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Implementing Strategy to Practice when Energy Crisis Arises

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ABSTRACT:

The theory of strategy as practice suggests that a company's strategy involves not only top management's vision or plan, but also the collective practices of all employees. This theory highlights the role of daily actions and routines in shaping and reinforcing a company's strategy and emphasizes the importance of aligning the strategy with employees' experiences for success. By focusing on aligning organizational practices with the strategy, a company can embed the strategy into its practices and sustain its success over time.

This case study aims to examine the implementation of a new strategy by a company following an acquisition and during an energy crisis, and how different levels within the company perceive its success. The research analyzes the opinions and views of each level of the organization towards the implementation of the strategy and evaluates its effectiveness in meeting its objectives. The focus of the study is to determine the success of the company in effectively implementing the strategy in practice.

The findings suggest that the company's departure from its strategy resulted in communication, commitment, and resource conflicts. The study highlights the importance of focusing on aligning organizational practices with the strategy to ensure its success, through clear communication, maintaining commitment, and providing adequate resources.

KEYWORDS:

Strategy, Strategy Process, Strategy as Practice, Strategic Management, Strategy Implementation, Strategic Decision-making, Strategizing, Strategy-making, Strategy work

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1 Introduction

Corporate strategy and its impact on business performance has been a significant area of study in both academia and business management (Whittington et al. 2003; Knights & Morgan, 1991; Hambrick & Fredrickson, 2001). Academic research traditionally focuses on macro-level analysis of strategy creation, content, management, and performance (Jarzabowski, Balogun & Seidl, 2007). Historically, strategy has been viewed as the property of the organization, used to achieve competitive advantage and long-term success in a changing environment (Porter, 1980). Strategy has been considered the responsibility of executive management, implemented by personnel (Mantere & Vaara, 2008) and primarily informed by top-level decision-making (Thomas & Pruett, 1993). However, this traditional perspective ignores the role of other actors in shaping strategy and often leads to difficulties in strategy implementation (Whittington, 2006). Studies have shown that strategies may change during implementation and that there may be differing views among management and personnel (Balogun & Johnson, 2005).

The research field of strategy as practice examines how strategies are implemented and how individuals are involved in the process, including who they are, what they do, and how they do it (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009). This field developed as a result of dissatisfaction with conventional strategy research, which lacks an emphasis on human actors and their actions (Johnson et al. 2003). It is common for conventional strategy research to focus on macro-level factors, such as firm or industry-level effects on performance, and when individuals are included, they are typically the top managers, with findings being reduced to demographic data such as age and tenure (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009; Johnson et al. 2003). The absence of the human element in mainstream strategy research is often attributed to the dominant micro-economic framework (Johnson et al. 2003). However, there is a growing movement to humanize management and organizational research by including the individual (Weick, 1979; Whittington et al. 2002), and strategy as practice research takes this concern seriously, placing human actors and their interactions at the center stage of strategy research.

The aim of strategy as practice is to take a more human-centered approach to strategy research, focusing on the actions, motivations, and emotions of those who develop and shape strategy, rather than just its results (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009). In terms of strategic management, this approach is part of a broader constructivist movement, which seeks to address some of the limitations of conventional strategy research that is based on microeconomic theory (Mir & Watson, 2000). It has been proposed that strategy as practice can be used to explore the social complexity and causal ambiguity of existing theories, including the resource-based view and dynamic capabilities theory (Ambrosini et al. 2007; Jarzabkowski, 2005; Johnson et al. 2003). While some argue that strategy as practice is similar to traditional strategy process research, others maintain that it differs in that it focuses on agency, the production and reproduction of strategic actions, and the way in which it is embedded within society on multiple levels (Jarzabkowski, 2005; Johnson et al. 2003; Whittington, 2006). Despite ongoing debate over the field's distinction from other fields of strategy research, strategy as practice offers unique insights by placing human actors at the center of strategy creation and replication (Whittington, 2007; Carter et al. 2008).

Studies in the strategy as practice field have primarily been focused on exploring the various practices, praxis, and practitioners involved in strategy-making within organizational contexts (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009; Whittington, 2006). These studies draw on sociological theories of practice and have broadened the scope of what traditional strategy research explains. Strategy as practice research has investigated a range of outcomes such as the political consequences of strategizing, the effects of strategy tools, and the involvement of different types of practitioners. (Vaara & Whittington, 2012) It is important for both leaders and employees to display proactive as well as reactive behavior when implementing a strategy (Brozovic, 2018) however, there has been no empirical study on the specific practices and behaviors required (Azhar, 2012). In order to achieve successful strategy implementation, it is imperative to address the behaviors and organizational flexibility of actors (Azhar, 2012). The transformational behavioral style, characterized by defining the need for change, creating a new vision,

and mobilizing employee commitment, has been identified as a key characteristic of leaders who can facilitate effective organizational change (Gathungu et al. 2015).

