in Figure 4.1 with sense deprivation, messages to Andrew from the SMT and to the SMT are getting through because they both have high sensereceiving. Ideas and problem solving takes place between Andrew and the SMT in the form of sensegiving where alternatives identification takes place.

Andrew continues,

I was invited to numerous discussions on the potential Payroll System and I gladly attended all of them. I have always felt supported by ABC - I was also asked to do a 'live-link' with another branch and I thought to myself 'why would I ever leave this organisation when I always felt so valued and appreciated'. My work has always been acknowledged and I have always given 100% of myself to my work in social care because this is what I am truly passionate about.

In the discussion that ensued, Andrew participated in and exchanged ideas during meetings of the alternatives identification and alternatives evaluation stages of the decision-making process. High sensereceiving from Andrew as well as from the SMT members is experienced. During the revisioning phase, both parties were open to suggestions, ideas and thoughts, exchanging information till they both finally come to an agreement that is acceptable to both. The SMT members confirmed the decision that was made to Andrew through sensegiving during the energising phase and this was received by Andrew who had high sensereceiving. The decision was evaluated by both Andrew and the SMT in the decision evaluation stage of the decision-making process.

These occurrences take place at the same time as in the previous diagram (Figure 4.1). The implications in Figure 4.2 show a contrast of how high sensereceiving influenced decision-making in the decision-making process. High sensereceiving ensures that employees and SMT are engaged in collective sensemaking that lead to the decision-making process. This is evidenced in Andrew's example where he had been invited to contribute his ideas and did so willingly. He felt valued and had high sensereceiving to the sensegiving messages from the SMT. From the signalling phase, the SMT were willing to listen to feedback from Andrew. Andrew experienced high sensereceiving that caused enriched sensemaking to take place. Andrew participated in the decision-making with the SMT throughout the entire decision-making process, incorporating sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving. It is seen that sensereceiving plays an important role to Andrew's participation and contribution to the decision-making process. This is reflected in Figure 4.2.

1. SMT acknowledges that there are issues with the payroll system and suggests that it needs to be replaced - Decision Identification. Andrew (employee) receives an email from Olivia (SMT) inviting him to contribute his ideas for the new payroll system. He is excited that his opinion is sought and has high sensereceiving.
2. Andrew, Olivia and the other SMT brainstorm and produce different ideas during the Information Gathering phase of the decision-making process. They are collectively engrossed in the process of sensemaking. The ideas from Andrew are discussed and the conversation goes back and forth between Olivia, Andrew and the rest of the SMT.
3. Andrew and the other SMT sensegive information to each other - each trying to influence the other through their sensegiving messages. Alternatives are shared and discussed - Alternatives Identification.

4. All ideas from the SMT's as well as Andrew are evaluated - Alternatives Evaluation.
5. Andrew shares all his insights on the current system and the SMT listen intently as they want to ensure that the system that they choose is the most suitable one for ABC. The SMT and Andrew have high sensereceiving - Choice of Best Alternatives. The best choice is made after collective sensemaking ensues, deciding on which system to adopt.
6. The SMT make their suggestions to the CEO who also sensegives and eventually implements the choice made to all ABC members - Decision Implementation. Andrew sensereceives the decision and has high sensereceiving and feels that his opinions have been considered and he feels a valued member of ABC.
7. After implementation, the decision is evaluated by the CEO and SMT members. They are pleased that they had carefully evaluated the choices with Andrew who had shared his valuable insights with them - Decision Evaluation.

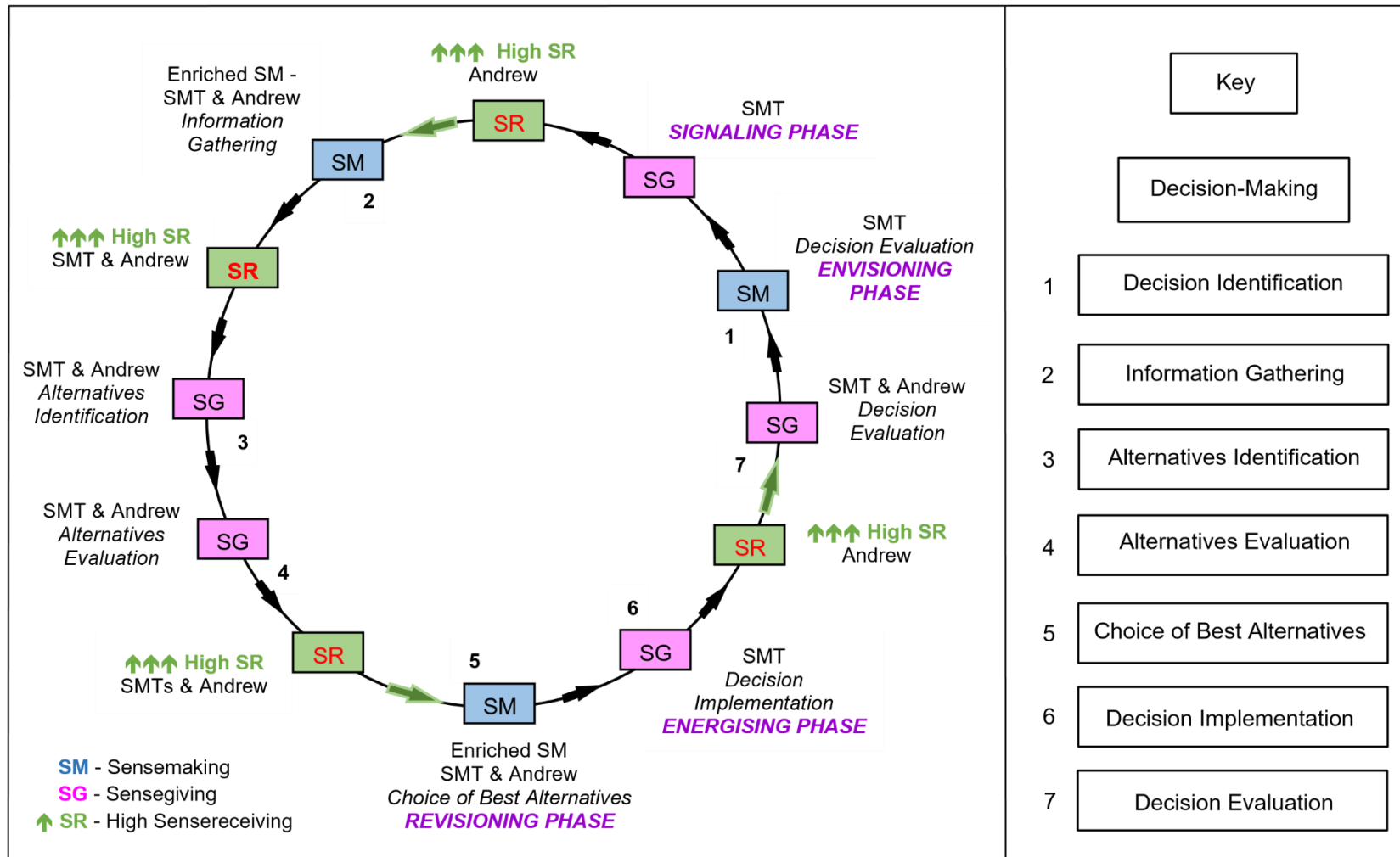


Figure 4. 2 - Payroll System Decision-making Process - (High SR)

4.5 Conclusion

The above excerpts show that managers are actively involved in the decision-making process, trying to shape them through sensegiving and this is mediated by sense-receiving. Their sensegiving messages could have been made clearer if they (SMT) had high sense-receiving of messages from their organisational members. If low sense-receiving is experienced by their organisational members, this leads to sense deprivation, limiting the effectiveness of the sensegiving messages from the SMT. When sense deprivation occurs, organisational members will be more focused on their role in the organisation because of the way they are being made to feel by the SMT members. When sensegiving messages are relayed to them, the organisational members will experience low sense-receiving, thereby not really focusing on the sensegiving messages of their SMT but instead on their status and role within the organisation. This shows that the decision-making process is useful - sense-receiving is clearly part of the decision-making process and has a substantial impact on the outcome.

Managers try and shape decision-making by sensegiving to their organisational members. Example (No. 1) - Low sense-receiving - Payroll System, shows how a decision is made adopting a new payroll system, when sense-receiving is low. There is a group of people involved in that decision and they are all sensemaking i.e. interpreting and gathering information about the payroll system, the need for it and what they want to achieve from it. Managers are trying to give sense to that by shaping those processes and sense-receiving mediates this. Low sense-receiving occurs when organisational members have been excluded from the decision-making process and this leads to sense deprivation. If sense-receiving is high, and I am fully engaged in the process, then sensegiving will be much more effective in shaping the sensemaking process involved in decision-making. High sense-receiving leads to enriched sensemaking.

To contrast this effect, I utilised Example (No. 2) High sensereceiving - Payroll System, from the same decision-making process. The SMT were sensegiving and the reason for this is because they wanted to shape Andrew's sensemaking. If Andrew had low sensereceiving, then this would lead to sense deprivation, which would then limit the effectiveness of messages and information getting to him. However, because he experienced high sensereceiving, he became more receptive to the sensegiving messages from the SMT and experienced enriched sensemaking. From the examples that depict low sensereceiving on one hand and high sensereceiving on the other, it is clear that sensereceiving is really important to understanding how sensegiving impacts sensemaking and decision-making processes.

From the analysis of the decision-making process, we are able to answer research question 1 which asks how sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving influence decision-making in organisations. From the examples utilised, we can see that sensereceiving is really important for understanding the decision-making process i.e. for understanding how sensegiving and sensemaking interrelate in decision-making processes. We are able to see how low sensereceiving from SMT influence the effectiveness of sensegiving messages from them to their organisational members, due to the reason that their organisational members have low sensereceiving causing sense deprivation to occur.

Sensereceiving acts as a regulator to either prevent or allow the inflow of messages through the sensemaking processes of individuals in organisations. Sensegiving sets in motion the articulated construction by the SMT of preferred visions and preferences, and these sensegiving messages either take on an enriched or deprived form of sensemaking, whilst trying to influence their organisational members. If organisational members are made to feel that their ideas are unwelcome, they will experience low sensereceiving. In contrast, if organisational members feel that their ideas and contributions are welcome, they will feel valued and appreciated. This causes high sensereceiving to occur which leads to enriched sensemaking during the decision-making process.

Exploring sensereceiving

Thus far, my analysis has explored why and how sensereceiving works. The two (2) examples above, high and low sensereceiving, show their usefulness together with the importance of sensemaking and sensegiving in the decision-making process. So far, we have looked at sensereceiving but we don't know much about sensereceiving and therefore the analysis is now focused on what causes sensereceiving to shift to either high or low. This seems to be really important to understanding the relationship between sensemaking and sensegiving, which bring them back to my second (2nd) research question. The decision-making process highlights the importance of sensereceiving in the decision-making process and shows how the process is a useful tool. Whilst exploring sensereceiving, two key themes emerged - one is around control and the other is around identity. We will now begin the next part of this analysis by exploring sense of control and sense of identity and what these terms mean for the context of this study.

CHAPTER 5. ANALYSIS - SENSERECEIVING

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will explore sensereceiving in greater detail and will be structured into three (3) different sections, drawing conclusions after each one. Conclusions reached are derived from prior analysis of sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving discussed extensively in earlier chapters which is where my contribution lies.

The 1st section highlights an aspect from the previous chapter, that established that sensereceiving is vital to the decision-making process. We were able to see that there were a variety of things shaping sensereceiving e.g. leadership style, management responses to organisational members etc. Therefore, in this chapter, we need to delve deeper into the analysis to understand the relationship between sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving to fully comprehend the decision-making process.

The 2nd section emphasises the need to understand feedback loops with positive or negative impacts that occur in certain instances when sensereceiving is low or high. It is important to understand how this shapes sensereceiving, moderates sensemaking as well as sensegiving and in the process hugely impacting the decision-making process. The feedback loop is really key to understanding the decision-making process over time and to demonstrate this, I will be specifically focusing on the organisational members.

The 3rd section of this chapter highlights my analysis which has identified sense of control and sense of identity as key factors in shaping low / high sensereceiving for organisational members. Sense of control and sense of identity are partly about understanding the feedback loop because sense of control and sense of identity are both processes of interaction. This chapter will conclude with a summary of all the definitive findings from the discussions and evidence put forward.

5.2 Selected findings on sensereceiving

Sensemaking in my analysis is a process whereby organisational members and leaders (SMT and the CEO) give meaning to their ongoing experiences. Sensemaking is a process of social construction in which an attempt is made to create order as it unravels. Managers and leaders are usually at the helm of the organisation and usually in charge of the decision-making process. Managers and leaders are often in the role of passing on their sensemaking in the form of sensegiving to organisational members. Sensereceiving is a process that describes the receptiveness of individuals or groups, to receiving and making sense of the sensegiving messages of others and acts as a regulator to either allow or prevent the inflow of messages through the sensemaking processes of individuals (McKiernan and Mackay 2017). Sensereceiving is important to the sensemaking process within the decision-making framework because sensereceiving mediates the sensegiving messages from leaders to either be receptive or resistant to organisational members.

5.3 Leadership style

In this particular organisation, the CEO and her SMT's imperious style seem to have a significant issue around sensereceiving. They seem to have a real problem with listening (by choosing not to listen to others in the organisation) and I have framed that as low sensereceiving. Below are some quotations to evidence their style of leadership.

Amelia a Support Advisor (SA) from Regional Office No. 3 explains what it felt to be in a meeting with the CEO and says,

I've gone into meetings with the CEO and 16 other members from the organisation. Literally only her voice is heard at the meeting. Everyone else is just left out and have to abide by her rules. Initially, some others tried to voice out, but were 'shot down' in embarrassment. Now, people may disagree with her, but they daren't speak up for fear of being reprimanded.

The quotation above shows that the CEO has low sensereceiving because she refuses to listen to other organisational members. It would appear that only her ideas are shared with the organisational members and this in turn sends a message to them that their views and opinions are unimportant. Consequently, this causes low sensereceiving in the organisational members, and they suppress their ideas. Low sensereceiving in organisational members causes sense deprivation to occur whereby they become consciously aware of their relationship with others in the organisation and this then becomes their primary focus rather than the sensegiving messages from the CEO. The messages from her have diminished in terms of their information content.

Peyton an Area Lead from Head Office describes her experiences with the CEO and says,

Everyone here realises that the CEO is where we have a 'bottleneck' and that anything that reaches her, often does not come back down with solutions, but instead says 'that's the way it's always been done here'.

The organisational members perceive that the CEO has low sensereceiving when feedback from them reaches her. Issues that reach her are not considered because she maintains that things should continue the way it has been done in a particular way according to her wishes. This data shows that the CEO is not open to sensereceiving i.e. she does not listen to the information relayed to her by her organisational members. Her leadership style is classed as low sensereceiving because the CEO utilises top-down decision-making, whereby decisions are made, usually independently of their organisational members and then communicated to them. Organisational members under her authority are bound by the decisions handed down to them. She is perceived to be the decision-maker at the organisation.

Jade a Support Advisor (SA) from Head Office, frustrated that her many attempts to seek help have been futile says,

There was absolutely no help and feedback from the CEO and SMT - I tried to offer lots of new ideas that would be beneficial to our working lives but I was ignored and eventually not able to cope. So I decided to step down from my current position and effectively demoted myself. There was no constructive support from management and it became impossible to carry out my day to day work practices safely. I stopped caring and lost interest at work.

Jade recognised the fact that the CEO and SMT had low sensereceiving to her views and ideas. The situation became unbearable when she felt that there may be a safety risk in performing her daily tasks, and eventually demoted herself, taking on a less challenging role within the organisation.

She continues,

I think that there is a lack of direction, lack of support and mismanagement from the CEO. I have often felt disrespected and alienated from her. I tend to shut out information at work and am not bothered about how things turn out because I don't feel that what I do matters.

In terms of the quotation, the low sensereceiving from the CEO and SMT has invoked low sensereceiving from Jade where she becomes unreceptive to the sensegiving messages from them causing sense deprivation. When this happens, she becomes acutely aware of her role and position within the organisation, diminishing the sensegiving message content from management.

There is a real sense of despair from **Michael**, a Personal Development Officer from Regional Office No. 3 when he says,

I felt that I wasn't being listened to by the CEO or the SMT because the solutions suggested just didn't fit with the problems faced. It was a pointless exercise and when I questioned it, the SMT said 'we make all the decisions because we know this business better than you'. I don't know why I bother - it is better to just keep quiet, not pay too much attention to what happens around me at work and hope for the best.

Michael became aware that the issues he raised with management were not being suitably addressed when he said "I wasn't being listened to" to and this meant that he perceived that the CEO and SMT had low sensereceiving when he approached them with his set of problems. The solutions offered were not appropriate to the problems faced and he felt that it was a waste of his time to pursue it any further. He subsequently also had low sensereceiving to the sensegiving messages of his CEO and SMT. Their low sensereceiving to his ideas had further led him to experience sense deprivation, being conscious of his status within the organisation.

Other general examples of what causes high or low sensereceiving beyond leadership style was highlighted during the coding process.

Ethan, an Area Lead (AL) from Regional Office No. 3 complained about the new payroll system that was being implemented and said,

We were given very limited information on the system itself. There was no Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) available and the people themselves who were teaching us, were unsure of the true workings of the system. We gave up trying to understand - it was just such a mess.

Being provided with inadequate information was perceived to contribute to low sensereceiving for organisational members. This caused them to become frustrated with the system and after a certain period of time, withdrew from trying to understand its workings altogether.

Jade a support Advisor from Head Office said,

My video was shown at meetings and everybody could see that I had done my part. They started utilising advice from my videos in terms of recruitment and it made a huge difference. I felt so appreciated by my team members and worked even harder to teach my colleagues effective recruitment techniques.

Jade had high sensereceiving and was proud that the videos that she helped make with her colleagues was utilised to aid recruitment and doing so proved beneficial to them. This promoted a healthy working environment amongst her team members and she was encouraged to contribute more of her ideas to benefit her team's working practices.

5.4 Analysis of sensereceiving impacts

This section focused on how sensegiving messages from the CEO, SMT and organisational members influence and impact the decision-making process. There are a large number of examples of decision-making processes that have been damaged by the CEO and the SMT, where the organisational members end up in a vicious cycle of low sensereceiving. The management's answer to counter this low sensereceiving is to force decisions down on them. The actual messages delivered to them through sensegiving become secondary whilst their status within the organisation and the relationship that they have with others is highlighted. Low sensereceiving from the SMT and CEO, has prevented them from absorbing the sensegiving messages from their organisational members. The organisational members react to these sensegiving messages by showing indifference or simply not carrying out the decisions as intended.

Sense deprivation is described by Polanyi (1967) as a return of an external object from a state of secondary awareness to a state of being fully aware of its existence in an individual's thought process. In my analysis, I adopt the concept of sense deprivation to explain how it relates to situations where low sensereceiving fails to shape the process of shared meaning between the CEO, SMT and organisational members. When organisational members are initially invited to participate in the decision-making process, sensereceiving is high. On a normal basis, organisational members go through their roles at the organisation and effectively perform their tasks. However, when the CEO and SMT are perceived to have low sensereceiving to the organisational members' ideas, suggestions or opinions, i.e. when they perceive that they are not being listened to, this is perceived to cause low sensereceiving in organisational members.

The low sensereceiving behaviour from the CEO and SMT can therefore cause sense deprivation to occur in organisational members. When sense deprivation sets in, organisational members are consciously aware of their relationship with the CEO and SMT and this takes precedence over all other matters. Organisational members become acutely aware of their status within the organisation and this causes them to be unreceptive to the sensegiving messages from the CEO and SMT. When sensereceiving is low, the organisational members who are at the receiving end of sensegiving messages from the CEO and SMT, are more aware of what it means to go unacknowledged and have the CEO and SMT unreceptive to their ideas. This leads to a loss in communication content where sensereceiving plays a regulatory role. Low sensereceiving is experienced when they feel rejected and unappreciated.

High sensereceiving from the CEO and SMT towards their organisational members, signals to them that they are interested in listening to their ideas and opinions, inviting them to participate in the decision-making process. High sensereceiving by the organisational members is experienced when they feel valued and appreciated, which leave them receptive to the sensegiving messages from the CEO and SMT.

When the CEO and SMT practice one directional information transfer or one-way communication with their organisational members, this means that information is only transferred from the CEO / SMT with no opportunity for the organisational members to give feedback. One-way communication in organisations is limited i.e. the way it occurs at ABC because its main purpose is to send information to the organisational members in the form of a command. When the CEO / SMT use one-way communication with their organisational members, it might mistakenly give the impression that their organisational members comprehend their sensegiving messages and are able to interpret them accurately as to its intended meaning. Instead, a more effective way to sensegive messages to their members is to participate in shared sensemaking.

Different hierarchical groups of employees in organisations, i.e. organisational members and SMT's, interpret information differently through the process of sensemaking and sensegiving. Organisational members could interpret messages differently based on body language etc. However, the processes of sensemaking and sensegiving are simply inadequate to deal with the complexity of shared meaning making on their own. This is where sensereceiving plays a vital role in ensuring that interpretation of sensegiving messages from leaders are accurate. This can only be achieved when organisational members and leaders are in-sync with each other through high sensereceiving from both parties. Conversely, if low sensereceiving is initiated by the CEO and SMT, this distorts the sensegiving messages from them to organisational leaders who are now aware of being ignored and become unreceptive to the sensegiving messages due to sense deprivation.

To summarise, when sensereceiving is varied, there is a marked difference in the attitude of organisational members. Low sensereceiving from the CEO and SMT limit the shared meaning making with organisational members. Organisational members are not able to absorb the sensegiving messages from their leaders because they are angry at not being listened to. Conversely, when there is high sensereceiving from the CEO and SMT towards their organisational members, this sends a signal to them that their ideas, opinions and feedback are important, which invites them to participate in the decision-making process. The CEO and SMT are in positions of power and therefore able to control how this transpires by either choosing to listen or ignore their organisational members' ideas. However, although organisational members could perceive that they are being ignored, there are instances that this might just not be the case. By simply choosing to ignore or not acknowledge what the organisational members are saying to them, sends a message to the organisational members that they are unimportant.

We need to understand the feedback loop to comprehend what shapes sensereceiving.

5.5 Feedback loop with positive / negative impacts

A negative feedback loop with negative effects in my analysis relates to instances when there is low sensereceiving, leading to sense deprivation. In this instance, a feedback loop with negative impacts is perceived to cause organisational members to withdraw their ideas, refrain from making any suggestions or even worse, when suggestions are offered to the CEO and SMT, these ideas are ignored. Alternatively, where there is high sensereceiving, a feedback loop with positive impacts is created and can lead to enriched sensemaking. A feedback loop with positive impacts is perceived to involve receiving feedback from the organisational members who participate in the sensemaking process and by doing so, making them feel valued and appreciated.

Figure 5.1 below - Recruitment - (High SR) shows how a feedback loop with a positive impact functions. The example used, reflects a feedback loop with a positive impact in the decision-making process.

1. Decision Identification

The Support Advisors (SA) get together and discuss the current recruitment policies currently in place at ABC. Sensemaking has been triggered. They all agree that there are serious flaws with the current process which prevents them from hiring efficiently. They concur that there have been too many unsuitable individuals recruited for positions within ABC. Consequently, there is a high turnover of staff due to job dissatisfaction.

2. Information Gathering

There are extensive discussions amongst the organisational members to determine how this problem may be eliminated. There is high sense-receiving amongst the members because they are excited to be creating a recruitment policy which is beneficial to all members. Some of the members suggest eliminating the current recruitment policies and procedures altogether and replacing it with a three-step interview process. A feedback loop with a positive impact is created.

3. Alternatives Identification

A few members suggest that they put in place a short information video which would clearly inform the potential candidates, about what the job entailed. Additionally, a pre-hire screening survey would also help in identifying if a candidate was suitable for the position available.

4. Alternatives Evaluation

At this stage, the two alternatives suggested by a few members are deemed inadequate due to the nature of ABC's business which is varied and custom made to the needs of their clients. Here is where the feedback loop with a positive impact comes into play whereby a decision is made to revert back to the information gathering stage (Phase 2), to explore other options. They set about talking to members from other similar organisations to enquire about what they may be utilising for recruitment purposes. Again, alternatives are identified and evaluated. The feedback loop with positive impacts, works to ensure that all information is shared, exchanged and a consensus reached. The organisational members decide that they will inform the SMT's of their discussions through the process of sensegiving. A decision is made to have the quick video in conjunction with a personal interview with potential candidates with a pre-structured set of interview questions specifically designed around the needs of clients.

5. Choice of best alternatives

High sensereceiving ensures that enriched sensemaking takes place and that the sensegiving messages of the SMT are fully assimilated and implemented. The SMT have high sensereceiving and make a choice to accept the suggestions put forward by their members, as these ideas are not only cost effective but also time efficient.

6. Decision Implementation

The decision is implemented and the employees feel valued and appreciated that their suggestions have been taken seriously by the SMT. The decision is relayed to all members through sensegiving. Here again high sensereceiving by organisational members leads to enriched sensemaking.

7. Decision Evaluation

An evaluation of the decision implemented reveals that the decision is efficient and effective, thus leading to it being subsequently adopted for all future job applicants. The high sensereceiving feedback loop with positive impacts serves as an important tool in this instance because it ensured that each phase of the decision-making process was shared with all members who participated in it. By using the seven-step decision-making process, it enabled individuals within the organisation to make better decisions which contained all the relevant information, whilst evaluating alternatives. Data gathered is used in an efficient way because of the stages that the information went through from its initial inception till the implementation of the decision. Doing so ensured that the information was analysed appropriately, comprehended by all members and used effectively for decision-making.

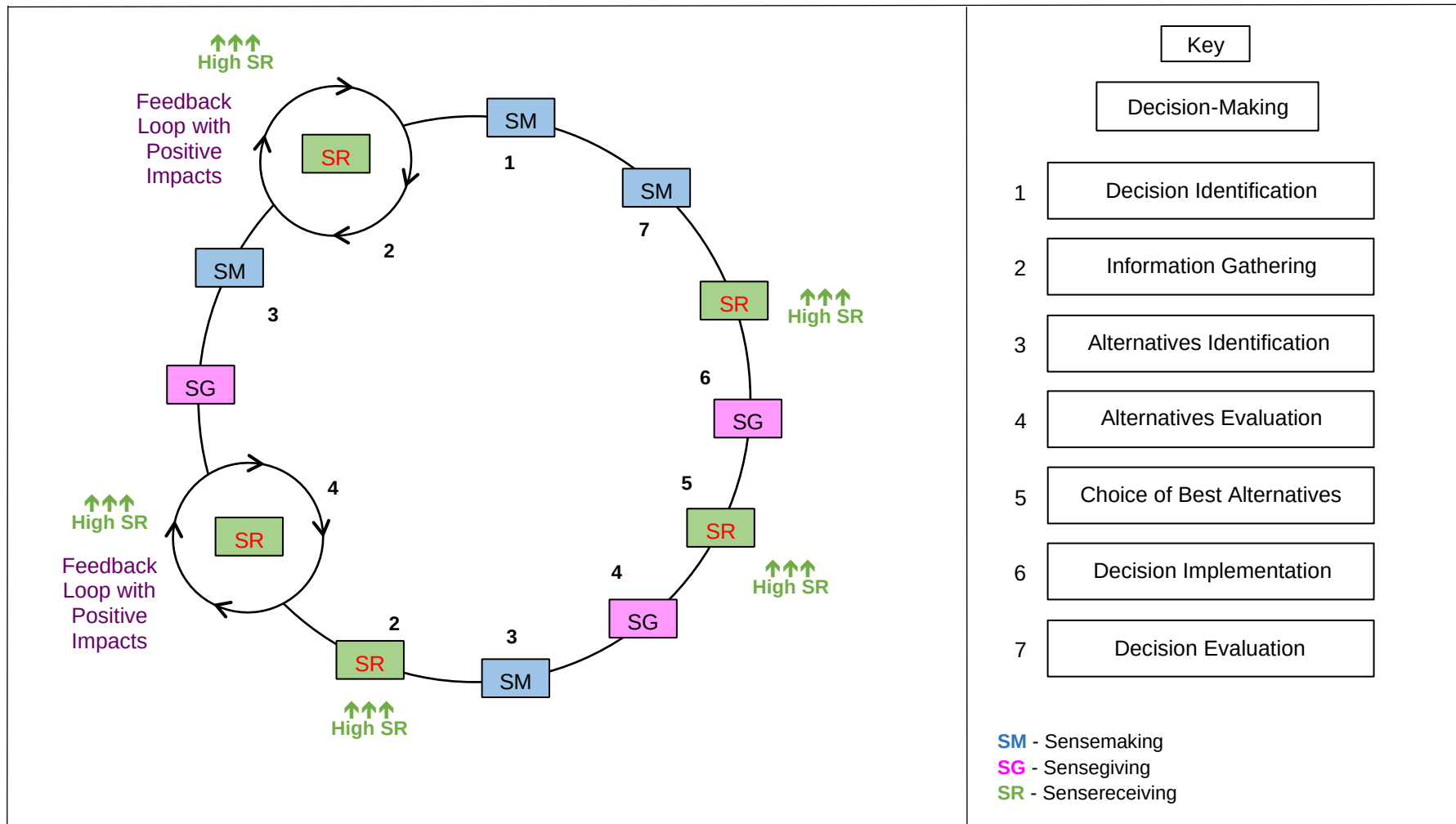


Figure 5. 1 - Feedback loop with positive impacts

In Figure 5.1, the Support Advisors (SAs) get together and participate in sensemaking when they have discussions that there are problems with the recruitment policies and these contribute to the high turnover of their new staff members. This occurs at the decision implementation phase 1 of the decision-making process. They hold discussions to determine what is causing the high rate of staff turnover and all members have high sensereceiving at this time because they have high sensereceiving during the information gathering phase 2 and are receptive to information. A first (1st) feedback loop with positive impacts is created when 'feedback' consisting of numerous suggestions are offered which include eliminating the current policies and replacing them with a three-step interview process. The 'loop' is created when the SAs have discussions on how best to address the high staff turnover issue and because all members have high sensereceiving, they participate in sensemaking of the ideas exchanged. Various other alternatives are identified during the alternatives identification phase 3 whereby the SAs participate in sensemaking and come up with suggestions which include a short informative video and a pre-hire screening interview. At the alternatives evaluation phase 4 and after continuous brainstorming of ideas, the SAs decide collectively that the previous suggestions are inappropriate due to the custom needs of their clients.

A second (2nd) feedback loop with positive impacts is created whereby a joint decision is made to revert to the information gathering phase 2. The joint decision made by the SAs specifically create the second (2nd) feedback loop with positive impacts, where members have high sensereceiving and are receptive to the ideas from each other, coming to an agreement that the earlier suggestions are not suitable for the organisation. The feedback loops with positive impacts work to ensure that apart from weighing in on all the pros and cons of the alternatives suggested, ample consideration has also been given to all the feedback from the SAs. The SAs have high sensereceiving and a thorough evaluation is made, based on all the valuable contribution from team members. They once again consider the alternatives through sensemaking at the alternatives identification phase 3 and evaluate the alternatives in phase 4 till they are satisfied with the outcome.

The SAs inform the SMT of their decision through sensegiving. In choice of best alternatives phase 5, the SMT have high sensereceiving to the SAs sensegiving messages and are satisfied with the suggestion to have a short video and a personal interview that could potentially eliminate unsuitable candidates. In the decision implementation phase 6, the SMT relay their decision to all the organisational members through sensegiving. The organisational members and SA's have high sensereceiving to the sensegiving messages of the SMT leading to enriched sensemaking. In phase 7 of the decision-making process, decision evaluation is carried out by the SMT, which reveal that the decision implemented is effective and would make a positive change to the entire recruitment process.

The high sensereceiving feedback loop with positive impacts, serves as an important tool because it has ensured that each phase of the decision-making process is shared with all members who participated in it. By using the step-by-step decision-making process, it has empowered individuals within the organisation to make more deliberate and thoughtful decisions containing all the relevant information, whilst assessing alternatives. Sensereceiving is important here because when members have high sensereceiving and are receptive to each other, data gathered through the exchange of ideas, is used in an efficient way because of the stages that the information went through from its initial inception till the implementation of the decision. The feedback loops with positive impacts, add to our understanding of sensereceiving because through high sensereceiving, members are receptive to all information exchanged, understood by all members, analysed appropriately, and used effectively for the decision-making process.

Before we proceed any further, it is important that another example from my interviews is used to demonstrate how a feedback loop with positive / negative impacts, function in a specific decision-making process.

1. Decision Identification

A decision identification was highlighted by Belinda, an employee of ABC who had been at the organisation for six (6) years. She asserted that there were problems with the on-call system whereby members in a particular location were not being treated fairly because they were forced to be on call more times than their colleagues who were at other locations.

2. Information Gathering

All her colleagues call for a meeting and there are discussions as to why their specific location has organisational members on call far more frequently than their other locations around the UK. There is high sensereceiving amongst her colleagues and they are determined to come up with a solution that will benefit everyone. A feedback loop with positive impacts is generated whereby the organisational members and Belinda discuss the options available to eliminate this problem.

3. Alternatives Identification

The employees decide to involve the SMT with their concerns through sensegiving. The SMT have low sensereceiving and are not really paying much attention to the grievances highlighted. They remain adamant that this has previously been discussed and a settlement reached. They argue that this is simply a waste of time, not wishing to spend any more time on discussions pertaining to the on-call system. They express their decision that no changes will be made. A feedback loop with negative impacts is created by the SMT's because they refused to listen to their organisational members.

When the organisational members shared their concerns with the SMT, they were told that this wasn't really wasn't a problem at all that justified any further discussion. When they said this, they excluded the organisational members, leading them to have low sensereceiving and they disengaged. This is created in the feedback loop with negative impacts.

4. Alternatives Evaluation

The matter is closed, and no alternatives are suggested by the SMT. The SMT pick up on the disengagement and they too have low sensereceiving, creating a feedback loop with negative impacts. Both the SMT and organisational members have low sensereceiving.

5. Choice of Best Alternatives

The SMT have low sensereceiving and decide that no changes to the current on-call system are necessary because they feel that there is nothing wrong with the current system.

6. Decision Implementation

A decision is made that the matter will not be brought up again and if it is, they will face disciplinary action for inciting unrest amongst other employees. The employees are unhappy and feel that their grievances were not addressed and do not feel valued. Low sensereceiving is experienced by employees because they feel that they do not have a voice at ABC. They disengage from other activities and refuse to contribute their ideas for other matters.

7. Decision Evaluation

An evaluation of the decision is taken by the SMT who sensemake and agree collectively amongst other SMT that the decision taken is fair and must continue as before.

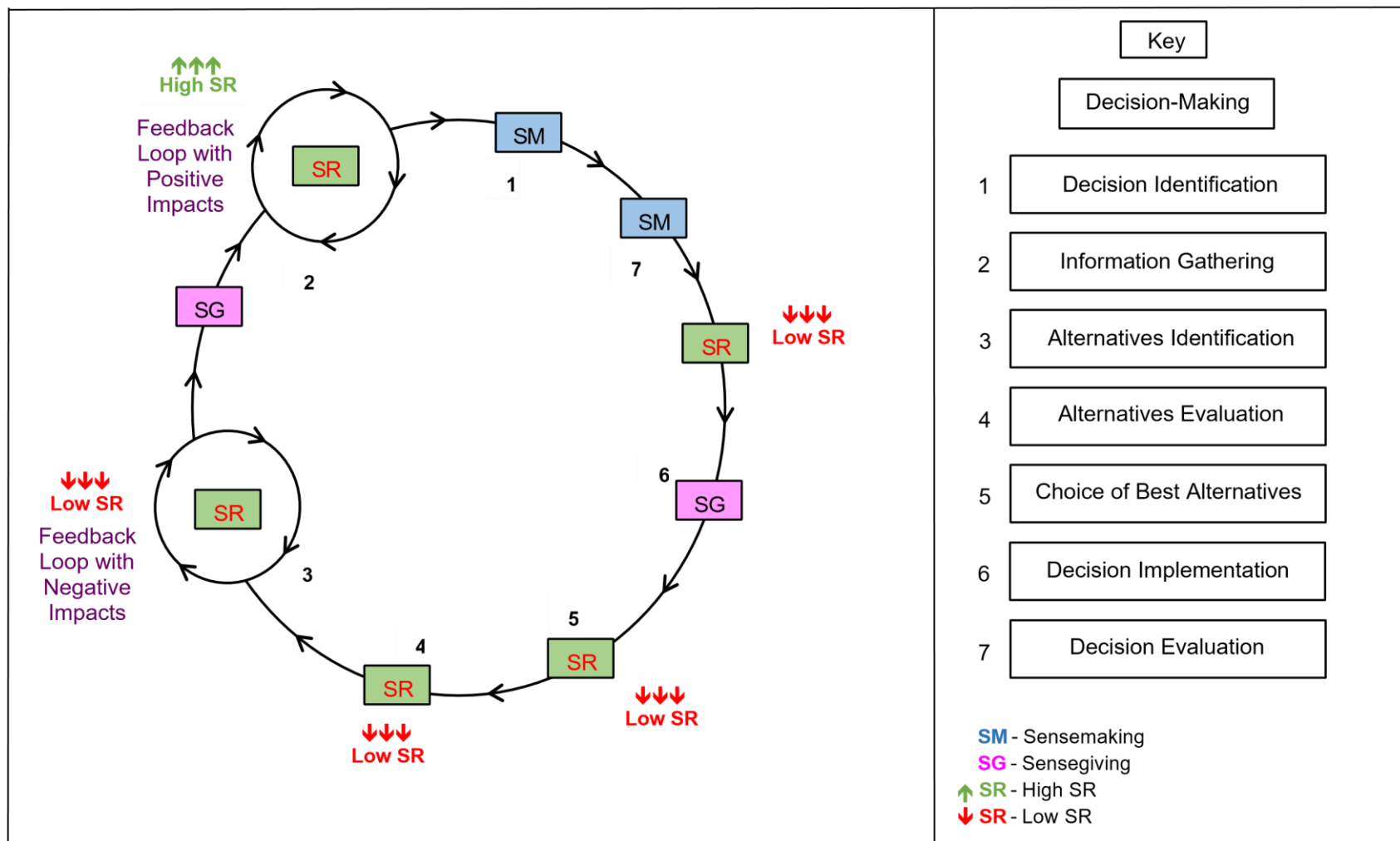


Figure 5. 2 - Feedback loops with negative and positive impacts

Further explanation of the feedback loops with positive / negative impacts

The feedback loop with negative impacts doesn't just lead to low sensereceiving and sense deprivation, impacting the decision-making process, but also impacts the other organisational members and influences how they act / react. What this means is that if the CEO has low sensereceiving in terms of her leadership style, then this alone would lead an organisational member to have low sensereceiving as well. The feedback loop with negative impacts, emanates from the CEO's low sensereceiving and transfers to organisational members low sensereceiving. It is a feedback loop with negative impacts because if she disengages, then that re-enforces the organisational members to have low sensereceiving. This means that it isn't just that the CEO's low sensereceiving that causes organisational members to have low sensereceiving, but also the low sensereceiving from organisational members that cause the CEO to have low sensereceiving. Therefore, if the CEO sees that organisational members have low sensereceiving, she will think that she will not bother with the organisational members. This is the feedback loop with negative impacts.