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The current energy crisis started in 2021 due to factors such as a rapid economic rebound after the pandemic. The situation worsened following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, causing the price of natural gas and oil to reach record highs, resulting in high inflation, poverty, factory closures, and slowed economic growth. The crisis involves all fossil fuels and affects the entire global economy, making it the first truly global energy crisis. The high energy prices have impacted vulnerable households, caused economic and political strains, and set back progress in universal and affordable energy access. Climate policies are not to blame for the energy crisis, and instead, a greater supply of clean energy sources would have protected consumers and reduced upward pressure on fuel prices. (Milne, 2022; Popkostova, 2022; Paulus & Staehr, 2022; Abram, 2022; Hutter & Weber, 2022)

The energy crisis is a result of various factors including the rapid economic recovery post-pandemic, weather conditions, delayed maintenance, and reduced investments by oil and gas companies and exporting countries. Russia's invasion of Ukraine worsened the situation as the US and EU imposed sanctions and many European countries declared their intention to phase out Russian gas imports. The reduced supply of Russian gas caused an increase in prices for LNG from US, Australia, and Qatar, leading to a rise in electricity prices as well. The oil prices also increased as international trade routes were reconfigured and shippers declined to carry Russian oil due to sanctions and insurance risks. The lack of investment in recent years made it difficult for large oil producers to boost supply to meet the rising demand, leading to sky-high prices. (Milne, 2022; Popkostova, 2022; Paulus & Staehr, 2022; Snell & Pleace, 2022; Borowski, 2022; Alvarez & Molnar, 2021)

The energy crisis affects organizations in various industries, including the one in which the case study company operates. In recent years, organizations have become increasingly concerned with preparing for and responding to energy crises. The purpose of this study is to analyze how the case company's strategy has influenced the current situation, from the perspective of strategy as practice research.

The purpose of this study is to assess how the new strategy has been implemented after acquisition and when energy crisis started to arise. This study focuses on how different levels of the organization perceive the success of the new strategy and its implementation. The purpose of this research is to understand the opinions of each organizational level regarding the implementation of the strategy to practice and the success this implementation has had in terms of achieving its objectives. The objective of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the prepared strategy and how that strategy has been implemented into its day-to-day operations. The research will be conducted using a case study approach, with the focus being on the research problem: *Has the strategy been successfully implemented to practice?*

This research will also present concrete tools and methods with which the target company can enhance the implementation of the strategy in the current situation and possibly in the future. Also, the goal is to identify other discoveries related to the case company's strategy process that can be used for further research. With the results of the study, there is a sub-goal to increase managers' understanding of the case organization's strategy. Based on the research problem, research question, and objectives, the following sub-research questions are formulated:

1. *How has the strategy been implemented at different levels of the organization?*
2. *How do the different organizational levels understand the strategy?*
3. *Has the implementation of the strategy been successful at different levels in the organization?*

1.2 Structure of the Study

First section of this study is the introduction. The introduction section provides background information on the topic, sets the context for the argument, and presents the thesis statement. In the second section a review of existing literature relevant to the topic under study is presented. The literature review discusses several aspects of the strategy process, including the definition of strategy, strategy formulation, strategic management, and strategic consensus. The literature review also includes section about strategy as practice, including the role of managers in the implementation process of strategy and the concept of praxis, practices, and practitioners.

The third section, research methodology, provides a detailed description of the methods used to gather and analyze data for this study. This section will include information on the research design, data collection methods, introduction of the case company, participants to the research, and data analysis methods. The fourth section presents the results of the study, including the findings on commitment conflict, communication conflict, and resource conflict. The purpose of these sections is to provide a transparent and replicable description of the methods used in the research, so that other researchers can evaluate the validity and reliability of the findings.

The conclusions section provides a discussion of the results and conclusions of the study, including the managerial implications and limitations, and suggestions for further research. The study provides valuable insights into the practice of strategy and the role of managers in implementing it effectively. The conclusions section of the study has implications for managers within the company and suggestions for future studies.

2 Literature Review

This section is the starting point of the thesis, in which the theoretical basis is explained. Firstly, it aims to highlight the main points in the field of strategy research, exploring the various theories, perspectives, and research findings that have been developed over the years. Secondly, it will present the views of the strategy as practice school on strategy, exploring the ways in which strategic decision-making and implementation can be approached in practice.

2.1 Strategy Process

Strategy as a concept was defined for the first time in 1832 when the philosopher Carl von Clausewitz stated strategy as: “The use of the engagement to attain the object of war”. When the first business schools were founded in the United States in the latter half of the nineteenth century, strategy as a concept spread rapidly. As the competitive mindset developed during the era of industrialization and mass markets, strategy was recognized as a key tool for controlling market forces and the operating environment. As a result of growing organizations and limited resources, active strategic thinking became part of organizations' management methods during the Second World War. (Ghemawat, 2002.) A strategy provided answers to questions regarding what an organization’s business is and what it should become in the future and in this way, strategic thinking became an integral part of business management (Drucker, 1954).