Conversely, if for example, the organisational members have high sensereceiving, they would tell the CEO to listen to them and have high sensereceiving so that all the information that is imparted from them to her is absorbed. This would mean that organisational members' sensegiving messages are shaping the CEO's practices and if that is feeding back, it gets into a feedback loop with positive impacts. It is important to emphasise that it is just not what the CEO / organisational members do, it's about what they are perceived to do. What the CEO does and what she is perceived to do are not a perfect fit i.e. it is easy to imagine that I am listening to you but you may perceive that I am not. Using an example from the data,

Liam, a PDW from Head Office said,

The CEO tells me that I am to compile a list of safety issues that have been flagged by the Safety Inspector in the current year. I am excited to have been chosen to do this important task. I know exactly what to include in my list but don't give any immediate feedback to the CEO.

The CEO may leave the meeting perceiving that Liam has low sensereceiving as he did not respond in a positive way or give any immediate feedback, although Liam did have high sensereceiving and was eager to perform the task designated to him.

So, in terms of the feedback loops with negative or positive impacts, it's not so much whether I have low or high sensereceiving but rather both our perceptions of each other. The loop is created where low / high sensereceiving is perceived and actions taken (or not) as a result. Chances are that my perception will be correct. Similarly, I may have low sensereceiving, but you perceive that I have high sensereceiving - therefore, it is vital to have this distinction between what is perceived and what's there. What is perceived is important for the feedback because it's your perception of me is what decides on whether or not you engage. From my data as well, when someone says, "she doesn't listen", that is their perception. They don't know for sure if she does or not. It's these perceptions that are very important.

When we're into the feedback loop with negative / positive impacts, that's where it is damaging because once you are into the feedback loop with negative impacts, you're more likely to perceive the other person is having low sensereceiving, irrespective of whether they do or not. There may not always be a feedback loop with negative / positive impacts, because sometimes she may have low sensereceiving and they may have high sensereceiving and that continues till they have a decision. I have identified examples of feedback loops with negative / positive impacts and they seem to be

significant with their impact on the decision-making process. When I get into a feedback loop with negative impacts, that's incredibly disruptive. A feedback loop with positive impacts shows that people are engaged. The feedback loop with negative / positive impacts may not always be present, but they are significant and I can see that in my data especially when it is a feedback loop with negative impacts.

Low sensereceiving of organisational members

In the previous section, we explained that when the organisational members perceived low sensereceiving from the CEO, they switched to low sensereceiving themselves. It impacted them and her leadership style could lead to them withdrawing as they became aware that they were not being listened to. This got into the feedback loop with negative impacts, where there were instances where she notices that they are withdrawing and also thinks that she was not going to engage with the organisational members and now she's in the feedback loop with negative impacts. Once that happens, that's where the trouble lies i.e. low sensereceiving is being re-enforced. When she sees that the organisational members are withdrawing, they are not engaged, she is definitely doing low sensereceiving and not going to listen. This is seen by them and they withdraw. This is the feedback loop with negative impacts.

Having looked at feedback loops with negative / positive impacts, and how low / high sensereceiving from the CEO and SMT can affect the decision-making process in the manner that individuals respond to each other, let's now look at low sensereceiving of organisational members in more detail. Let's look at the factors that are shaping sensereceiving for the organisational members. The feedback loop with negative / positive impacts, sounds like what the organisational members perceive of her, but it's not, it's more complicated than that. I will analyse all my examples below to understand what is happening and will state what I have identified. This section of the chapter will explore low sensereceiving of organisational members in response to the sensegiving messages of leaders.

5.6 Sense of Control

Detailed explanations are offered below to show how the different processes of sensemaking are linked and how each one impacts the decision-making process. The need to understand sense-receiving and its role in the decision-making process will be explained. Sense-receiving relates to my two research questions and is the primary focus of my analysis because by understanding sense-receiving, it puts in place the relevance of sensemaking and sensegiving which reverts back to decision-making. Sense-receiving is the key that enables me to delve deeper into how the other things relate to each other as well as gaining insights into decision-making processes in organisations. By varying the degree of sense-receiving, individuals could either positively or negatively impact organisational decision-making. The research questions are focused on how sensemaking, sensegiving and sense-receiving relate to each other and impact decision-making. Through my analysis so far, I have ascertained that sense-receiving plays a vital role in the decision-making process because it plays a 'regulatory role'. High sense-receiving leads to enriched sensemaking when organisational members feel valued. In contrast, when low sense-receiving ensues, this leads to sense deprivation, where organisational members feel unappreciated and not valued. I now present the concept of 'sense of control' which is a novel concept introduced in this thesis. In my analysis, various interview examples will be used to show how sense of control or the lack thereof, impacted the ability of some organisational members to function efficiently in the organisation. The following sections will elaborate sense of control, including issues such as engagement and empowerment which are likely to inform sense of control.

There is an abundance of evidence through various studies to substantiate the assumption that when employee engagement is present, there is a marked difference in overall organisational performance (Menguc et al. 2013; Shantz et al. 2013; Lee 2015; Bekirogullari 2019). Employee engagement has been defined as "the harnessing of organisational members' selves to their work roles; in engagement,

people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during role performances” (Kahn 1990, p. 694). It is argued that engaged employees contribute to enhanced performance because their high levels of emotional, physical and cognitive energy utilised at work, promote better psychological health. This allows engaged employees to reap the full potential of their work responsibilities (Halbesleben 2010; Leiter and Bakker 2010; Bailey et al. 2017).

Empowerment is defined as “a process of enhancing feelings of self-efficacy among organisational members through the identification of conditions that foster powerlessness and through their removal by both formal organisational practices and informal techniques of providing efficacy information” (Conger and Kanungo 1988). At the organisational level, empowerment may include an involvement in the decision-making process as well as shared leadership (Rappaport and Seidman 2000; Jose and Mampilly 2014; Edelman et al. 2020).

I am seeking answers to determine how sense of control can be refined and conceptualised, given the accounts of those organisational members. This needs to be done because even after using detailed analysis to explain how the sensemaking processes (sensemaking, sensegiving and sense-receiving) affect and influence decision-making processes, there is still more information that needs to be explored that will give me a fuller sense of how other things are linked to the decision-making processes.

We now turn our focus on ‘sense of control’. From my thematic analysis, I looked for prospective themes to see how they fit with other themes, having originated from the data, capturing bits of interesting information which were linked to the research questions. Persistent themes were identified in the thematic coding, resulting in a final thematic map and centered around regaining control, losing control and exerting control. Each of these will be briefly explained. Regaining control reflected a positive

experience for organisational members, where a healthy working environment, good communication and training were encouraged. Losing control highlighted negative thoughts of their working environment, including ideas being rejected, being ignored by management as well as receiving inadequate information for their work tasks. Exerting control was implemented by stalling tactics, enforcing top-down decision-making and playing 'mind' games with their organisational members. To capture these analytical codes, a thematic theme led to the concept of sense of control.

Excerpts from interviews from participants from ABC will help us better understand how the notion of sense of control with regards to empowerment and engagement contribute to the different degrees or levels of sense-receiving of organisational members. I have chosen to use the following example to demonstrate how sense of control may work in an organisation because it is vital that the reader be made aware of how sense of control functions.

This can be demonstrated with the following example from ABC: -

Theresa is a SMT at ABC. She has a team of people who work for her. Every one of her team members including herself are involved in sense-making and the process of decision-making. Through the process of sense-giving, Theresa shapes the decision-making process. For example, Theresa is in charge of the induction program and designates Alana and her colleagues to compile all the necessary information to successfully implement the induction process. She instructs them to carry out several tasks to the best of their ability based on prior information. This sends them a message that they have a 'sense of control' on how they wish to carry out the tasks designated to them which they complete successfully. A high sense of control bestowed onto them has given them the confidence to carry out the tasks to the best of their abilities. They had high sense-receiving to the prior sense-giving messages from Theresa.

Even though 'formal control' resides with Theresa, her team feels empowered because of their enhanced 'sense of control' and come to Theresa with their 'ideas'. Here 'sense of control' comes from the individuals themselves and not just from management. High sensereceiving towards her team members from previous instances, has made them feel that their ideas are valued and welcome. This invokes them to further contribute their ideas to achieve success in the tasks designated to them. Their perception is shaped from previous runs of similar circumstances. High sensereceiving leads to enriched sensemaking. This consequently leads to an optimal decision being made which enables the organisational members to positively impact the decision-making process.

Ella, a Personal Development Worker (PDW) at Regional Office No. 1 said,

I don't think that I'm being heard. Only when you're 'shouting' that you may get heard. Or have a 'breakdown'. Even then, they (SMT) may say that they will consider your suggestions, but to date, I have had only 1 suggestion taken seriously, and I've been here for twelve years. I don't feel that I am empowered to make any decisions, not even small ones. If you start moving something important forward, something that Isabella (CEO) isn't interested in, it will get shut down and you will be forced to acknowledge why it was deemed unimportant. My motivation has slipped considerably, since I started working here because I do not have the authority or power to implement the issues that are vital for my success.

Despite being at the organisation for quite a few years, Ella felt that her suggestions went unheard and that she was not empowered to make any decisions at ABC. She is unable to participate in the decision-making process because she is not empowered to do so and this has led to her having low sense of control. Ella's low sense of control leads to low sensereceiving which in turn causes sense deprivation to occur.

Theresa a SMT member at the Head Office said,

Over the years the ideas for this organisation have been put forward by 1 person and 1 person only and that's the CEO. That's great but that puts everyone else off and not allows them to contribute their ideas. That's not healthy because only one person's opinions matter and any other decisions must go through her. Trying to get structure across departments is hard because they are waiting for one person to make a decision. Creativity from all other individuals who often have great ideas on how to move the organisation forward is lost because they lose interest in contributing their ideas.

From the narrative above, it can be seen that from a SMT's point of view, organisational members are not empowered to participate in decision-making processes at ABC. Theresa acknowledges that some great ideas are lost because individuals are not empowered to make any decisions. Low sense of control has led to low sense receiving and sense deprivation. As a consequence, organisational members disengage because they feel that their ideas, opinions and contributions are not valued.

Layla, a support Advisor (SA) at Regional Office No. 2 has been working at ABC for a substantial period of time. She was enthusiastic about her job when she joined and saw how she could bring about positive changes to the organisation.

Layla says,

Over time, I noticed flaws in the implementation of the payroll system. I did suggest ideas to my manager on how to have this corrected, so that staff would be aware of these circumstances and be able to deal with it appropriately. Unfortunately, this was ignored, and nothing materialised from it. I lost interest in trying to make a difference.

Layla had worked hard to be recognised for her dedication to her clients, but it went unrecognised by management. At the beginning of her career, she had tried to engage her leaders in circumstances where she could help and seek help. However, she felt powerless and was denied the tools and resources she badly needed to be successful at her job. They ignored her pleas for help but blamed her when the situation became dire. She had experienced low sense-receiving from the SMT. When she had tried to bring up various issues that were preventing her from performing her tasks efficiently, she was ignored. Low sense of control led to low sense-receiving and this further led to sense deprivation, where she became consciously aware of her status within the organisation. This caused her to disengage and she subsequently was excluded from the decision-making process.

Given the context of the decision-making process, the examples below demonstrate the problems encountered by organisational members who became disengaged from ABC. There had been a lack of communication between the leaders and their organisational members in the organisation.

Lana, a Support Advisor (SA) from Regional Office No. 3 organisational member said,

When the information was being collected and assessed about which payroll system to adopt, I was excited to share the information that I had come across from my last job in IT. I asked some questions with regards to the system that was being considered and was told that I shouldn't ask too many questions. I did suggest lots of ideas to my manager on how to have this corrected, so that staff would be aware of any extraordinary circumstances and be able to deal with it appropriately. Unfortunately, this was ignored, and nothing materialised from it.

Although Lana was enthusiastic about the potential system being considered during the information gathering and alternatives identification stage, she felt that there was a lack of information as to how different systems were evaluated. The SMT had low sense-receiving to Lana's concerns and when they informed her that she shouldn't ask

too many questions, the SMT had caused her to have low sense receiving herself to their sense giving messages. She strived to bring about positive change by trying to engage with her manager but was unsuccessful because her messages were ignored - she was unable to implement any positive changes at ABC because open communication and feedback were not valued in the organisation. This caused issues to develop between the SMT members and organisational members which led to frustration when issues remained unresolved. Her low sense of control led to low sense receiving and sense deprivation. This eventually caused her to disengage and was unable to participate in the decision-making process. It can be clearly seen that when organisational members are not listened to, their sense of control is low which impacts sense receiving, causing it to be low and they experience sense deprivation.

She continued,

My team came up with this slogan 'Expect and no respect' - every one of us works extremely hard but we are neither appreciated nor valued in this organisation. I have stopped volunteering, offering up ideas or giving feedback on projects.

Low sense of control on behalf of the organisational members lead to a feeling that they do not feel empowered to carry out the tasks and were ill equipped to participate in the decision-making process. They disengage because they feel that their ideas, opinions and contributions are not valued. Lana was not allowed to make any important decisions about her work, causing the continuous cycle of physical, emotional and cognitive contract between both parties to irretrievably break down. Lana disengaged and refused to participate in further activities at ABC. The message sent to her from the SMT was that her ideas were not valued or welcome. Low sense of control from organisational members meant that the sense giving messages from the SMT were received with low sense receiving leading to sense deprivation. Consequently, Lana was unable to participate in any of the vital decision-making processes.

Rose a Support Advisor (SA) from Head Office said,

One of my staff, came out with a training presentation and we had a look at it and it was really good - however, that was as far as it got. We never saw or heard about it again. Shame really, as it was a good one and would have helped us a great deal. After that we never saw her participate or contribute her ideas to any incentives that the organisation undertook. We noticed that she wasn't really on board with what was being discussed at meetings, she seemed quite out of it really.

The example above from a participant interview, demonstrates the following: - Low sense-receiving from the SMT led to the organisational member experiencing a low sense of control. This low sense of control from the organisational member led to them having low sense-receiving and experiencing sense deprivation. They subsequently disengaged and did not participate in the decision-making processes at the organisation.

Zoey, an Area Lead (AL) from Regional Office No. 1 said,

Joan one of my SA's is incredibly good at her job and comes up with brilliant ideas from time to time on how to improve our interaction with our clients. Joan always loses motivation because the ideas are taken off her and its 'died' and I'm going to have to work really hard to get her motivation back.

Organisational members are resentful that when they do contribute their ideas and engage with SMT members, their ideas are ignored. Low sense-receiving from SMT have caused organisational members to have a low sense of control, contributing to low sense-receiving which further leads to sense deprivation. As a result, they withdraw their ideas and disengage altogether. They are not feeling valued because they can see that the SMT have low sense-receiving to their ideas and opinions, and further not being invited to participate in the decision-making process.

Summary

In this section, I looked at the factors that shaped sense-receiving for organisational members and identified that it isn't just what they perceived of their leaders that was shaping sense-receiving, but also their sense of control. From the examples above, it can be clearly seen that low sense-receiving from leaders (SMT) i.e. when they are not being listened to, the organisational members sense of control is low, which impacts and causes them to have low sense-receiving. The low sense-receiving contributes to sense deprivation where they become acutely conscious of their status within the organisation. Low sense of control caused organisational members to either disengage altogether or not feel empowered to carry out their tasks confidently.

Additionally, organisational members were not consulted on matters that had a direct impact on their working lives. A few organisational members sense-gave information they thought could help their teams but these ideas were either ignored or quickly dismissed. Organisational members were uncomfortable to even initiate any good suggestions that they might have had due to the fear of being reprimanded. These organisational members did not feel empowered to contribute their ideas or to participate in any decision-making processes and did not engage in ongoing activities. Morale in the organisation was low with organisational members feeling that they lacked any sense of control on their working environment.

We now turn our attention to another important concept - sense of identity, which shapes sense-making, sense-giving, sense-receiving and eventually the decision-making process.

5.7 Sense of identity

In this section, we look at the concept of 'sense of identity'. What is crucial here is to understand how much of organisational identity (from which individuals claim through work) provides a suitable fit with their self and social identity (Reynolds-Kueny and Shoss 2020). The concept of sense of identity arose from my thematic analysis and highlights sense of identity in terms of how it impacts sense-receiving.

Identity is socially constructed and negotiated and therefore sometimes to attain a certain 'identity', one needs to 'negotiate' it from another person. There is a certain amount of 'negotiation' around a company's 'identity'. What are its values, what is it for, what culture does it adopt and the degree to which one identifies with that? This requires clarification on what self-identity is and how it impacts or is impacted by organisational identity. In this study, issues of identity are connected to other underlying problems within the organisation, and these will be addressed in the following sections.

Three distinctive codes emerged from my thematic analysis pertaining to identity. They were personal identity, social identity and organisational identity. Personal identity was reflected in the self-worth of organisational members, the culture that they felt excluded from and the ambiguity in the roles that they assumed. Organisational identity was linked to value of self, the respect that was bestowed towards them and their exclusion from decision-making processes. Social identity was associated with organisational members ideas being ridiculed, a lack of support for the job that they carried out on a daily basis as well as being disregarded for the work that they did with their clients.

The following from interviews with participants at ABC will illustrate the importance of a sense of identity in the decision-making process as it effects sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving. In the following examples, I show that sense of identity plays an important role in sensereceiving and therefore part of the decision-making process in organisations. As previously highlighted in my literature review, sensemaking is triggered when an 'identity threat' is imminent and attempts are made to restore an individual's identity (Weick 1995).

Belinda, a Support Advisor (SA) at Head Office says,

As time went by, I felt that the company ethos was lost, and I struggled to find what the organisation's true values were. At the core of this organisation, are its values and the people we work for - that's what keeps us here. I contributed lots of new ideas, but they were mostly ignored. I was unsure of why I had come to work for this organisation, where their values were so different from mine. I became disillusioned and lost interest.

Over time, Belinda was unable to identify with the values of the organisation, as she felt that the original vision of the organisation was lost. She could no longer apply these value statements to her work, and gradually saw her personal values conflict with those she observed implemented throughout the organisation. Moreover, she saw that the SMT were not interested in what she had to say or contribute in terms of her ideas. The SMT had low sensereceiving towards her ideas and this in turn led to her negative sense of identity. This further led to her own low sense receiving and sense deprivation, causing her to become aware of her status and role within the organisation. She was unable to identify with the goals and values that the organisation had previously portrayed.

This decision-making process focuses on managerial identity and how it is linked to organisational issues, the role expectations as well as the decision-making process that ensues thereafter. This decision-making process also presents the individual steps taken to steer between discourses and attempts to resolve issues through identity regulation. Senior managers often play the role of decision-makers and therefore have a major impact on the organisation. As such, they may be detached from the operational process of the organisation and in effect live in a more abstract world than their organisational members.

I interviewed **Jim**, a Support Advisor (SA) at Regional Office No. 3 and this is what he had to say,

I was excited to work for this organisation as I was always interested in working for an organisation which helped those less fortunate than myself. I saw myself totally embracing the goals of the organisation which included 'supporting people to live the lives they choose'. I totally identified with the organisation's ethos which stated that 'everyone was equal, different and had their own gifts and skills. Every relationship was valued and everyone had the ability to develop and achieve anything whilst being involved in decisions that affected their lives'. I loved that. It was so me. This was going to be my dream job - I was thrilled.

Jim had specifically defined the context of his work and as such had set the scene for the preworking conditions, implicitly invoking the 'actor identity' that he was going to be a part of, working for the organisation. He explicitly described the conditions in which the organisation operated and this reshaped his identity. He embraced the organisation's ethos and this generated intensive identity work which strengthened his own self-identity which he espoused wholeheartedly.

He continues,

I was a Personal Development Worker (PDW) for quite a few years before coming into this role of a Support Advisor (SA) - so maybe they thought that I would naturally come into the role without any mentoring but it's a totally different skill set that you're now utilising. The CEO told me to 'get on with it' and learn from others as everyone else had done previously. Attend a course or something and besides, aren't we supposed to be 'self-managing teams' anyway? Quit complaining - we work as a team. It effected my work. It makes you feel inadequate and that people are not communicating well with you. There is no mentoring - I have had to struggle all on my own, and this has left me feeling defeated. I am very nervous about making decisions about my team because I am unsure if it will be the right one, and in my line of work, a wrong decision can have dire consequences.

The narrative above illustrates that Jim defined himself directly as a long serving former PDW taking on a new role. By doing so, he had positioned himself at a particular hierarchical location within the organisation, armed with a distinctive set of values and an independent social standing. He was mindful of his expectations in acquiring the new role as a SA as it was defined by defining others in that same role (Alvesson 1994). Through the use of specific vocabulary and motives, he was instructed to 'get on with it', and was urged to follow what his colleagues had done previously to become eloquent in his role (Mills 1940). By saying that 'we work as a team', the CEO was using a specific vocabulary of motives to stress the absence of a hierarchy and thus promoting a positive workplace atmosphere within the organisation (Alvesson 2011). He had no prior knowledge or adequate skills on how to perform his job efficiently and as a result, his self identity was weakened considerably. Although his job title distinguished him from others, he was unable to carry through with the expectations required of him. He felt very much alone (Laurent 1978). He received no support and was told blatantly, that he was supposed to be a 'self-managing team', so he should be in a position to better manage himself (Ezzamel and Willmott 1998).

From the narrative above, it shows that there is an element of self awareness which reflects how Jim truly feels, thinks and determines value (Hassard et al. 2000). The CEO had clearly established a distinct set of rules of the game by writing 'this is the way things are done here and we will continue to uphold this guiding principle'. They had a particular way of handling the on-call sessions and this was a major implication for the SA's identity (re) construction. As a team player, he was forced to adapt this new established code of conduct and thus be at odds with his own self identity. He is forced to accept the social cues that he obtains from the CEO. If he were to survive in the organisation, identity regulation would force him to learn and assimilate such rules, and in doing so, reposition / reshape his sense of identity (Ezzamel and Willmott 2008; Rothausen et al. 2017). Previous encounters combined with the specific experience of not having the on-call issue examined for fairness, has led the SA to experience feelings of "heightened awareness to the constructed quality of his self identity" within the organisation (Alvesson and Willmott 2002, p. 626).

Here, his sense of identity did not connect him to his past experiences at the organisation because the work he was presently undertaking was at a different level. Feelings and thoughts were fragmented. This severely interfered with his ability to deal with contingencies if they happened. His decision-making skills did not reflect his skill set due to his lack of self esteem and identity issues attributed to negative social values (Mitchell and Beach 1987). Low sensereceiving from the CEO had led to a negative sense of identity, leading to low sensereceiving and sense deprivation, where there was an enhanced level of conscious awareness to his role and status at ABC. Sense of identity is happening within him and affecting how he feels. He then enters the decision-making process where sensereceiving is low and this causes problems for the organisation.

The CEO sent out an email about compiling a 'best practices guide' which would include practical information from all organisational members on how to deal with difficult situations encountered through work situations at the organisation. However, I will not be contributing my ideas because I feel let down and am very resentful that something that was important to all of us remains unchanged. Morale is very low - communication is bad and I don't feel a sense of belonging. Since being an SA I have come up with a few initiatives but my voice has not been heard. When I come up with something useful, the CEO fails to reacts in a positive way and I think to myself 'what's the point' and retreat into my shell.

The example above reflects how an incident may prompt rigorous identity work where Jim's identity is questioned and weakened due to an attack from the CEO when he states that "I don't feel a sense of belonging". In response, the identity work that he takes on redefines his self and the other individuals around him. This identification forces him to accept undesirable negative conditions which leave him feeling frustrated. He feels that he doesn't have a voice in the organisation, becomes resentful and refuses to contribute his ideas. His identity has been suppressed by established organising practices in the organisation and he is not encouraged to participate in any of the important decision-making processes.

When looking at a decision-making process, whatever the organisation's intention might be with regards to my personal or social identity, if it allows me to make sense or rationalise that, then that's good. If, however there is a tension there, then this disrupts the decision-making process and individuals start to disengage and move away from the decision-making process. That is related to me through sense of identity and sensereceiving.

Summary

My own sense of identity might shape my own ideas through sensemaking. Our sense of identity and how we choose to engage with others, is a crucial relationship. How we choose to flow information, how we choose to sensereceive and sensegive is really strongly tied to our sense of identity as there is a feedback effect there i.e. when we engage with someone and we are sensitive to the feedback / cues that people are giving back to us, it might reinforce or potentially alter our sense of identity. When I show that I don't care about what other people think, sensereceiving is low. I may deliver a message and feel good that I did so. However, what I have chosen to do is to practically shut down how I've chosen to do that work. That could be potentially shutting down ideas, problem solving and skewing my decision-making. My analysis of sensereceiving identified the importance of sense of identity.

5.8 Incorporating Sense of Control and Sense of Identity into Sensereceiving

There may be both / either a sense of identity and a sense of control which are disrupted at any one time i.e. I may not have a sense of control but I trust where the organisation is going presently and have a positive sense of identity. Or, alternatively, I may have a negative sense of identity and a low sense of control, which causes major strain in the relationship.

We now look at a situation where there is a tension between sense of control and sense of identity i.e. when there is a positive sense of identity and a low sense of control. We look at the following example from **Joan**, an Area Lead (AL) at Regional Office No. 3 who says,

I totally identified with the organisation's ethos which stated that 'everyone was equal, different and had their own gifts and skills. Every relationship was valued and everyone had the ability to develop and achieve anything whilst being involved in decisions that affected their lives'. I had lots of suggestions as to how we could improve our relationship with our clients but the SMT ignored all my suggestions. I felt that I was unable to participate in any decisions that affected my clients and was quite distraught. After a while, I stopped trying and paid little attention to what those around me were saying. I lost interest very quickly and resented what we were told to do.

This could possibly explain the tensions at ABC. Individuals work at the organisation because they wish to make a difference and identify with the ethos of the organisation, whereby the non-profit work that they did to enhance the lives of vulnerable individuals was what drew them to ABC in the first place. Although Joan had a positive sense of identity, whereby she was able to identify with the values of the organisation she worked for, she had a low sense of control. This was brought about because she perceived that the SMT had low sensereceiving to her ideas and this in turn led her to have low sense of control and a negative sense of identity. This set-in motion Joan's low sensereceiving to the SMT sensegiving messages. Low sensereceiving on her part occurred where she stopped paying attention to their messages, leading to sense deprivation.

Leah, an Area Lead (AL) at Head Office said,

I have been at the organisation for a good number of years and have good experience at the organisation. I have quite a few staff who work for me and they are good staff who want to do the best for their clients. However, over the last year, I feel that the organisation has been slowly moving away from their mission and this has me in conflict with my own thoughts and the reason I started working here in the first place. There has been a steady decrease in communication from the SMT and CEO, leaving me feeling inadequate that people are not communicating well with you. There is no mentoring - I have had to struggle all on my own, and this has left me feeling defeated. I feel that I am shutting down the information that is being sent down to me from the SMT.

Although Leah has a high sense of control working with her team who she regards as “good staff who want to do the best for their clients”, she feels that she has a negative sense of identity because she feels that the organisation has been slowly moving away from their mission. The organisation didn’t keep to its side of the bargain, and this created tensions (identity problems) with Leah. I feel that this is a fair statement to make about the organisation because individuals desire to work for the organisation mainly because of its ‘perceived values’. Now if that changes, then the organisational members are the ones who are most effected, predominantly because the organisation’s new values are not identifiable with that of their members.

Senior management often have a considerable say on what decisions should be adopted by the organisation. “However, to be effective in a hegemonic sense, staff must be willing to reject, or at least suspend, their own definitions as they embrace those of management” (Kenny et al. 2011, p. 140). If properly exercised, organisational members will share in a strong sense of pride in working for an organisation and would be prepared to input ‘discretionary effort’ without the need for any form of remuneration or reward for additional work done.

Where they influence decision-making is where they work well, where 'sense of control' and 'sense of identity' are present enabling people to engage in the decision-making process (SR is high). Therefore, the problems at the organisation are poor at empowering people and losing people around the concept of identity by not getting them involved.

Rose, a Support Advisor (SA) at the Head Office says,

I am a manager at the organisation and get along well with my staff. Since being an SA I have come up with a few initiatives but my voice has not been heard. When I come up with something useful, the CEO fails to react in a positive way and I think to myself 'what's the point' and retreat into my shell. As a result, I don't feel that I should listen to them either.

Rose may feel that her 'identity' as a manager gives her a very strong sense of empowerment and control depending on who she's dealing with, in which case she acts in a certain way, engaging with others. In a different setting, she is repressed and doesn't participate. Although Rose may have a positive sense of identity and a high sense of control in circumstances involving her own staff, she experiences a negative sense of identity and a low sense of control when dealing with the CEO. This contributes to her having low sense-receiving to the sense-giving messages from the CEO.

5.9 Conclusion

I have focused on sensereceiving, looking at it in different ways, and in doing so, highlighted the variety of things that played an important role in the decision-making process. We began by exploring leadership style and discovered that leadership style can be conceptualised as part of sensereceiving. This is how the CEO and SMT lead and because they have low sensereceiving, information from their organisational members is not getting in. There are lots of quotations that evidence that they are not listening and that they don't engage. I consider this low sensereceiving because they don't listen to their organisational members and only what they impose on their organisational members is regarded as important. The instances when there is high sensereceiving from the CEO and SMT, the organisational members are equally receptive to the sensegiving messages from them and have high sensereceiving that leads to enriched sensemaking.

There are instances evidenced from my analysis that when the CEO made a decision and handed it down to her team, they decided that they were unwilling to offer ideas etc. because they had made up their mind (which had altered their identity) that their ideas were unwelcome. The CEO felt that her ideas had been accepted willingly with no resentment, and this made her happy. She did not receive the benefit of different ideas / experiences from her team which may have enhanced the results of her decision. The decision may have succeeded or failed. This was a repressed situation. In a different situation, the CEO pitched her ideas and everyone in the room had 'high sensereceiving' because they anticipated that they could contribute to it - they processed her ideas and made a decision that they disagreed with her - she absorbed it and passed on her thoughts once again - this went back and forth till a consensus decision was reached by everyone in the room.

When the organisational members perceive that they are not being listened to, this leads to a feedback loop with negative impacts whereby they also fail to absorb the CEO and SMT sensegiving messages. When the organisational members perceive low sensereceiving from the CEO and SMT, they switch to low sensereceiving themselves, and withdraw. This forms a vicious cycle whereby the CEO and SMT, perceiving that the organisational members are not receptive to their messages, also do the same to them. This results in sense deprivation where the organisational members are more focused and consciously aware of their status within the organisation, rather than the sensegiving messages themselves. The content of the messages is diminished and as a consequence, the organisational members are excluded from the decision-making process. However, there are instances when a feedback loop with positive impacts is present when the organisational members perceive that they are being heard. This in turn ensures that they have high sensereceiving to the sensegiving messages from their CEO and SMT. When the CEO and SMT perceive that they are being heard, they also have high sensereceiving to the messages from the organisational members. In these instances, high sensereceiving leads to enriched sensemaking and participation in the decision-making process.

We have established that sensereceiving is important for the relationship between sensegiving & sensemaking, and that sense of identity and sense of control shape how sensereceiving works. I used the decision-making process to introduce the concepts of sense of control and sense of identity. Sense of control and sense of identity are partly about understanding the feedback loop with negative / positive impacts, as much of the decision-making process is shaped by the feedback loop with negative / positive impacts. It helps us to understand leadership as well as the feedback loop with negative / positive impacts in terms of the employee perspective. Identity work and identity regulation were seen to have a significant impact and influence on how organisational members were affected in different ways. The tension between sense of control and sense of identity diminishes sensereceiving.

Sense of identity and sense of control are happening within me and affecting how I feel. I then enter the decision-making process, arguing that my sense of receiving is either high or low. Low sense of receiving from the SMT leads to low sense of control for the organisational members. They now have low sense of receiving because there is a feedback loop with negative impacts happening. This leads to sense deprivation where the organisational members experience an enhanced awareness of their role or status within the organisation. Conversely, when organisational members perceive that they are being listened to by the CEO and SMT, i.e. the SMT and CEO have high sense of receiving, they experience a high sense of control. This in turn causes organisational members to have high sense of receiving and are receptive to the messages from their SMT members, and leads to enriched sensemaking.

This is about a sense of identity that we have set up with people e.g. if I act in a dominant way, I have set up a sense of identity for you. It's a way of describing our feelings or our sense of identity as both the product of previous exchanges and the site of current exchange. So how I feel about our engagements, exchanges and discussions have been indelibly shaped by our 'history'. But what we are doing today will influence how we interact with each other in the future. This may look stable but there is a process going on every time we have that exchange of reinforcing or slightly modifying the outcome. What is normal is that there is usually a 'slight' variation on how we feel about each other. It explains why people may keep quiet if the CEO came into a room and said that she wanted everyone's ideas - my sense of identity is shaped by previous numerous times when decisions have been handed down to me and my ideas have 'not been invited'. It really boils down to the person in the position of 'power' to make that invitation to shape your identity for you. You are not just shaping your own identity but also that of others.

CHAPTER 6. DISCUSSION

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of my research is to identify how sensemaking processes influence decision-making outcomes in organisations. Organisational decision-making is complex in nature, involves human behaviour and involves making a choice between various alternatives, often in uncertain environments (Dewulf and Biesbroek 2018). My research is focused on determining how organisational decision-making processes are impacted by the action of managers and organisational members. Sensemaking processes, involving sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving are experienced by managers and organisational members during the decision-making process. Decision-making processes were examined through a sensemaking lens so as to ascertain the behaviour of managers who were involved in multifaceted decision-making processes. Examining sensegiving processes, enabled me to gain insights into how managers were able to utilise their powers to influence organisational members.

As sensereceiving is a relatively new concept introduced by authors Hoyte et al. (2019) and McKiernan and Mackay (2017), I have decided to pursue this in much greater depth in my thesis. Studying it closely has enabled me to develop in-depth understanding on the importance of sensereceiving to sensemaking, sensegiving and the decision-making process. This chapter will include important information related to the existing literature and will explore the significance of my findings as well as providing answers to the research questions. I then proceed to the contribution to theory which is my development of the concept of sensereceiving and conclude this chapter with implications for practice.

The organising of decision-making processes involves sensegiving and sensemaking processes, so in order to understand decision-making in organisations, exploring the sensemaking processes should give us insights into the organising and decision-making. That then gives us two research questions which address gaps in the literature pertaining to the sensemaking processes.

RQ 1 - How do sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving influence decision-making in organisations?

RQ 2 - How do sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving relate to each other?

6.2 Theoretical Framework

Decision-making processes involve selecting an optimal choice when faced with a set of alternatives. The use of a Rational Decision-Making Model consists of going through multiple stages, including decision identification, information gathering, alternatives identification, alternatives evaluation, choice of best alternatives, decision implementation and decision evaluation, till a solution is reached. The decision-making stages may not always be linear and involve every stage or be in the same order. This study has shown that enriched sensemaking is of significant benefit to the decision-making process in contrast to sense deprivation where it poses a danger to effective decision-making processes. Previous literature has stressed the importance of effective sensegiving and sensemaking. This study has shown that sensereceiving is equally important to decision-making processes.