According to Falsey (1989) organizations must provide their members with a clear understanding of who they are, where they are headed, and how they will achieve it if they wish to maximize productivity and ensure that they are performing the right tasks. In addition, Balmer and Gray (2000) believe that corporate identity enhances the competitive position of a company. As a result of mission and vision statements, companies can communicate their identity, as well as their core philosophy and values. (Yamauchi, 2001) According to Mirvis, Googins and Kinnicutt (2010) vision is a picture of the desired future, while the mission is what the organization believes is the purpose of its existence, and

values are the principles by which it conducts itself in order to reach its objectives. Mission and vision statements have proven to be an effective means of conveying essential values and norms to the organization (Leuthesser & Kohli, 1997).

2.1.1 Definition of Strategy

As Henry Mintzberg ones said (1987): “Human nature insists a definition for every concept”, so the first step is to define the strategy based on the findings of various researchers. As a starting point for defining strategy, it is understood that strategy is the long-term direction of an organization, and it is implemented by strategists (people) (Quinn, Mintzberg & James, 1988). The concept of strategy is defined as what must be done in order to accomplish organization's objectives and goals (Phillips, 2011). According to Mintzberg and Waters (1985), strategy refers to an organization's "plans" for the future. Forming strategies entails formulating long-term goals and action plans through analysis (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985).

It is the responsibility of the organization's strategy to ensure that the organization reaches its destination at the appropriate time and according to Mintzberg (1979), a strategy is "a pattern in a stream of decisions". According to Kvint (2009), strategy refers to the process of identifying, formulating, and developing a doctrine that will ensure long-term success when followed faithfully. Also, Scholes, Johnson, and Whittington (2002) define strategy as direction in long term plan, according to them an organization's strategy identifies the direction and scope of its activities over the long term, as well as its capabilities to achieve advantage through its optimum configuration of resources within a challenging environment, and to meet the needs of customers and stakeholders.

According to Mintzberg and Quinn (1992) the development of a strategy is a critical component of finding a balance between stability and change, by meaning how to succeed in both achieving efficiency while staying on top of a changing operating environment. Company success is strongly influenced by strategic management (Wolf & Floyd, 2013).

According to Miller and Cardinal (1994) growth in competitiveness can be achieved with well-implemented strategic management.

In this research, strategy is defined as the long-term direction of an organization, formulated by strategists (people) through the process of identifying, formulating, and developing a doctrine that ensures long-term success when followed faithfully. It involves formulating long-term goals and action plans through analysis, and it is responsible for ensuring that the organization reaches its destination at the appropriate time. Strategy is also seen as a critical component of finding a balance between stability and change, achieving efficiency while staying on top of a changing operating environment. The success of a company is strongly influenced by strategic management, and growth in competitiveness can be achieved through well-implemented strategic management.

Strategy analysis is a process of gathering information to help with the development of a strategy (Papulova & Gazova, 2016). The process of strategic analysis can be divided into two main stages according to Campbell et al. (2011). In order to determine the strategy of an organization, it is necessary to examine its internal environment in the first place. Analyzing the business's internal processes and structures includes an analysis of the organization's strengths and weaknesses. According to Campbell et al. (2011) The second phase of strategic analysis is an external analysis. The micro and macro environment are included also in this part. Micro level can be defined as the industry in which the organization competes. This environment often affects and influences the organization. An external environment is referred to as the macro level. The macro level factors are normally beyond the control of a single organization. (Campbell et al. 2011; Faulkner & Campbell, 2003) Papulova and Gazova (2016) highlights the importance of strategic decision-making in shaping the future of a company and suggests a three-step approach to the decision-making process that involves gathering information, analyzing it, and making a final decision.