Sense of identity and sense of control are vital in shaping how sense-receiving works in the decision-making process. Of primary importance here is the need to understand SR and ensure that it is high to enrich SM and gain maximum benefits for the decision-making process. For this to be maintained over time we must also note that the outcome of the process (and how this is communicated through further sense-giving) feeds back into sense of identity and sense of control with implications for future sense-making processes within this decision-making process, and likely beyond for other decision-making processes involving the same organisational members.

Although both figures (Figure 6.1 and Figure 6.2) show distinct sense-making processes (Enriched SM and Deprived SM), there are instances when SR could be High SR initially but then could change to Low SR or vice versa due to the perception of the individual at the receiving end of the SR process. An important point to note is that other external / individual factors could also shape Sense of Control and Sense of Identity e.g. leadership style. The Theoretical Framework below incorporates the main themes of the research undertaken, tying in the main concepts of Sense-making, Sense-giving, Sense-receiving as well as Sense of Identity and Sense of Control within the organisation. This framework / toolkit may be extended to other sectors and organisations, providing guidance as to how to best utilise the sense-making processes to effectively / efficiently impact and influence decision-making in organisations.

Figure 6.1 - shows Enriched SM and Figure 6.2 shows Deprived SM.

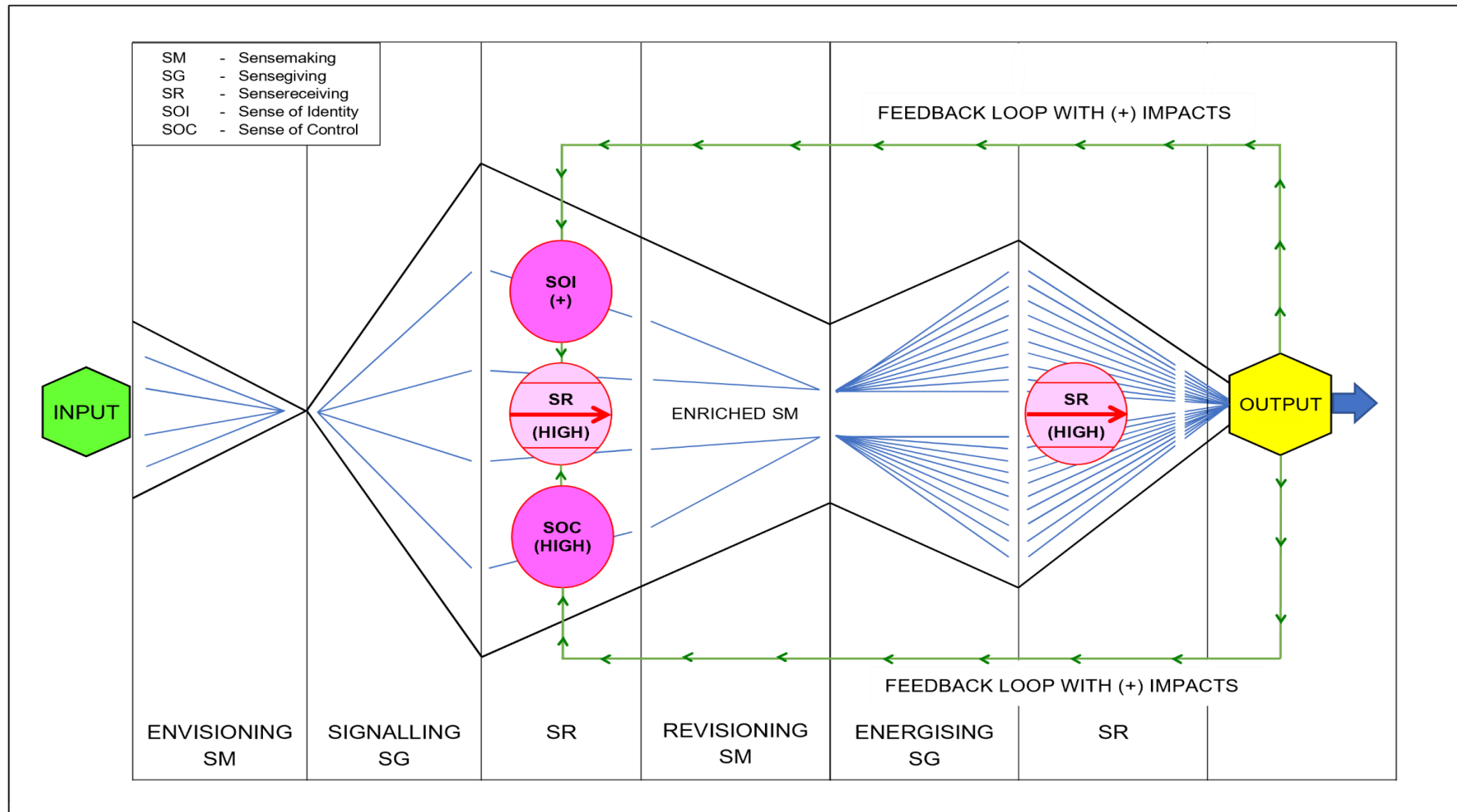


Figure 6. 1 - Decision making process (Enriched SM) adapted from Gioia & Chittipeddi (1991)

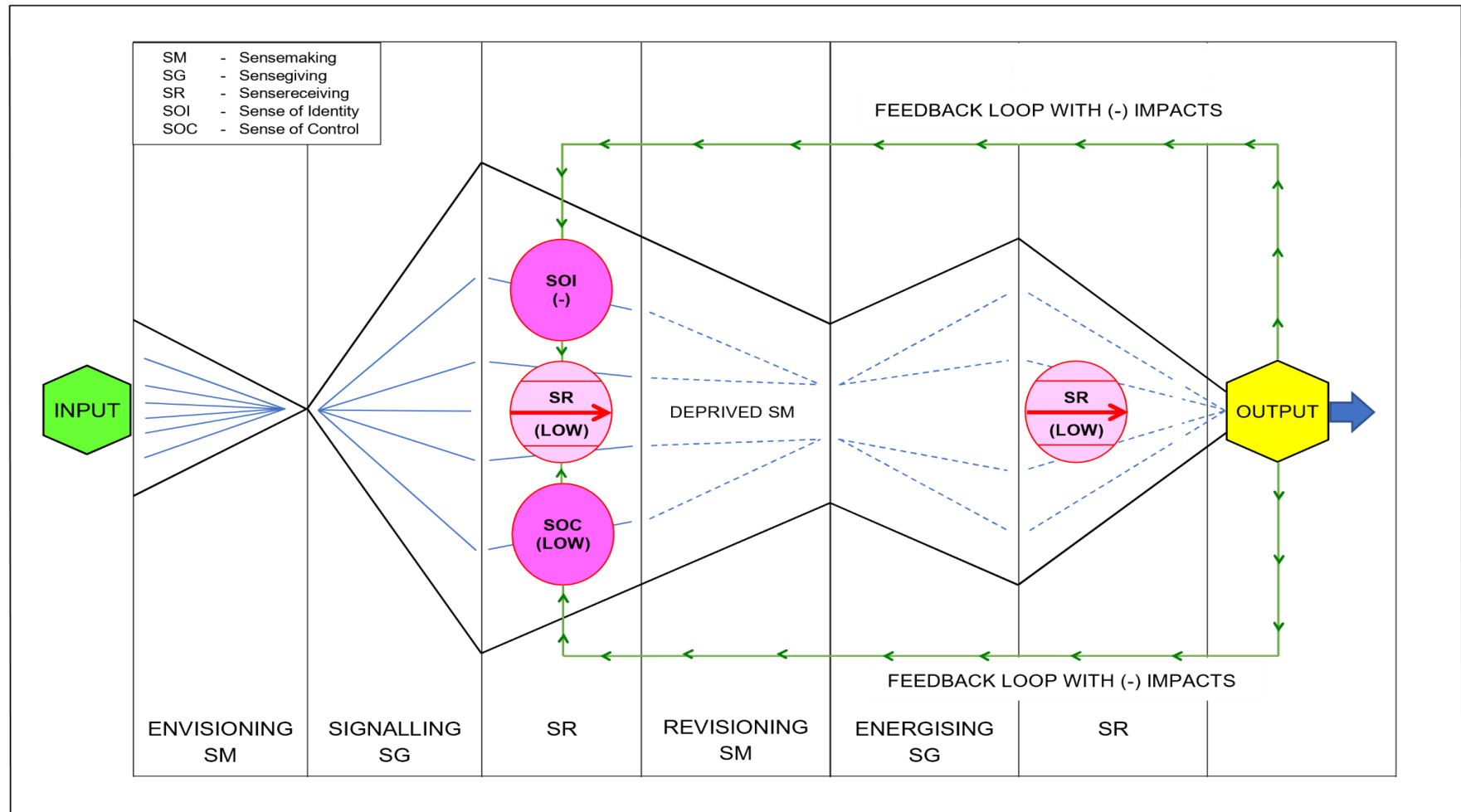


Figure 6. 2 - Decision making process (Deprived SM) adapted from Gioia & Chittipeddi (1991)

The value of the Decision-Making Framework

The DM Framework gives a clear indication of means to maximise decision-making processes and outcomes. It clearly shows how to achieve a desirable output which enhances engagement in the decision-making process. The framework outlines the processes involved - SM, SG & SR. The framework may be used as a guideline on how to motivate employee engagement in the decision-making process. The information from the framework is applicable to all organisational employees including management, and thus not having some voices privileged over others. The framework explains a more focused contribution of the DM process. The challenges faced in decision-making processes is often experienced by management as well as employees in organisations but has remained unexplained until now and knowledge acquired guides us on how to act in a more informed and effective manner.

The theoretical framework shows that DM processes will be enhanced if communication between all employees and management is based on a willingness to listen, offer feedback and share in meaning-making. If management accepts that it is not just selective individuals who contribute to the DM process but rather the inclusion of all employees who are empowered to participate, then there will be success in the process. Being empowered would mean that employees experience a high sense of control and a positive sense of identity. A shared understanding and vision about the DM process will promote a positive culture within the organisation where everyone is equally valued and feels free to contribute their ideas.

The framework would be useful for organisations as an educational tool. It presents a conceptualisation that when managers and employees engage, a positive organisational culture ensues, promoting shared meaning making leading to a high sense of control and a positive sense of identity. A feedback loop with positive impacts is created consequently and this is brought about because employees have a high sense of control and a positive sense of identity which further leads to high sensereceiving and enriched sensemaking. By raising the awareness on the importance of shared meaning making, managers would intentionally facilitate their employees' feedback, ideas and opinions. The emphasis on understanding how communication processes occur, further contribute to learning how identity problems and solutions emerge in the DM process.

The framework helps to fill a gap in comprehending the differences on how management who are often in charge of complex decision-making processes, exclude employees who are entrusted in implementing those decisions. Often under various forms of constraints e.g. time, budget etc. or simply excluding employees from the decision-making process, management overlook discussing future decision-making plans with the rest of their organisational employees. This leads to employees not fully receiving and absorbing the messages from management in the manner intended. As a result, there is low sensereceiving and employees do not fully comprehend the decisions and are unable to implement them successfully.

The framework is based on established theory and literature but has been extended through this extensive research on SR to uncover problematic issues or areas which can be detected, understood and improved. There may be differences in ideas and opinions between managers and employees, but the framework clearly indicates a need for reciprocal communication pertaining to decision-making processes. Decision-making processes are complex in nature and the framework indicates that communication and shared meaning-making will require management and employees to work together to reap its benefits.

The framework is reflective of the experiences of management and employees. Consequently, managers could gain insight and identify the factors which might stimulate or constrain the DM process. The framework could trigger discussions on further understanding the behaviours, systems and beliefs of the DM process which previously may have been abstract concepts. It may enable various groups within the organisation to explore differences in perception of how DM processes evolve. Additionally, it could encourage analysis of deeper issues and factors within the organisation which may have been causing the DM processes to fail.

Finally, the framework is also sensitive to the impacts of sensegiving and sensemaking over time through feedback and sense of identity and sense of control encourages a longer-term view and an investment in engaging staff.

6.3 Decision-making process

The decision-making process encapsulated the sensemaking processes (sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving) and depicted the seven decision-making stages of the decision-making process. They offered explanations as to how each stage could be affected by the sensemaking processes as experienced by leaders / managers and organisational members. Although the literature pertaining to the decision-making process identifies the various stages, (Carpenter et al. 2010) I did not find that each decision process evolved through them, as certain stages were repeated, especially evidenced when there was high sensereceiving and communication between all parties. For example, in my findings and analysis, a couple of instances surfaced when the decision-making stages were not linear as stated in Van Buuren and Gerrits (2008). This occurred when an agreement was reached by all parties involved in the discussion, stipulating that the potential decision for the payroll system would not derive optimal results. In this instance, a joint decision was made to revert back to earlier phases of the decision-making process to once again start the brainstorming of ideas i.e. reverting back to phase 2 (information gathering) from phase 4 (alternatives evaluation) of the decision-making process.

Additionally, some of the decision-making phases may be omitted altogether as advocated in Nutt (1984), whereby a historical model process was used in practices where organisational success was guaranteed. From my findings, although the SMT attempted to follow suit by trying to learn from external organisations who had successfully adopted various payroll systems for their organisations, they failed to realise that there were other important internal matters which involved their organisational members, that were needed for decision-making success. Whilst hoping to follow in these organisations successes, they chose to neglect various vital phases in the decision-making process which would have allowed for the participation of organisational members in the sensemaking processes that would lead to successful decision-making.

The decision-making process shows that organisations may sometimes utilise only some of the decision-making stages. The effect on leaders and organisational members is different when sensemaking processes are enacted and can lead to very different results, dependent on the behaviour of all the parties who participate in the decision-making process.

6.4 Sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving

Sensemaking is usually triggered when the situation facing individuals create ambiguous meaning and where their former coherent experiences cannot fit into the current situation faced. Relating to Sandberg and Tsoukas (2015), my findings are not in line with what they state about sensemaking triggered in unexpected events but instead stipulate that sometimes, sensemaking is triggered when there is a discrepancy between what organisational members expect and what they experience, questioning what their next move should be (Corley and Gioia 2004). They may experience feelings of significant unease which could have an impact on their personal and organisational identity. This could also impact their personal goals which may hinder the manner in which they carry out their daily work activities (Maitlis et al. 2013).

According to March and Olsen (1975), decisions made to find the best alternatives are vital for organisations if they were to thrive. However, there were instances where problems identified by an organisational member, were not given solutions that fit, and just as quickly dismissed by the CEO and SMT. Doing so, contradicts what a strategic decision is supposed to do, as outlined by Eisenhardt and Zbaracki (1992) where they stipulate that it is important that the appropriate action be taken in organisations.

Karl Weick's seven properties of sensemaking appear to be a useful tool in explaining the sensemaking processes that take place in organisations (Weick 1995; Weick et al. 2005). The properties allowed me to comprehend how individuals made sense of their experiences through processes that were embedded in identity construction, ongoing, attentive to extracted cues, social in nature, retrospective and driven by plausibility rather than accuracy. However, upon closer scrutiny, there are some gaps that sensemaking on its own does not consider, raising additional questions. The properties were useful in understanding the sensemaking concept but not the role of sensemaking in the decision-making process.

The reason for a lack of clarity when using sensemaking with decision-making processes is because organisational members made sense of their experiences with the inclusion of the environment which surrounded them, and the properties on their own, did not provide an adequate explanation. The environment that surrounds organisational members includes power from individuals who are able to exert more influence on meaning, when it comes to decision-making through their sensegiving. Instances such as these are prominent amongst individuals in power positions who are simply able to enforce their sensemaking onto other organisational members. Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) state that when managers participate in sensegiving, they are actively trying to shape the existing values of their organisational members and imparting their own values onto them as well as the organisation.

When a sensegiving process is successful, the individuals involved are able to share in its interpretation (Mantere et al. 2012). With regards to the various phases of sensegiving in the literature review, Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) state that change brought to an organisation evolves through the envisioning, signalling, revisioning and energising phases. During the revisioning phase, it is specified that organisational members are able to visualise the projected goals and values imparted onto them by their leaders. However, from my analysis, when organisational members perceive that they are being ignored or not listened to i.e. when leaders are perceived to have low sensereceiving, organisational members themselves also have low sensereceiving, become resentful and choose not to participate or contribute their ideas to any decision-making processes. It is clear that when feedback from organisational members is not considered, they choose not to absorb the sensegiving messages in the form of decisions, handed down to them from their leaders.

This study supports findings by Eckel and Kezar (2003) whereby sensemaking and sensegiving happen in progression in instances where top-down decision-making ensued. However, when issues arose which called for decision-making processes to be initiated by organisational members, sensegiving took on a slightly different role. In order to persuade the leaders to take on their sensemaking, sensegiving from the organisational members did not start with signalling and energising but instead involved them in firstly trying to persuade leaders to see their point of view and then to gain their support. Therefore, it is clear that bottom-up decision-making takes on a slightly different route from sensemaking and sensegiving processes when top-down decision-making occurs.

My research extends a previous study on sensegiving triggers in Maitlis and Lawrence (2007) whereby they stipulate that leader sensegiving was triggered by issues that they perceived to be unclear. My findings suggest that organisational members triggered sensegiving, when the issues that arose were important to them, and felt that their leaders were incompetent to handle these issues on their own. However, my research points to instances that even when solutions and clarity were offered by organisational members, it was ignored. This was because leaders had low sensereceiving to the sensegiving messages from them.

As a consequence, even though leaders were perceived to be sensegivers in the organisation, they were not able to persuade others to take on their own sensemaking, because they chose to have low sensereceiving. My findings also evidence that sensegiving is important at all stages of the decision-making process and not just at its initial stages (Kezar 2013). There is the constant need for organisational members and leaders to experience a deeper understanding of the issues through the sensemaking processes in order to arrive at an optimal decision-making position.

6.5 Sensereceiving

Sensereceiving is described as the receptiveness of individuals or groups, to receiving and making sense of the sensegiving messages of others (McKiernan and Mackay 2017). It is a complex mental state encompassing feelings, values and beliefs that influence cognisance.

Bounded rationality

By reviewing Simon (1972) and his work on decision-making, the notion of bounded-rationality offered me important insights into sensereceiving, which I could build on, as they ultimately affected the quality of decisions made. I explored bounded rationality and suggested that when individuals were faced with decision choices, they

possessed limited rationality or boundaries, either choosing to move forward with making a decision or withdrawing altogether. Limitations include a lack of knowledge, personal values or different goals etc. Cyert and March (1963) asserted that complex decisions involved behavioural factors predominantly, with economic factors taking on a secondary role. Various forms of options enter the decision-makers field of vision, where sensereceiving makes them less receptive to the options delivered through sensegiving. Internal and external options are delivered, creating a complex situation for the decision-maker who now has far too much information to deal with.