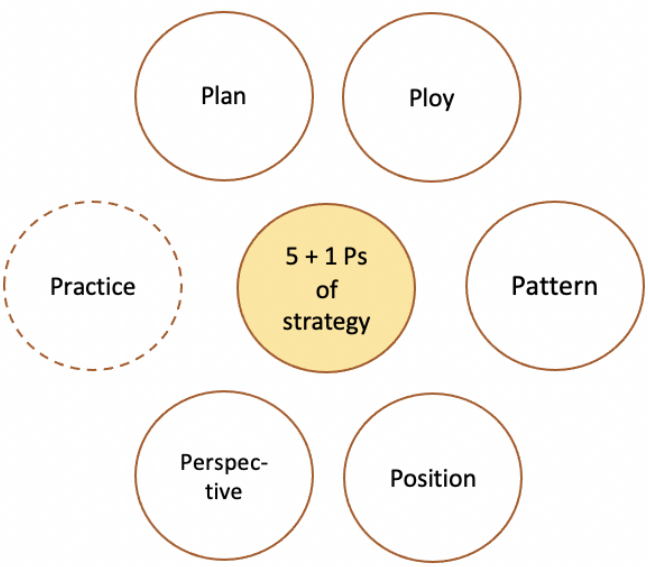

Figure 1 Five Ps and Practice

In Mintzberg's 5ps of strategy, five different perspectives (figure 1) are examined in order to develop a successful business strategy. According to Mintzberg (1987) a plan is designed to help an organization get from where they are today to where they desire to be in the future. The purpose of a ploy is to gain an advantage over opponents. Using strategy as a pattern involves looking at what behavior patterns have proven successful in the past. As soon as it has identified these patterns, it must determine which ones to continue. (Mintzberg, 1987)

The position of the company is determined by where it stands in relation to its competitors. In other words, position answers the question, “In what way can we carve out a niche for ourselves?” Position focuses on the outside world, while perspective focuses on the inside. A perspective takes into account how an organization's culture and personality are shaped. (Mintzberg, 1987)

The sixth perspective, practice, has been developed over the years to assist businesses in implementing their strategies. (Hurtado, 2008; Bourdieu & Nice, 1990) This point of view will be further discussed in the following chapter strategy as practice.

2.1.2 Strategy Formulation

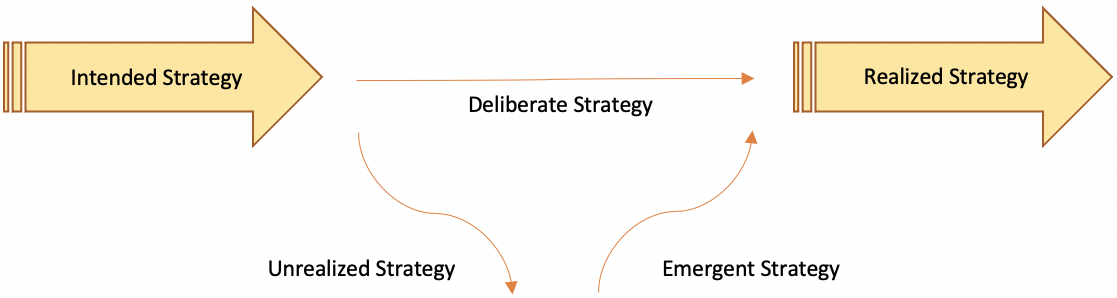

Figure 2 Types of Strategies (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985)

As the figure 2 shows, strategies can be formulated in many ways. In the following section, it is discussed in more detail the different methods of developing strategies. The planned strategy involves people in management or in other leading positions in the organization formulating and articulating the organization's goals and working together to achieve those goals (Hart, 1992; Regner, 2003). Entrepreneurial strategies are slightly less accurate and less clear in their goal setting than planned strategies (Murray, 1984). According to Mintzberg and Waters (1985) in an umbrella strategy, a company's operations are limited by general boundaries and allow it to act freely within them. Management allows the complexity, uncontrollability, and unpredictability of the operating environment to be taken into account in operations because the strategy process gives members of the organization the opportunity to respond to environmental challenges (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985). In contrast to umbrella strategies, process strategies allow the members of an organization to define the content of the strategy with greater freedom, while the management is responsible for determining how the strategy creation process is progressing (Jørgensen & Mintzberg, 1987). Emergent strategies are consistent and continuous without any form of planning (Hendry, 2000; Regner, 2003). According to Mintzberg and Waters (1985), an emergent strategy means finding workable solutions by examining one measure at a time, looking for a possible formula.

In summary, employees, company management, and the operating environment influence strategy significantly (Hart, 2991; Hendry, 2000; Regner, 2003; Mintzberg & Waters,

1985; Jørgensen & Mintzberg, 1987). As Mintzberg and Waters (1985) argue, neither a purely planned strategy nor an emergent one is necessarily pure in reality and practical life. These strategies fall in between these two extremes. When a company's management is capable of effectively managing operations, strategies are more planned, while when management's ability to manage operations is limited, strategies are more emergent. (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985) A planned strategy does not always result in the same outcome. Eventually, the strategy evolves from a planned intended strategy with specific objectives to an emerging strategy and then to a realized strategy. To be effective, the strategy must remain adaptive and flexible enough to adapt to new situations without sacrificing its original goals. (Campbell et al. 2011; Mintzberg et al. 1998)

2.1.3 Strategic Management

The purpose of strategy is to create a shared understanding of the organization's future (Porter, 1979). In strategic management, it is important to chart how to accomplish the objectives as well as how to adjust the direction and actions in response to a changing environment (Preble, 1997). The organization should have a strategy that provides employees with the means and direction to carry out their duties (Porter, 1979; Faulkner & Campbell, 2003). Ultimately, senior managers are responsible for making strategic decisions, while middle managers are responsible for executing those decisions (Mintzberg, 1994; Mitroff et al. 1987). In order to make effective strategic decisions, it is essential to have a clear understanding of how the organization operates, there can be no separation between strategy formulation and implementation (Faulkner & Campbell, 2003). It is important to recognize that strategic management is an ongoing process, and that each component is interdependent upon the others (Dunphy & Stace, 1993).

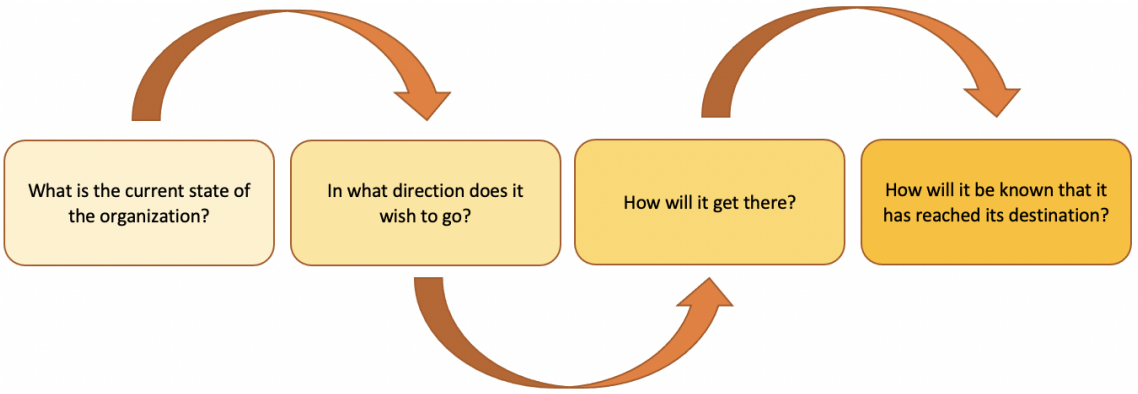

Figure 3 Strategic Management

According to figure 3, strategic management consists of four stages (Gluck, Kaufman & Walleck, 1982). Managers are responsible for gathering and studying information during the strategic analysis stage, which is part of the process of preparing a strategy. An examination of external as well as internal factors is carried out in this phase. As part of the strategy formulation stage, the organization formulates alternative and specific strategies. It is during this phase that the best course of action for achieving the organizational goal is determined. After analysis, managers develop corporate, business, and functional strategies. During the implementation stage, annual objectives are established, and policies are developed. It is during this phase that the selected strategy is implemented, and the structure of the decision-making process is determined. The purpose of the stage of strategy evaluation is to gather information regarding which strategies are effective and which are not. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the current strategy, external and internal factors must be assessed, performance evaluated, and corrective action is taken. (David, 2011; David & David, 2013; Rothaermel, 2012; Thompson & Martin, 2010)

The strategy process can involve and engage a wide range of individuals. Participation varies according to the stage at which the strategy is being developed. It is also important to note that the role that the top manager chooses during the implementation phase influences the workers' perception of strategy. In order to achieve alignment in the interpretation of the strategy, managers must lead the change within their organization

(Belogun & Johnson, 2005). There is a need to acknowledge the important role played by middle management in the process of developing a strategy. It is them who receive and deploy top-down initiatives, and their decisions have a significant impact on the future of the organization. Through formal and informal communication, strategy implementation takes place within a variety of vertical and lateral social processes. It is they who facilitate the process of change. (Belogun & Johnson, 2005) A strategy must be committed and evaluated throughout the whole process, along with the leadership and management, in order to become more than just a piece of paper. For strategic discussions to take place, there must be a designated time and place. In order for the strategy work to be successful, the tools and materials used must be appropriate for the task at hand. (Dameron, Lê & LeBaron, 2015)

2.1.4 Strategic Consensus

Individuals or groups within an organization who are in agreement with a strategic directive are said to have a strategic consensus. Organization members aren't working toward the same goals and objectives when there is no strategic consensus. (Nobel, 1999) According to Nobel (1999) there may be a correlation between the level of strategic consensus among managers and the success of strategic directives. According to Woolridge and Floyd (1989) shared understanding without commitment may result in the creation of a "counter effort" that negatively impacts the performance of the organization and strategy implementation. Based on Schweiger et al. (1989), it was revealed that groups with diversity of opinions but using dialectical inquiry reached significantly higher quality decisions than groups seeking total consensus. In summary, strategic consensus researchers has found a direct and positive relationship between firm performance and consensus.

In order for the organization to interact with each other and create shared meaning and strategic consensus the strategy must first be made meaningful at an individual level (Hui & Triandis, 1985). According to Hui and Triandis (1985) employees are more likely to receive meaning if they are involved in the organization's strategic planning processes.