As in Hambrick and Mason (1984), a filter is created between the stipulated situation and the resulting perception of the encounter. This causes the field of vision of the SMT to be somewhat restricted as they cannot possibly scan the entire environment as argued in Hambrick and Snow (1977). Bounded rationality from the SMT and CEO's perspective would look like this:- sensereceiving plays an important role where the decision-makers encounter ample varied experiences, from the internal and external environment of the organisation. This would include the sensegiving messages from their organisational members, making it impossible to review them all. It is important to emphasise that the extent to which information is received through the filter is an indication of sensereceiving. What is received through the filter and to what extent, is the level of sensereceiving.

The SMT and CEO have low sensereceiving and put forward their own set of values and cognitive biases by sensemaking the situation faced. Doing so, creates a barrier between the situation faced and their own cognitive limitations. The CEO and SMT cognitive base would be inclusive of their knowledge of various alternatives available, knowledge of future events and the consequences which they may encounter when choosing specific alternatives. This shows that sensereceiving is the important link between past sensemaking and sensegiving which would be incomplete if not included in the process (Hoyte et al. 2019).

Leaders encounter external as well as internal provocations simultaneously, forcing them to continuously update this information until it reaches a satisficing position. Therefore, sense-receiving on behalf of the leaders could regulate the flow of information from external and internal sources which would effect the sense-making process. Low sense-receiving happens when the leader's field of vision is limited by bounded rationality. Sense-receiving could potentially influence the degree to which bounded rationality restricts the leader's field of vision. In effect, the views from organisational members on behalf of the leaders, is controlled by sense-receiving.

The CEO and SMT practice a specific kind of leadership style whereby they choose not to listen to their organisational members by having low sense-receiving. They then have incomplete knowledge and a lack of choice consequences which would interfere with rationality. Management style may prevent them from making an evaluation of all possible alternatives offered to them in the form of views and ideas from their organisational members because they simply have chosen to ignore them. This means that all available choices are unlikely to be evaluated because the leaders have decided to disregard the points of view offered by their organisational members (Simon 2013).

From this we can deduce how sense-receiving relates to the processes of sense-making and sense-giving in organisations. Internal mechanisms as evidenced by organisational members, reluctant to pursue their ideas / suggestions with the CEO and SMT are a reflection of why after repeatedly trying to get their points of view across to them, simply end up accepting what has been passed down to them in the form of decisions. Their behaviour has been altered by the CEO and SMT who have chosen to ignore them, instilling their own sense-making and authority onto the organisational members, who after a period of time, realise that their opinions have minimum significance.

This discussion relates to bounded rationality above in the following manner - leaders are having to filter all the information that they encounter from their internal and external environment. Leaders have a conscious choice on whether to listen to their organisational members and are able to control this as they are in a position of power. As demonstrated by Drori and Ellis (2011), 'power games' were used by leaders to reflect their culture through the process of sensegiving. This was done so that they could promote strategies that would help prevent changes from taking place, thereby preserving their positions within the organisation. Similarly, it would appear that leaders were using their positions of power to advocate changes that they deemed necessary but using this same position of power to prevent changes from taking place.

Janis (1982) advocated a kind of behaviour that stated that conflict created in organisations, produced better results. Various methods were suggested including the inclusion of external experts and the encouragement of arguments. In light of my findings, this proved to be detrimental, because organisational members who had tried to impart their own ideas through sensegiving to the leaders were swiftly reprimanded.

This was witnessed by other organisational members during meetings and they refrained from offering different perspectives to them. As a result, the leaders often made decisions single handedly and because the organisational members were excluded from the decision-making process, they disengaged.

Sense deprivation

I adopted the work by Polanyi (1967) and his concept of sense deprivation with a subtle difference in interpretation, so that it would enable me to incorporate sensereceiving. This would help me relate to situations where low sensereceiving fails to shape the process of shared meaning between leaders and organisational members. Sense deprivation describes how individuals in their thought processes,

become aware of an external item which had previously been only secondary. Sense deprivation pushes the secondary item to the forefront, where the item is no longer part of our subconscious and in doing so, makes us consciously mindful of the role it portrays in our meaning making. Sense deprivation has been addressed by other authors and will be highlighted below.

When organisational members are initially invited to share in the decision-making process, sensereceiving is high. On a normal basis, organisational members go through their roles at the organisation and effectively perform their tasks, not really thinking about their relationship to other individuals within the organisation. However, when leaders have low sensereceiving to their ideas, suggestions or opinions, i.e. when they are not being listened to, this equally triggers low sensereceiving in organisational members. This is in line with Paton et al. (2014), who state that initial reasons for interacting with others is pushed to the background - 'relegated', in favour of their relationship to us which becomes the focus of our thoughts, 'relevated'. This concept is used to explain the notion of sense deprivation in an organisational context, examining the pitfalls of strategy execution in their study by McKiernan and Mackay (2017).

Pertaining to sensereceiving, sense deprivation is used to explain an individual's increased level of consciousness with regards to their relationship with other organisational members. Initially, organisational members perform their tasks and their roles where their relationship with others only takes on a secondary role. However, when they are made aware through low sensereceiving from leaders that their opinions are not important, they become consciously aware of their relationship to them. Organisational members become acutely aware of their status within the organisation and this causes them to be unreceptive to the sensegiving messages from their leaders. The actual messages delivered to them through sensegiving become secondary whilst the role that they play within the organisation is highlighted.

The low sensereceiving attitude from the leaders have prompted a lack of engagement from their organisational members. My findings evidence that restricted options were forced onto the organisational members, who refused to implement these decisions appropriately and this led to execution failure.

When sensereceiving is low, the organisational members who are at the receiving end of sensegiving messages from the CEO / SMT's and shaping their sensemaking, are more aware of what it means to go unacknowledged and have the management unreceptive to their ideas. This forces them to become aware of their status in the organisation caused by sense deprivation. Organisational members become aware of supplementary external objects which they were not fully conscious of initially, thereby altering meaning making altogether. This leads to a loss in communication content. High sensereceiving is experienced when organisational members feel valued. Conversely, low sensereceiving is experienced when they feel rejected, unappreciated and unacknowledged.

In Chia and Holt (2009), it is stated that strategic goals sought with intense calculation and deliberate action may sometimes be detrimental to the success of its implementation. Accordingly, low sensereceiving from leaders would contribute to the diminished success of strategy implementation in organisations. As evidenced by my findings, there was a lack of communication between management and organisational members which caused sense deprivation to occur. As highlighted by Eden and Ackermann (2001), effective strategy imparted by top management teams depended on the emotional and psychological commitment which involved negotiation with various groups for the purpose of decision-making. Minimum shared meaning making between managers and organisational members, i.e. when members experience not being listened to by their managers and vice versa, triggered sense deprivation. Managers were only keen to pass down their own ideas and opinions, simply expecting acceptance of decisions from organisational members.

In Pye (1995), it was argued that only when dialogue comprising of listening and talking together with action taken commence, would successful strategy execution materialise. Forceful implementation of strategic decision-making from leaders, would result in limited success, due to the low sense-receiving from organisational members. This would deny them the chance to participate in shared meaning making, discounting the valuable role that they play in the implementation of these decisions. From my findings, it was evidenced that managers, often engage in activities that are primarily concerned with persuading others by intensifying their power on organisational members. This is done for the purpose of influencing organisational decision-making (Pettigrew 2014).

6.6 Sense of control

Sense of control and sense of identity emerged from my analysis but these assertions may already be supported in the existing literature. Sense of control draws support from some of the evidence base on empowerment and engagement. If we look back at the literature, this gives us a new conceptualisation of sense-receiving, where we see its centrality to decision-making processes through the framework. This helps us understand how sense-receiving impacts decision-making processes in terms of sense of control and sense of identity.

Sense of control describes the degree to which employees perceive they are empowered to influence decision-making or included in any part of the decision-making process. Perkins and Zimmerman (1995, p. 570) state that “at the organisational level, empowering processes might include collective decision-making and shared leadership”. This suggests that empowerment entails the participation of members in organisational decision-making as well as putting in place various structures that encourage member participation, enabling achievement of organisational goals. Rowlands (1995) stipulates that empowerment must be about including individuals who are outside the decision-making process and enabling them to become aware of their own interests. This allows them to participate in decision-making from a greater position of strength, which ultimately is able to exert influence on the quality of decisions made.

Empowerment and engagement

The literature on empowerment and engagement gives us a glimpse into what is happening in terms of sense-receiving, and also helps to support my concept of sense of control. That support is my interpretation of what is happening with sense of control and has an impact on sense-receiving. The authors cited below, studied different aspects of empowerment and engagement but it relates or is similar to the context of my study and as such, I will use it to interpret and support my analysis. There is substantial evidence in the literature to support the assumption that when employee engagement is present, organisational performance improves (Lee 2015; Bailey et al. 2017; Bekirogullari 2019).

It is stated in Wilkinson (1998) and Poole and Warner (1998) that empowerment provides an answer in the workplace where employees are unable to express their creativity and become alienated. However, Wilkinson (1998) argues that employers are the main deciders on how and / or whether they wish to empower their employees. Further, it is stipulated that empowerment may be purposely designed so as to limit the role that employees are able to play in the decision-making process. This would further ensure that employees are willing to contribute more in terms of their loyalty and skills, simply because they perceive that they have been empowered although in reality, real power was only held by management.

This is strongly evidenced in my findings; whereby organisational members try their best to come up with creative solutions to problems that they encounter at work. There are many incidences where the leaders provide specific 'important' tasks for organisational members to take charge of and in effect giving the impression that they are empowering their organisational members, but the end result is frustrating for the organisational members. This is because although initially given the impression that they have been empowered to take on specific important tasks, the organisational members are not given the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities because in most instances, the work goes unacknowledged or ignored. The organisational members have low sense of control and this in turn has an effect on their sense-receiving.

It is argued that organisations should make it their priority to better understand what de-powers their employees and if organisations were to genuinely empower their employees, this would reap tremendous benefits (Hennestad 1998). A strategy offered is to partake in organisation de-powering, because empowering is mostly driven by management who are predominantly in power situations. The CEO made it clear that she believed in taking the power away from the organisation and empowering her organisational members, stating that the structure of her organisation was flat. She added that the best-informed decision-making processes were done by the people who were best able to serve their clients.

Doing so implied that she had entrusted all her organisational members to make decisions that effected their work practices, as they were the ones who would be best suited to serve the needs of their clients. However, interviews from participants seemed to portray something entirely different. Although organisational members were perceived to be given a sense of control to make decisions and increase efficiency, this was often not what actually transpired. Greater flexibility was not practiced and this took away from the discretion element initially perceived by organisational members as empowerment, making them feel that their knowledge and experience were not of any value. As a result, job satisfaction was not achieved and organisational members had a low sense of control which effected their sensereceiving.

It was stressed that employees would be more empowered if they were given information because of its central importance in understanding how businesses decisions were made, which would lead to being committed to the actions undertaken on behalf of the organisation (Wilkinson et al. 1993). However, they added that even if information was available to employees, this reduced the scope of true empowerment where employees could participate in decision-making, because it merely shifted from individuals being told to complete tasks to being explained why tasks had to be completed (Wilkinson et al. 1993).

Organisational members were told on many instances not to question the decisions made by management because they were the experts in the business and knew how best to make important decisions. Organisational members complained that they were unaware of how and why things functioned the way that they did, and when they made any attempt to question it, were immediately reprimanded. This was evidenced in meetings as one organisational member said that any attempt to offer suggestions or question decisions at meetings was strongly discouraged. At other times when they were able to derive some form of answer, they were told that this was the way things had always been done and that was the way it would continue. Lack of information and empowerment led to low sense of control and low sense receiving.

It was argued that employees could be awarded some level of empowerment if they were involved in suggesting solutions to problems and management could decide whether to act on them or not (Bowen and Lawler 1995). More empowerment would ensue if this were stretched to include giving employees the flexibility to correct deficiencies if they occurred. This form of empowerment was only applicable in theory but did not work in practice. This was evidenced in my findings where participants were initially told that they were self-managing teams and were empowered to make any changes they deemed necessary. However, when this was done, organisational members were chastised for not getting approval from management first before making any changes. Organisational members were confused at being told that they were empowered to make decisions for their clients on one hand and being told off for doing so, on the other.

Pertaining to employee engagement, Kahn (1990) stated that in order for employees to be fully engaged at work, their organisational roles must be met physically and psychologically i.e. emotional and cognitive aspects. It was argued that the cognitive aspect of the roles undertaken by employees would take into account the working conditions, the beliefs of employees as well as the manner in which leaders functioned in organisations. When organisational members were given the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process as evidenced by the 'poster boy' of the organisation, he was fully engaged in the work and readily participated in the creativity aspect of contributing his ideas to the organisation. This was in line with Leiter and Bakker (2010), Bedarkar and Pandita (2014) and Marchington et al. (2016), whereby it was postulated that when employees were fully immersed and found their work life enjoyable, they increased their productivity. It also appeared from my analysis that when employees have a high sense of control by being engaged, they have high sensereceiving and enriched sensemaking. They are also eager to participate in the decision-making process. This shows that employee engagement is beneficial to employers, employees as well as to the organisation.

Additionally from my findings, when organisational members were invited to participate in the decision-making process, (with regards to the payroll system) they had high sensereceiving, and exchanged in sensemaking and sensegiving with other members and looked for an optimal system that would be beneficial not only to themselves but also for their leaders and the organisation as a whole. It is fair to say that the organisational members engaged because they had an emotional and rational commitment with the organisation and the individuals who worked there were under the perception that they had been included in the decision-making process (Frank et al. 2004; Mani 2011). Although the organisational members were passionate about the work that they did and had made a conscious choice to work for a non-profit organisation, this failed to take into account all the variables that promoted a passion for work as advocated by Shaw (2005). They argued that a passion for work could only be present if physical, emotional and cognitive aspects were met at work, which was not what occurred, due to the low sensereceiving of the management team.

It has been asserted that when organisational members were engaged, and fulfilled psychologically, they were less likely to leave their employment (Torrington et al. 2014; Marchington et al. 2016). Some organisational members perceived that they were not listened to by the SMT who had low sensereceiving to their pleas for support and acknowledgement, voluntarily stepped down from their designated positions / roles to assume a lesser position within the organisation. Their motivation had slipped considerably and they did not feel empowered to carry out their daily work efficiently and consequently disengaged. They did not feel valued or appreciated and felt that they were not included in any decision-making processes which involved their clients and had a significant impact on their working lives. The manner in which employee engagement affects organisational performance is highlighted in Bailey et al. (2017) whereby it is suggested that when employee engagement is present, it offers a substantial difference in organisational performance. High sensereceiving leads to enriched sensemaking for organisational members and because they are engaged, they are able to participate in the decision-making process.

High sensereceiving appears to support the notion that enhanced performance at work is caused by fully engaged employees, experiencing high levels of physical, emotional and cognitive energy. This enables engaged organisational members to take full responsibility of the tasks that they perform on a daily basis (Bailey et al. 2017). This is also in line with Torrington et al. (2014) who suggested that employees that are engaged at work are able to take on supporting roles that take the organisation to greater heights.

From my earlier concept of bounded rationality, I assert that it restricted the leaders' field of vision, whereby they had low sensereceiving towards their organisational members. This caused the members to feel that the extra work that they did for the organisation went unappreciated and unacknowledged. This is evidenced when the issue of the 'on-call' system arose and organisational members were adamant about assuming additional responsibility through their extended roles because they had been presumed that the SMT and CEO had low sensereceiving to their immediate needs.

They had disengaged with their work roles and did not want to assume further responsibilities as they had become disillusioned with their leaders and the organisation. Their low sense of control had a negative effect on their own sense-receiving and the sense-giving messages from their leaders were unclear. The low sense-receiving from leaders led to the organisational members experiencing sense deprivation, where they were more focused on their relationship to the leaders rather than understanding the content of the messages themselves, leading to exclusion from the decision-making process.

Moldavanova and Wright (2020) suggest that the non-profit sector seemed to portray the highest level of employee engagement because of the nature of their business. They argued that the type of business attracted individuals who were drawn to the core purpose of the job. However, where my findings differ with theirs is that although some organisational members took on employment positions at ABC because they were passionate about the nature of business, they disengaged when they perceived that their leaders had low sense-receiving to their sense-giving messages and they were refrained from participating in decision-making processes. They failed to have a 'voice' in matters that significantly affected their work and when their views were ignored by leaders who did not involve them in decision-making processes over issues of significance (Akingbola and van den Berg 2019), they disengaged. This was evidenced when organisational members said that on many occasions, although they had repeatedly tried to make their voices heard, their leaders simply chose to either tell them that they were the experts in the business and knew how to run it or chose to ignore them altogether.

Summary of sense of control / sensereceiving

Bounded rationality occurs when organisational leaders fail to see the results of their actions, ignoring sensegiving messages from their members, forcing them to make less than ideal / optimal decisions (Vargas-Hernández and Ortega 2019).

Sensereceiving controls the inflow of information of other individuals into the sensemaking processes and therefore is able to influence the field of vision which is limited by the notion of bounded rationality. The perceived low sensereceiving from leaders, trigger a message to organisational members that their messages to them are unimportant. When this happens, the organisational members have low sense of control which is caused by a lack of empowerment and they disengage. They become unreceptive to the sensegiving messages from their leaders, as the messages themselves lose their meaning content, making them unclear.

Low sensereceiving from leaders cause the organisational members to experience sense deprivation. Previously their role in the organisation as well as their relationship and value to others were only secondary, but when they become mindful that their opinions are not valued through the low sensereceiving of their leaders, they become consciously aware of their position within the organisation. When this occurs, the shared meaning making between leaders and organisational members is diminished, as the messages themselves become less important, taking a back seat to their newly heightened awareness of their relationship to others in the organisation. They have a limited understanding of the decisions made as they are excluded from the decision-making process itself and as a result, are not able to implement the decisions in the manner intended, leading to execution failure.

6.7 Sense of identity

Sense of identity is a novel concept introduced in this thesis and understanding how it relates to the decision-making framework is vital, as individuals personal and social identity are very much affected by their organisational identity. Where I would draw on the literature for identity is to say that the literature on identity work of individuals, Watson (2008) suggests that the social environment in which an individual encounters through work has a significant impact on their personal and social identities.