Strategic thinking and planning alone do not guarantee action, so all members should be more committed to implementing the strategy. (Stensaker, Falkenberg & Gronhaug, 2008) According to Maitlis (2005), meaningfulness has a dynamic nature when several stakeholders are involved simultaneously in the process. A significant factor influencing the dynamics and results of meaningfulness is the meaningfulness of other actors in the organization, such as management. (Maitlis, 2005)

In order to achieve success, strategies must be more flexible, and more innovative, and organizations must be able to respond with outstanding responsiveness. In order for an organization's operations to flourish, it must utilize all its stakeholders and network to the maximum extent possible. (Grant, 2013) It has been observed that a shift has taken place in strategic thinking from strategic planning to strategy in practice.

2.2 Strategy as Practice

Many research directions and schools have examined strategy and its formulation from various perspectives. Strategy has been studied both as content, based on rational starting points, and as a process, focusing more on the creation of a strategy. Strategy as practice has emerged at the turn of the millennium as one of the most relevant research directions in strategy. (Jarzabkowski, 2005)

Strategy as practice school was created as a result of the desire to humanize operations and examine the content of strategy work emerging from organizational and business management research (Jarzabkowski, 2004). According to Jarzabkowski (2004) it is especially relevant for today's organizations that operate in constantly changing dynamic environments to view strategy as a practice. According to Whittington (1996), the key question from a strategy practitioner's perspective is: what makes a strategist effective?

In the theory of strategy as practice, the strategy is viewed as a social 'practice', based on how its practitioners actually act and interact (Whittington, 1996). In a practice-oriented approach, strategy is viewed as something that occurs within the organization,

rather than an abstract property, as would be expected rationally (Suominen & Mantere, 2010). Jarzabkowski (2004) argues that strategy is a phenomenon that emerges in social interaction. According to Whittington (2007) strategy as practice is followed from the process view of strategy, which was popular in the 1980s, but it has its own research agenda and it is wider than just strategy process. In order to really understand strategy as practice, the sociological eye must be used to see strategy's relationships, embeddedness, ironies, problems, and both its changes and its continuity (Whittington, 2007).

The study of strategy as practice can be divided into three phases according to Jarzabkowski, Seidl & Balogun (2022). In order to differentiate strategy as practice from other fields of strategy research, the Germination phase (agenda-seeking) has been used to generate new concepts and terminology. The Blossoming phase (agenda-setting) establishes a community of scholars and articles whose focus is on strategy as practice, consolidates differentiation from other fields, and defends boundaries concerning strategy in practice. The Harvesting phase (agenda-confirming) studies and explains organizational phenomena and connects them to other areas of study. (Jarzabkowski, Seidl & Balogun, 2022)

In order to distinguish strategy as practice from other fields of strategy research, agenda-seeking work during the period 2001-2008 included the generation of new concepts and terminology as well as their definition. In this phase, micro-strategizing is defined as focusing on the micro-activities that are relevant to an organization but are often overlooked in traditional strategy research. It was in this phase that the 3Ps, practices, practitioners, and praxis, were established as the field's core meta-theoretical framework. This phase of the research involves the study of phenomena using multiple theories and methods incorporated into the practice of theory. Also in this phase the study of strategy workshops, middle managers, and peripheral strategy-making also became relevant. (Johnson et al. 2003; Jarzabkowski, 2004; Jarzabkowski, 2005; Whittington, 2006; Hodgkinson & Wright, 2006; Jarzabkowski et al. 2007; Denis et al. 2007; Chia & MacKay, 2007; Carter et al. 2008)

Between 2008 and 2016, an agenda-setting group of scholars and articles developed that identified strategy as practice through reference and sharing, consolidating differentiation by setting and defending boundaries. This study examines strategy as a practice-oriented phenomenon, including managers at various levels, processes, tools, and materials for making strategies. In this phase, a variety of methodological lenses are brought together to broaden the understanding of strategic thinking as practice-based insights. It became important to identify gaps in the growing field and critiquing them, particularly those related to phenomena and issues that occur outside of the organization. As a result of this phase of the study, researchers began to question the initial frameworks and further develop the concepts, resulting in the creation of a strand of research on strategy as a profession (4Ps), even though the term "micro" was becoming increasingly considered to be conceptually inaccurate. (Whittington, 2007; Jarzabkowski & Whittington, 2008; Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009; Golsorkhi et al. 2015; Vaara & Whittington, 2012; Balogun et al. 2014; Seidl & Whittington, 2014; Dameron et al. 2015; Jarzabkowski et al. 2016)

From 2016 to 2021, agenda-confirming work included taking strategy as a practice lens for granted in studying and explaining core strategy and organizational phenomena and expanding the network to reach out to other fields of study. As part of this Harvesting approach, we were going beyond the existing "strategies as practice-oriented phenomena" in order to examine a broader set of issues, such as how people and practices develop strategic thinking. As part of this phase, the study extended to large-scale puzzles and phenomena that occur outside of organizations. As a result of the research, the researchers revisited and developed more dynamic explanations of existing topics such as strategy and structure, strategy formation, strategy and design, as well as planned and emergent strategies. (Burgelman et al. 2018, Feldman et al. 2019; Lounsbury et al. 2021)

Research on strategy as practice focuses on three main themes: strategic praxis, strategic practices, and strategic practitioners (Whittington, 2006). The term "strategic

practitioners" refers to both internal and external parties who have the potential to influence an organization (Jarzabkowski, Balogun, & Seidl, 2007). Therefore, the review is not limited to the top management, but each individual's actions can be considered important in achieving strategic goals. According to Hambrick (2004), strategy as practice theory represents a return to individual activity as the center of research that has been neglected in strategy research for a long time. Specifically, the research examines the ways and means by which actors interact in the local context and how they are shaped into everyday activities (Jarzabkowski, 2003).

The concept of strategy as a practice research approach is viewed as a socially implemented activity, where the formation of a strategy is formed through interactions and activities involving multiple actors in a local context. Rather than viewing strategy as a static outcome, it is viewed as a dynamic process. (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011). Whittington (2003) emphasizes the performance of the individual actors rather than the performance of the organization as a whole. The most significant finding of the practice research so far is that strategy work and its implementation are strongly related to organizational practices that affect the progress of the entire strategy process and strategic outcomes (Vaara & Whittington, 2012).

2.2.1 Praxis, Practices & Practitioners

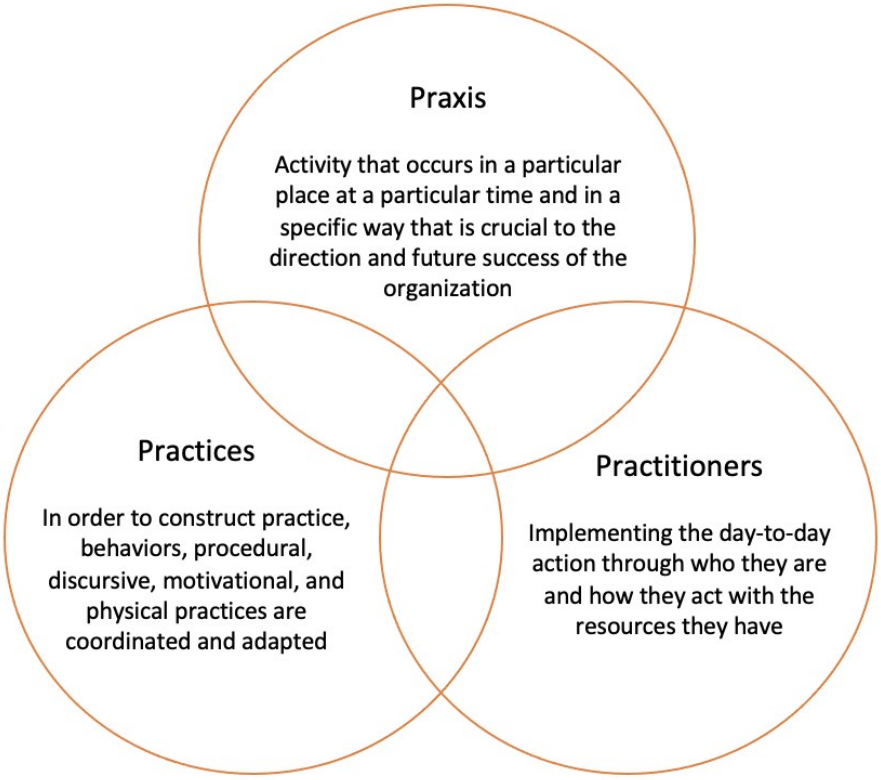

Figure 4 Three Dimensions

Strategic praxis according to Reckwitz (2002), describes the entire range of human activity. As Sztompka (1991) describes praxis, it unfolds as the nexus of society's activity and the actions of individuals. It is argued by Jarzabkowski, Balogun, and Seidl (2007) that praxis entails the interdependence between the actions of many individuals and groups dispersed across the world and the social, political, and economic institutions that they participate in and contribute to. According to Whittington (2007), the term "strategic praxis" refers to shared behavioral routines and norms associated with strategy work, without which strategic action would not be possible. As Jarzabowski and Whittington (2008) explain, praxis are social, symbolic, and concrete methods for implementing strategy.