It was argued that the actual attributes that define an organisation, to a certain extent also define the individuals working for them (Dutton et al. 1994). We are able to gauge from the analysis, that organisational members who worked at the organisation did so whole heartedly because they felt that they were able to identify clearly with the aims and ethos of the organisation. This is in line with Ashforth and Kreiner (1999), whereby they state that psychologists affirm that individuals working in organisations, require a safe understanding of who they are and what they represent, which enables them to function effectively. After a couple of months working at ABC, many of the organisational members expressed self-doubt, questioning their self-identity, which left them confused and uncertain of outcomes.

Personal identity is associated with one's own self-worth whereby they feel that they are not able to recognise their own beliefs and felt alienated from the culture of their work environment (Ybema et al. 2009). In terms of their organisational and social identity, organisational members felt disrespected and not valued because their opinions, ideas and thoughts were disregarded, leaving them feeling deflated, as they felt that they were not supported in their daily work activities. Our own sense of identity shapes the ideas that we utilise through sensemaking. The way in which leaders choose to interact with organisational members is vital because the way in which this interaction occurs, has a significant bearing on one's sense of identity. Feedback from leaders profoundly affects sense-receiving and sense-giving, because the way the interactions occur, alter our sense of identity.

This supports the assertion by Mumby (1997) suggesting that this conflicting behaviour is the product of identity work, whereby individuals are torn between control and their own resistance, trying to shape a coherent notion of their personal self-identity through this process (Watson 2008). Organisational members express uncertainty pertaining to problem solving and decision-making due to the occurrences of past events, causing conflict with their own identities (Beech and Huxham 2003). This was caused by low sensereceiving from leaders who repeatedly refused to listen to their organisational members, which left them feeling inadequate to make decisions. This point of view is similar to Alvesson and Willmott (2002) who stipulate that the identities assumed by individuals, significantly affect organisational decision-making skills. Further, organisational members had repeatedly tried to share their viewpoint with leaders and in doing so, tried to negotiate their identities through social interactions (Alvesson et al. 2008). When they realised that the leaders had low sensereceiving to their ideas, this sent a message to members that they were not valued. This had a negative effect on their identities, leading to their own low sensereceiving.

Organisational members are sometimes forced to develop objectives set by management in the form of organisational control where their sense of identity is altered, creating tension in the organisation. This was highlighted in Alvesson and Willmott (2002) where values and morals were used to inspire the process of positioning identities in specific directions that were beneficial to management. When there were issues with clients, there was a shaming process which impacted their personal identities, and this sent a message to other members to warn them that this could happen to them if they failed to adopt the high values set by the organisation (Barker 1993).

The term 'self-managing' teams is used as a form of organisational control because it gives the impression that by downplaying the discourse linked to leadership, members would be more comfortable with it (Knights and Willmott 1987). This has the additional advantage of invoking consent from the organisational members to readily absorb

goals set by management (Casey 1995). My findings evidence that the term 'self-managing teams' was misused as it was a way in which leaders had got organisational members to take on additional responsibility as time progressed. This had a negative effect on their sense of identity and left the organisational members feeling that they could no longer relate to the work that they had initially set out to do (Ezzamel et al. 2001).

Summary of sense of identity / sensereceiving

When leaders fail to listen to the employees by having low sensereceiving, this causes employees to develop a negative sense of identity. The sensegiving messages from leaders become ineffective as the messages are not being absorbed by employees. A negative sense of identity causes employees to have low sensereceiving and this in turn leads to sense deprivation. Conversely, if organisational members have a positive sense of identity, they will become fully engaged in the process and sensegiving will more effectively shape the sensemaking processes through enriched sensemaking. It is seen that the breakdown in sensereceiving which results in low sensereceiving, damages the decision-making process basically as sense deprivation. This has clearly identified in most instances that when sensereceiving is low, it is because of negative sense of identity.

Evidence from the data highlights that when sense of identity is high, sensereceiving is high and this leads to enriched sensemaking. This further leads to optimal decision-making. However, it must be pointed out that there are instances where high sense of control and negative sense of identity occur. These are instances where an individual i.e. a manager, who has a high sense of control but has a negative sense of identity because they are unable to relate to the values of the organisation, either because it has changed over time or that it was not what it seemed on the surface when they joined the organisation. Alternatively, an individual could also have a low sense of control and a positive sense of identity.

6.8 Feedback loops with negative and positive impacts

In Kraft et al. (2015), the notion of feedback loops is discussed, highlighting the link between sensegiving from leaders and sensemaking from recipients. It is asserted that this is the phase where recipients' sensemaking is affected by leader sensegiving who in turn equally affect the sensemaking of leaders as well as their own sensegiving (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991). I explored this reciprocal process, in which the goal was to attain a shared understanding (Vlaar et al. 2008) where attempts were made for a simultaneous exchange of sensemaking and sensegiving (Stensaker et al. 2008). I now explore the nature of feedback loops with negative / positive impacts and discuss how it enhanced my understanding of sense-receiving in the decision-making process.

The response invoked from organisational members as stated by Muczyk and Reimann (1987) assert that a desirable response will only be possible if leaders and followers engaged in a democratic-style exchange as well as proper assimilation of information. My findings show that organisational members were willing and enthusiastic to participate in the sensemaking / decision-making process when the call for ideas was initially announced.

Feelings of frustration surfaced when organisational members discovered that they had been excluded from the discussions taking place pertaining to the payroll system. What I found was something different and not explained by the existing literature. Therefore, we need to think about why this was happening or we need to look at it differently. Each organisational member has their own apprehensions on any foreseeable change, which they base on their previous encounters with leaders as well as their own personal characteristics (Wisse and Sleebos 2016). Leaders must be sensitive to the changes brought about during the sensemaking and sensegiving phases, where effective leaders attempt to make sensemaking more meaningful for their organisational members through the process of sensegiving (Isabella 1990). Sensegiving and sensemaking processes are not solitary separate processes but

rather ongoing cycles which affect each other (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991). From my findings, leaders are firstly involved in their own sensemaking efforts, followed by leader sensegiving onto organisational members who are recipient sensemakers. Organisational members sensemaking also has the effect of influencing the sensemaking and sensegiving of leaders (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991).

I have used the concepts of sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving to further develop the current literature. I began the analysis by dividing the sensemaking processes into two phases as stated in Kraft et al. (2015).

1. The first phase concerns how a leader's sensemaking affects their sensegiving imparted onto organisational members.
2. The second phase explores how a leader's sensegiving effects the sensemaking, sensereceiving and decision-making of organisational members.

We will unpack the two phases and explain how each phase works for leaders and organisational members. Sensemaking enables individuals to draw on schemas which are "knowledge structures that contain categories of information and relationships among them" (Bingham and Kahl 2013, p.14). Individuals can either integrate the new information to alter existing or create new schemas (Maitlis et al. 2013). This would depend on the gap between the old and new schemas i.e. a bigger gap will require information to be processed 'top-down' as leaders rely on experiences from their past (Walsh 1995). 'Bottom up' information processing is favoured when information received is new.

The first phase defines how leader sensemaking is altered into meaning and passed on to others through leader sensegiving (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991). As sensegiving is a process of how messages are interpreted, individuals are able to affect and influence the sensemaking of each other, establishing that sensemaking and sensegiving are reciprocal processes (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Mantere et al. 2012). Successful sensegiving results in a mutual interpretation whereby leaders usually in a position of privilege, are able to impart their own sensemaking onto their employees (Ravasi and Schultz 2006). For this to occur, leaders need to firstly ensure that their employees' sensemaking needs are being considered so they may adjust their own sensegiving to be in line with them (Narayanan et al. 2011).

In order to understand the relationship between the variables (sensemaking, sensegiving, sensereceiving and decision-making as the end result), I will use examples from my findings to further explain the process. The leaders experiencing high intensity sensemaking due to the new payroll system, looked upon it as a new challenge to comprehend (Weick et al. 2005). The SMT were keen to have the organisational members 'on board' to accept this change and engaged in high level intensity sensegiving, which triggered high controlled sensemaking amongst the organisational members (Maitlis 2005). It was important to the leaders that the organisational members fully absorb the sensegiving messages from them as they were constrained by time and a limited budget. The leaders saw themselves as being different from their organisational members as they were able to see the bigger picture and visualise the organisation's goals (Lammers et al. 2012). This would mean that the the leaders' legitimate power would dictate how their sensemaking would result in sensegiving towards their organisational members. They chose to adopt direct unilateral strategies which sought to exclude any consultation with the organisational members. Individual sensegiving needs of organisational members were disregarded (Smith and Trope 2006).

What emerged from my analysis were feedback loops with negative / positive impacts (Kraft et al. 2015). Let's see how a feedback loop with positive impacts functions and what benefits it brought to the organisation. I identified instances where organisational members were in a feedback loop with a positive impact. When this occurred, organisational members and leaders were engaged in discussions which promoted a healthy exchange of ideas and extensive feedback in situations where individuals felt that the decisions encountered throughout the decision-making process were inappropriate and could lead to execution failure.

Members had high sensereceiving to each other's views and made a conscious decision to revert back to earlier stages of the decision-making process, so that a better solution could be reached. When high sensereceiving by all parties (organisational members and leaders) was experienced, sensegiving messages from all parties were absorbed and assimilated. Organisational members felt valued / appreciated and willingly participated in enriched sensemaking. This is when a feedback loop with a positive impact is formed and it involves all individuals who enthusiastically participate in the decision-making process. By utilising the step-by-step process of the decision-making stages, organisational members and leaders were able to carefully evaluate each phase of the decision-making process, making good use of all available data, constructive feedback, skills presented by each individual as well as experience, to make an optimal decision which would derive benefits for the organisation.

Conversely, a feedback loop with negative impacts was created when leaders failed to listen to feedback from their organisational members. Leaders were perceived to have low sensereceiving because when organisational members highlighted issues that effected their work life and suggested various alternatives to them, their ideas were disregarded. Low sensereceiving from leaders set off a cycle of low sensereceiving in organisational members. Low sensereceiving led to sense deprivation whereby organisational members disengaged from the organisation and sensegiving messages

from leaders were not getting through (Chia and Holt 2009). The reason for this is because rather than focusing on the sensegiving messages from leaders when sense deprivation ensued, members were more focused on their role and relationship to others in the organisation.

This caused the messages to be diminished in content and sensegiving failed to become effective, indicating a loss in shared meaning making. This would suggest that a 'stimulus and response logic' (Bateson 1972) would seem appropriate to assess the response of individuals who react in specific ways to leaders' sensegiving messages rather than a reliance on 'cause and effect' (McKiernan and Mackay 2017). This in turn prompted leaders to perceive that their messages were not getting through to organisational members and they also chose to withdraw. A feedback loop with negative impacts was created because what one individual or group did, had an effect on the other. Sharing their views with the leaders proved futile because their ideas were simply shut down. This excluded the organisational members from the decision-making process and they disengaged altogether.

Summary - feedback loops with negative / positive impacts

To summarise, if an individual organisational member gets trapped in a feedback loop with negative impacts, it can drag everything down. A feedback loop with a negative impact leads to low sense-receiving and sense deprivation that will eventually culminate with an undesirable decision-making process, that excludes organisational members. Conversely, a feedback loop with a positive impact would lead to high sense-receiving and enriched sense-making, eventually concluding with an optimal decision-making process that includes all stakeholders. The results show that people's sense-receiving impacts that of others in their organisation. Over the course of time, the feedback loop with negative or positive impacts are going to enforce each other. There may not always be a feedback loop with negative / positive impacts, but there is always the possibility as people respond to one another. At other times, high

sensereceiving may foster high sensereceiving or low sensereceiving may foster low sensereceiving. This has demonstrated the importance of the feedback loop with negative / positive impacts in understanding sensereceiving.

6.9 Implications for practice

Based on the analysis of my research, there are implications for practice in organisations. This research mainly sought to study how decision-making in organisations was impacted by the processes of sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving. Several key concepts emerged from my analysis pertaining to shared meaning making and the extent to which sensereceiving could contribute to optimal decision-making success.

Firstly, organisational members spoke of not having their voices heard and not being included in decision-making processes which affected their working lives. The optimal goal of the decision-making processes in organisations is to ensure that all organisational members including the management team are involved in various aspects of the decision-making process. When interviewed, organisational members expressed a genuine interest in contributing their ideas and feedback as they were most involved in the daily activities upon which these decisions were based. Enabling them to contribute their ideas and feedback to the management team by means of active listening would be certainly beneficial to organisational members. An 'invitation' to participate in the sensemaking process, with a two-way dialogue established, would further send a message to organisational members that the management team have high sensereceiving to their ideas. This idea of an invitation to participate was advocated by Gergen (2015). When sensegiving messages from others are received with high sensereceiving, this sends a message to them that their thoughts and views are valued and appreciated.

Secondly, my study of feedback loops with negative impacts led to a vicious cycle of low sensereceiving leading to sense deprivation and proved detrimental for the organisation, management team and organisational members. In order to eliminate this vicious cycle, the management team could have reversed the cycle by creating opportunities for organisational members to contribute their feedback whilst sharing in meaning-making. This would have ensured that the sensegiving messages from the management team were absorbed with clarity and implemented in the manner intended, contributing to decision-making success.

Thirdly, the barriers to sensereceiving may be due to a lack of emotional support in the form of morale and professional support, which could be made available by appropriate training. If there were a problem with sensereceiving, there could be a possibility of a 'quick fix' or 'repair' available. This will raise interesting questions such as what the best solutions are, available and accessible to all members in the organisation. So far, there have been small amounts of therapy available in the form of meetings or discussions held at regular intervals - however, these remain mostly ineffective, due to leadership style. Having uncovered insights on how sensereceiving is able to promote the successful implementation of strategies in organisations, I further suggest that the sensereceiving attitude portrayed by management has a significant effect for shared meaning making throughout the entire organisation. Sensereceiving has a profound effect on sensemaking and sensegiving which can alter the performance of an organisation in the long term.

Finally, it is also important that leaders in organisations pursue the urgent need to set up their sensereceiving strategies when change is called for. The kind of material used to promote any change could be carefully prepared by Human Resource Departments so that the different weaknesses of managers are addressed (Kraft et al., 2015). This would only be possible if the organisation were large enough to have a Human Resources Department who could take the initiative in such matters. Conversely with smaller organisations with 'less dedicated resources', (Wapshott and Mallett, 2016) different methods could be set up to make sensereceiving more appealing to members, in the form of face-to-face communication or informal meetings. Responses derived, from interactions between internal and external sources, should rightly influence everyday employment, relationship and best practices advocated and implemented in smaller organisations (Harney and Dundon, 2006). There could be various reporting sources set up to receive feedback and ensure that there is always two-way communication. Organisational members had expressed a desire to be acknowledged through their own organisation online newsletters for different ideas or suggestions adopted by the organisation. Additionally, different incentives could be offered for excellence in team work to inspire others to come forward and do the same.

6.10 Conclusion

The role of sensemaking processes on organisational decision-making, together with the literature and their implications from my findings were discussed in this chapter. I further developed sensegiving, so as to provide a valuable link between sensemaking, sensegiving and sensegiving. The notion of bounded rationality provided an insight into how sensegiving regulated the flow of information into the sensemaking processes and in doing so, influences the field of vision of individuals. Additionally, I utilised the concept of sense deprivation to comprehend what causes decision-making processes to break down and surmised that sensegiving responses from leaders and employees significantly affected the sensemaking processes which led to decision-making. Feedback loops with negative / positive impacts proved to be a vital concept in understanding how sensegiving had the ability to contribute to decision-making processes which included all stakeholders. Sense of control and sense of identity emerged from my analysis as a way of understanding how they shaped sensegiving in the decision-making process.

The crucial thing that my analysis here has found is that sense of identity and sense of control are vital for understanding sensegiving and sensegiving is crucial for comprehending decision-making processes. A comprehensive understanding of sensegiving unlocked the relevance of sensemaking and sensegiving which then took us back to decision-making. This really sets out my contribution in terms of understanding sensegiving and doing so has made a novel contribution to knowledge.

CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION

7.1 Summary

This study addressed the problem of ‘how do communicative and sensemaking processes influence decision-making outcomes’? At the start of this thesis, I set out the problem in general terms and sought to seek answers to the problem I wanted to solve. I focused on that and looked at the literature, narrowing down my focus, allowing me to think of how I was going to analyse it. I found answers to my Research Questions and was able to relate it back to the literature. Therefore for the conclusion, I am able to say that I was successful in generating insights into the problem and in doing so, contributed to ongoing academic debates around it as well as having introduced some new knowledge of value to them.

This study examined the sensemaking processes and how they impacted decision-making in organisations, as experienced by leaders and organisational members. While the sensemaking and sensegiving literature are well established based on their own merits, their influence on decision-making through sensemaking processes is underdeveloped. This thesis enhances our comprehension of sense-receiving, highlighting its importance on decision-making functions in organisations. Managers are involved in the process of trying to shape sensegiving and this is facilitated by sense-receiving. Sense-receiving is a relatively new concept and has been developed further in this study, including through the introduction of the novel concepts of sense of control and sense of identity.

The key insights generated from this study accentuate the importance of organisational contexts and inter-relationships that precede the sensegiving activity. When there is a communication problem between leaders and organisational members, this causes the breakdown in decision-making processes. Insights into this can be gained through a detailed engagement with sense-receiving. Through my analysis, I established that sense-receiving is important in the relationship between sense-making and sense-giving where sense-receiving is the key that enables us to properly understand how organisational decision-making functions. Sense of control and sense of identity emerged from the analysis and aided understanding of sense-receiving in the decision-making process. Further, for sense-receiving to be at a high level, there is a need for sense of control and sense of identity to be maintained. Finally, feedback loops with negative / positive impacts are important to understanding the mechanics of sense-receiving in all decision-making processes.

In some instances, leaders are unaware that when changes or new decisions are implemented, organisational members are often not able to make sense of this new situation and become confused (Maitlis and Sonenshein 2010). The perceived resistance that ensues may be due to organisational members not being able to sense-make adequately rather than resisting against any change (Mantere et al. 2012). Leaders play a vital role as sense-givers in the decision-making process (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991). In order for sense-giving messages from leaders and organisational members to become effective, they must be able to influence each other reciprocally in an enthusiastic manner, rather than with any form of resistance.

This has been reiterated by Foldy et al. (2008), who stated that a critical managerial task was to ensure that individuals were able to shape their understanding of themselves as well as others who they worked with. This would mean that sense-making is the foundation on which all other sense-making processes are built from. If members are unable to understand the sense-making processes that are taking place around them, they will be ill-equipped to deal with them and problem-solve.

Sensegiving establishes sensemaking as an iterative reciprocal process and has the power to influence decision-making in organisations. Leaders and organisational members are faced with an abundance of information, both internal and external at any given point in time. They are unable to deal with all the different options available. I found that bounded rationality offers explanations as to why individuals make choices / decisions that are less than optimal. Sense-receiving controls the degree to which a leader's field of vision is restricted. Leaders being in a position of power, are able to control and filter the information that they wish to absorb and sometimes choose to disregard the information from organisational members. It is worth clarifying that bounded rationality is always part of decision-making processes but sense-receiving only heightens it and is not a result of sense-receiving. When the leader's field of vision has been filtered and limited by bounded rationality, they settle for a satisficing position, that is less than optimal (Simon 1990). Sense-receiving has the ability to control the inflow of information to their members sensemaking processes. Low sense-receiving from leaders sets off a response that is detrimental to themselves and their organisational members.

Low sense of control emanates from members not being empowered to participate in the decision-making process and leads to low sense-receiving, which subsequently causes them to disengage. Additionally, when members are at odds with the organisation, this leaves them feeling that they are unable to recognise their own goals, sense of purpose and self-worth in the work that they do. Individuals are torn between the control imparted onto them and their own resistance, leaving them unable to shape a coherent belief of their own self-identity. When this happens, members are unable to identify with the aims and objectives of the organisation which leaves them with a negative sense of identity. Low sense-receiving prevents members from focusing on the sensegiving messages that are bestowed onto them and as such these sensegiving messages leave members reluctant or unable to participate in shared meaning making. This gives rise to sense deprivation.

When sense deprivation occurs, members or recipients of sensegiving messages are more focused on matters that were previously less important. Going about their roles on a daily basis, allowed members to be less aware of their role or their relationship to others in the organisation. However, when members perceive that their leaders have low sensereceiving, they have an increased level of consciousness of their roles and / or status within the organisation. When this happens, leaders who are in positions to shape their members' sensemaking, fail to do so because members are no longer focused on the content of the sensegiving messages. This has the effect of diminishing the messages from leaders, making them lose their actual message content and as such, become unclear. This results in a loss of communication and leaves members feeling unappreciated and not valued. They may choose to withdraw or are excluded from the decision-making process altogether.

Conversely, for sensereceiving to be high, sense of control and sense of identity need to be maintained. Leaders need to engage in talking and listening to their members. A high sense of control is the result of members feeling empowered to participate in the decision-making process and they engage by contributing their ideas and opinions. A positive sense of identity stems from members who are now able to visualise their own goals and aspirations in line with that of their leaders. High sensereceiving enables the sensegiving messages from leaders to be absorbed by both and shared meaning making becomes beneficial through enriched sensemaking, leaving members with the knowledge that they are valued. High sensereceiving from leaders can lead to equally high sensereceiving from members as they both share in meaning making. From this, we are able to see the significance of sensereceiving to the processes of sensemaking and sensegiving.

Finally, feedback loops with negative / positive impacts are important to understanding how sense-receiving functions in decision-making processes because a feedback loop with positive impacts is beneficial and a feedback loop with negative impacts is detrimental for leaders and members. The reason for this is because of the following: - a feedback loop with negative impacts stem from low sense-receiving and causes members and leaders to have low sense-receiving to each other's sense-giving messages.

This eventually leads to sense deprivation and an adverse decision-making process which sees the exclusion of members, i.e. sense deprivation leads to further low sense-receiving and a feedback loop with negative impacts. A feedback loop with negative impacts has the ability of dragging everything down as members and leaders are stuck in a vicious cycle which is damaging to the decision-making process. A feedback loop with positive impacts on the other hand, emanates from high sense-receiving, enabling enriched sense-making which includes the participation of leaders and members in an optimal decision-making process. When this occurs, there is ample exchange of information between them and this leads to the best choice selected from the alternatives available.

7.2 Theoretical contributions

My study is important because it has added to our understanding of decision-making processes in organisations as well as developing knowledge in organisational behaviour and strategic management. By thoroughly examining the sense-making processes and specifically sense-receiving, we were able to ascertain that without the inclusion of sense-receiving in decision-making process, sense-giving and sense-making were incomplete. Sense-receiving is not just about the receiving of feedback, views or ideas - it is far reaching and extends to the creation of feedback loops with negative / positive impacts. I was able to evidence that when organisational members perceived that they were valued, they were eager to participate and implement decisions fully. This was associated with them having a high sense of control and a positive sense of identity.

Through sensereceiving, we were able to see that when sensegiving had transpired, it initiated sensemaking to begin again, and was noticeable in the feedback loops with negative / positive impacts that evolved. This was referred to as the beginning of 'new' sensemaking in Hoyte (2015), whereby it is able to provide insights into the past and future sensemaking processes. Additionally, they argue that sensemaking restores meaning and ends when new meaning is passed on to recipients through the process of sensegiving. When sensemaking is disrupted, various methods are utilised to restore shared meaning and comes in the form of intersubjective meanings (Gephart et al. 2010). Sensereceiving takes place when the intersubjective meanings derived during exchanges from other individuals is absorbed. Hoyte (2015) concludes that sensereceiving serves as a repair mechanism between sensemaking in the past and sensemaking in the future.

Through high sensereceiving, organisational members are given the opportunity to share their knowledge by voicing their opinions and participate in decision-making processes. As evidenced in my analysis, when this occurs, the relationship between leaders and members improves and this in turn encourages members to have a high sense of control and a positive sense of identity with the organisation. When organisational members participate in decision-making processes, they experience a sense of pride and responsibility which encourages further development. Organisational members are willing and excited to assume additional responsibility by going above and beyond the call of duty as they participated in enriched sensemaking. When members are involved in the decision-making process, they are able to comprehend the reason why decisions are made and as such able to implement them efficiently and effectively.

When organisational members are allowed to participate in decision-making, it builds trust between leaders and members. Receiving different opinions can be beneficial to decision-making because it offers different perspectives on the problem and this allows for better decision-making. Additionally, the positive relationship between leaders and organisational members in non-profit enterprises has been highlighted in Ohana et al. (2013). Here, it was established that enhanced employee commitment stemmed from an increase in employee involvement in decision-making processes. This enables organisational members to feel empowered and fully engage in the decision-making process. My in-depth study of how sensereceiving works, may be utilised as a valuable tool in organisations, to promote understanding of why it is so vital to shared meaning making. Favourable impact on members attitudes and commitment, may have the added advantage of increasing efficiency of leaders in organisations.

Through high sensereceiving, leaders and organisational members are able to share information efficiently and provide a motivational workplace culture that is not only desirable but also highly beneficial to business needs. From the analysis and discussions derived from this study, it is suggested that high sensereceiving increases decision-making quality as more comprehensive and relevant inputs are directed into the decision-making process. High sensereceiving would increase effectiveness of decision outcome implementation, as it builds commitment and engagement. High sensereceiving would also likely increase organisational efficiency as it prevents the loss of emotional energy / effort to sense deprivation outcomes. Additionally, sensereceiving impacts are powerful from employees to managers as they are from managers to employees.

7.3 Limitations of this study

I acknowledge a number of limitations in this study. Firstly, only a single organisation was used for the purpose of this research. At the outset, this may be seen as limiting the scope of my research as well as having issues which relate to generalisability. However, for this particular study, size of the sample may not have been appropriate, as overgeneralisation may have caused the relationships between the processes to be misunderstood. Seawright and Gerring (2008), argue that although random sampling is not a choice available when a small number of cases is selected, purpose sampling ensures in-depth and richness of the study to materialise. Moreover, this causes the activation of more actors who may contribute valuable insights to the study of basic mechanics in specific situations.

Further, it is argued that it is wrong to state that utilising random / big samples is the only way to work, as it is to highlight that individuals cannot generalise from the use of a single case (Flyvbjerg 2006). This is because it is wholly dependent on the chosen case as well as how it came to be chosen. It is stipulated that, the “strategic choice of a case may greatly add to the generalisability of a case study” (Flyvbjerg 2006, p. 9). Additionally, Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007) and Yin (2014) stipulate that it is acceptable for single case theory building in circumstances which give rise to cases which reveal something previously unknown or under-developed. The single case study chosen for my research, was successful in highlighting the problem studied (sensereceiving) as well as the circumstances that were connected to it (sensemaking, sensegiving) and used to develop decision-making processes. This was highlighted by Kennedy (1979), who emphasised that single cases should not be undervalued especially when new paths are discovered.

Secondly, the work done by the organisation researched was specialised and this may make applying generalisability difficult. The reason for this is because the organisation utilised for my research, was a non-profit organisation which provided custom services to individuals, helping them lead better lives. The nature of their work may not be in line with most organisations, but the concepts derived from the study may be used to understand general organisational sense-receiving impacts / effects as well as decision-making processes.

Thirdly, the use of critical incidents may have had an initial drawback, as a few participants had limitations on the recollection of past events. This was addressed by looking at critical incidents where participants looked at incidents which were fairly recent for clarity. Additionally, different participants had differing accounts of how events unfolded. This may not really be viewed as a limitation but part of what was being studied - never getting an 'objective truth', indicated that they experienced the process differently. This may arise pertaining to issues that appeared to be significant for some members but were viewed differently by others. A key example would be where low sense-receiving is perceived and this can create a feedback loop with negative impacts, irrespective of whether leadership is listening or engaged.

Fourthly, this study did not directly account for the role of emotions and how it shaped and impacted the sense-making processes (Maitlis et al. 2013; Glynn and Watkiss 2020; Tsoukas et al. 2020). Schabram and Maitlis (2017) and Liu and Maitlis (2014) advocated that emotions trigger sense-making and this in turn, effects the construction of meaning. The focus of this research was predominantly on the cognitive and subsequent action / behaviour of organisational members and managers, caused by sense-making, sense-giving and sense-receiving in decision-making processes.

Finally, the emphasis during the analytical stage of this study, was on understanding the sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving processes of all twenty-five incidents which were decision-making processes, consisting of critical incidents as experienced by all participants. As such, all focus was directed towards identification and clarification of sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving processes within the twenty-five cases which formed their organisational identity, rather than the analysis of personal identities within each case.

7.4 Future directions

For future research, a look at sensereceiving in more profit-oriented organisations, where sense of identity might differ e.g. in professions, where there is an identification with the profession outside the organisation. In others, an individual's self-identity normally associated with a profit-oriented organisation, is at par with management goals which are motivated by profit. The main incentive for individuals striving to achieve these goals is financial remuneration, a condition they utilise to satisfy their psychological needs. Additionally, research may also examine the influence of sensereceiving on organisational identity rather than just personal identity. Further research could also be used to conduct longitudinal studies on organisations that provide voluntary services. The effect of different forms of training could be utilised whereby it would be mandatory for leaders to undertake specific communication workshops which would enable them to exercise appropriate strategies for effective leadership. This would allow for a mutual understanding of how best to execute organisation initiatives, encouraging member participation.

An interesting area of research may include the examination of sensereceiving in a group-level context, as sensereceiving is a relatively new concept and research has only investigated it on a personal level. This would ensure contribution in the field of organisational behaviour and strategic management, which utilise the sensemaking processes of sensemaking, sensegiving and sensereceiving. Studies could also examine the different levels of sensereceiving tolerance on management as well as organisational members in non-hierarchical and hierarchical organisations.

Here, an interesting perspective would be one that observed the various levels, comparing how they differed in attitude from a management perspective as well as that of an organisational member. Further, pertaining to decision-making processes, an evaluation on varying the degree in sensereceiving, could improve our comprehension of how to better equip managers with the knowledge and skills necessary, that may influence participation in shared meaning making with all organisational members. Much has been researched about resistance to change in organisations but none to date on the impact of sensereceiving to counter this trait. This may prove to be beneficial because efficiency and employee satisfaction could be achieved in the long term.

7.5 Reflexivity

As a former practitioner in the corporate world, I had extensive first-hand experience of how leaders and junior executives interacted with each other in various circumstances. I was aware that when I conducted my semi-structured interviews with my participants, I needed to remain neutral, set aside my own personal feelings and adopt the perspective from a researcher's point of view. There were instances when I wanted to reassure my participants that I was there to try and bridge a gap between themselves and their leaders but remained cautious in doing so, as I did not want to give them any false hope. Nevertheless, I was determined to do my level best to ensure that through my research, organisational members would be given a voice.

The leaders felt that hearing my perspective and the views of their colleagues, was of great value. The feedback enabled them to reflect on our discussions and they looked forward to incorporating these changes into their work, in the year ahead. Additionally, they also felt that it was highly advantageous to look at the organisation through a fresh set of eyes. The CEO was thankful that I had given them a lot to think about and she ensured me that the work that I did would have a lasting impact on the organisation.

I was eventually able to experience the rewards of my research a couple of months later, when I conducted a series of workshops for my participants. They assured me that positive changes were slowly taking place throughout the organisation. I was repeatedly told by some organisational members that because I was invited to do my research at the organisation, they felt that this demonstrated that leaders valued them enough, to invest in their wellbeing, working diligently to restore the damage that had occurred. I ran several 'constructive communication' workshops, and the purpose of doing so was to assist all employees in evaluating their goals and the steps needed to achieve them.

Participation to my workshops were high and all participants indulged in fun filled activities on how to communicate better with their leaders and each other. I kept all participants motivated and fresh by introducing various team building activities which they thoroughly enjoyed. We evaluated what was working well and brainstormed ideas on how they could make improvements on giving and / or receiving feedback at the team or at individual levels. This proved to be beneficial when used as a tool for generating ideas, problem solving and negotiating behavioural changes between groups and individuals. They realised that conflicts could be resolved quickly with effective communication and were keen to learn how to utilise it appropriately, clearly understanding that listening and talking to each other pro-actively, benefitted everyone. The feedback received from leaders and organisational members, had a significant effect on my confidence in the analysis as well as the insights generated through my study.

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APPENDIX

1. Interview Protocol

****** *Important to remember that the Interview Protocol comes from the Critical Incidents themselves*

Questions for Organisational Members

1. Could you reflect on 2 or 3 projects that you have been involved in over the last 6 months?
 - a. What worked well and what didn't?
 - b. If you were doing it again, what would you change?
 - c. What did you first understand about the initiative?
 - d. How did you hear about it?
 - e. Who did you ask?
 - f. Who told you about it?
 - g. What were the issues and opportunities?
 - h. I would be really interested to hear 'where do you think the final solutions emerged from'?
 - i. How did you process it and make a decision around it?
 - j. How did you contribute to the initiative?
2. How well do ideas flow in the organisation?
Who gets listened to?
How do they get listened to?
3. What works well in terms of opinions?
What is the format of communication?
Where do ideas come from?
4. How much do you think your contribution to the organisation is valued?

5. Is there anything else that you see as important that we have not covered but would like to share with me?

Questions for Board Members

- i) what is your role as a board member at the organisation?
- ii) degree to which you and the board are involved in specific initiatives.
- iii) critical incidents on a couple of relevant initiatives as some items will make it to board level.
- iv) the relationship between the board members and the CEO, as this is partly what you're there to do.
- v) core functions of the board and how well the board does it.

Questions for the CEO

- i) How do you see your role in the organisation?
- ii) How do you feel that your organisation works?
- iii) Could you kindly focus on several specific initiatives / projects that have been highlighted in the last 6 months.
- iv) Could you please run me through the steps as to who initiated these projects, how was it carried out and were there any difficulties encountered.
- v) How did you overcome these obstacles?
- vi) What worked well and what didn't?
- vii) How well do ideas flow through the organisation?
- viii) Who gets listened to?
- ix) How do they get listened?
- x) What works well in terms of opinions?
- xi) What is the format of communication?
- xii) Where do ideas come from?
- xiii) How much do you think your contribution to the organisation is valued?
- xiv) Is there anything else that you see as important that we have not covered but would like to share with me?

2. Participant Information Sheet



February 14, 2019

1. Research Project Title - How sensemaking processes influence organisational decision-making.

2. Background, aims of project

My name is Phuspamalar Poopalasingam and I am a PhD student at the University of Stirling. The aim of the project is to study and understand the effect of how managers / leaders make sense of business-related situations and implement decision-making in organisations. I would like to invite you to take part in this study so that we can explore this aspect of organisational research further.

3. Why have I been invited to take part?

You have been invited because you play an integral role in your organisation and partake in decision-making on a regular basis.

4. Do I have to take part?

No. You do not have to take part.

If you do decide to take part, you can withdraw your participation at any time without needing to explain and without penalty by advising the researcher of this decision.

If you withdraw, we will not collect any more data from you. However, any data collected up until the point that you withdraw will be kept and used in the data analysis.

5. What will happen if I take part?

You will need to share your ideas, experiences, frustrations and feelings about how you made sense of organisational situations and the process used to form your decisions. I will be using audio recordings during my interview sessions. Each interview session should take approximately an hour long. The recordings will only be used for the purpose of transcribing the data and not used for any other purpose.

The study will take place in your organisation and will involve follow up visits.

6. Are there any potential risks in taking part?

There are no foreseeable risks in taking part.

7. Are there any benefits in taking part?

The benefits of taking part in this study are that you will be contributing your expertise and providing a valuable contribution to organisational research.

8. What happens to the data I provide?

The University of Stirling recommends that research data will be securely retained for a period of at least 10 years. Information will be held only in restricted areas of the University network and protected with secure credentials. Paper copies will be limited and, when not being referred to, held in locked storage. All paper documents will be shredded, and audio recordings will be permanently erased at the completion of my PhD. We will ask all participants for their permission to use direct quotations anonymously.

9. Will the research be published?

The University of Stirling is committed to making the outputs of research publicly accessible and supports this commitment through our online open access repository STORRE. Unless funder / publisher requirements prevent us, this research will be publicly disseminated through our open access repository. Additionally, the results will be presented at conferences and will be used in my doctoral thesis.

10. Who has reviewed this research project?

The ethical approaches of this project have been approved via The University of Stirling General University Ethics Panel.

11. Who do I contact if I have concerns about this study or I wish to complain?

If you would like to discuss the research with someone, kindly email myself at phuspamalar.poopalasingam@stir.ac.uk.

You may contact my supervisor, Professor David Mackay at david.mackay@stir.ac.uk or alternatively please contact Professor Kevin Grant, Dean of Stirling Management School at kevin.grant@stir.ac.uk.

You will be given a copy of this information sheet to keep.

Thank you for your participation.

3. Participant Consent Form

GUEP/NICR Approval Number 609

Research Project Title: How sensemaking processes influence organisational decision-making.

Please initial box	
I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet dated Feb 14 th , 2019 explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time during the study and withdraw my data within 2 weeks without giving a reason, and without any penalty. I understand that beyond 2 weeks when data analysis has started/results are published it may not be possible to remove my data from the study.	
I understand that my responses will be kept anonymous and I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses.	
I consent to being audio recorded for transcription purposes only.	
I give permission to be quoted directly in the research publication in anonymous form.	
I agree for my personal data to be kept in a secure database so I can be contacted about future studies.	
I agree to take part in this study.	

Name of Participant

Signature:

Date:

Name of Researcher Phuspamalar Poopalasingam

Signature:

Date: 14/02/2019