According to Jarousse (2015), strategy planning takes less time than it used to, resulting in faster implementation of the strategy. As a means of increasing efficiency and agility,

Jarousse (2015) encourages organizations to become action oriented. Achieving operational efficiency requires a shift from excessive planning and talking to planning and doing. It also means that the business is operated in an entrepreneurial manner and that the focus is not on reducing risks but on being enthusiastic and open to experimenting with new ideas. Although there is usually little information and many assumptions when experiments are initiated, experimentation can lead to the development of lucky strategic coincidences. People should be motivated to experiment, and assumptions should be openly discussed. (Jarousse, 2015)

An activity that is considered strategic is one that takes place on a daily basis and is based upon a set of practices that form a way of working that is considered strategic by a strategic actor. Repeated use of a practice strengthens it and allows for new practices to be developed as well as old ones to be transformed. (Whittington, 2006). Paroutis, Heracleous, and Angwin (2013) identified strategic action as the concrete actions and interactions that organization's managers undertake during the strategy process. According to Whittington (2006), activity is the concrete strategic work carried out by members of an organization, such as meetings, discussions, projects, presentations, and interactions in different settings. To these methods, Johnson et al. (2008) adds management blogs, videos, intranets, roadshows, voice messages, and employee engagement at events such as strategy conferences.

Strategic practices are defined by Reckwitz (2002) as a routinized form of behavior that consists of multiple interconnected elements: a body’s actions, a person's actions, things, and how they are used, as well as background knowledge base containing understanding, know-how, emotional states, and motivational knowledge. By using practices, multiple actors can interact to socially achieve a common goal by providing the behavioral, cognitive, procedural, discursive, and physical resources (Jarzabkowski, 2004; Whittington, 2002; Jarzabkowski, Balogun & Seidl, 2007). To comprehend how strategic activity is constructed, it may be useful to examine how these resources are used in a routinized manner (Jarzabkowski, Balogun & Seidl, 2007).

Concannon and Nordberg (2017) investigated the working practices of management teams and distinguished formal and informal practices. In accordance with the results of the research, formal practices included quarterly management team meetings, time on the agenda and ad hoc meetings. Study found also informal practices such as strategy planning days, brainstorming sessions, lunches, conferences, training, meetings with key stakeholders, phone conversations and emails, factory visits, and networking. The result of the research was that when an organization's strategic practices are informal, it is possible to isolate individuals or to separate them from the hole strategy processes. (Concannon & Nordberg, 2017).

The concept of strategic practices refers to a set of routines, discourses, concepts, and techniques that are employed in order to carry out strategy work, according to Jarzabkowski and Whittington (2008). A few examples of these practices according to them are strategy reviews, strategy drafting, analyses incorporated into consulting work, and hypothesis testing. According to Johnson et al. (2008), strategic practices are ways of thinking, models, traditions, norms, and ways of being and acting. Additionally, there are a variety of tools included in the practices. Increasingly, strategic practices involve the use of material technologies and things made by hand, such as flipcharts and PowerPoint presentations (Kaplan, 2011; Jarzabkowski, 2004). In accordance with Kaplan (2011), PowerPoint presentations can be distributed widely throughout the organization, forwarded, and modified across departmental and hierarchical boundaries.

A strategic practitioner is a participant, an individual who draws upon practices in order to carry out their duties. As a result, practitioners are interconnected with practices and praxis. They combine, coordinate, and adapt the practices of behavior, thinking, feeling, knowing, and acting that are prevalent in their society, so that they may act within and influence it. (Reckwitz, 2002) From a strategic point of view, practitioners are obvious units of analysis since they are actively involved in the creation and development of activities that have a direct bearing on the continued existence of the organization. They

influence strategic activity through their identity, their actions, and the practices they draw upon. (Jarzabkowski, Balogun & Seidl, 2007)

In the context of strategy as practice theory, strategic practitioners are defined as individuals or groups that actively influence or are involved in strategic decisions through their activities and as a result, every individual within an organization is a potential strategist, who can be viewed as a challenge to the traditional top-down model of the strategy process. (Vaara & Whittington, 2012) A group of strategic actors has been identified in addition to internal actors within the organization who indirectly influence strategy formulation and implementation. In addition to contributing to the strategy, these external actors have a significant impact on the legitimacy of the operations and practices. Consultants, investors, customers, and legislators have been identified as these groups. As individuals operate in accordance with their own values, norms, and practices, it is important to be aware of the influence of external actors. (Whittington, 2006; Jarzabkowski, 2005; Jarzabkowski et. al. 2007)

The understanding of turnover intent and its impact on organizational efficiency is relevant to strategy as a practice theory (Price, 2001; Thwala et al. 2012). In strategy as practice, the focus is on how people in organizations enact, interpret, and modify strategies in their day-to-day work (Jarzabkowski, Balogun & Seidl, 2007). When it comes to employee turnover, it is important to highlight the importance of considering how HR practices and performance management impact employees' intentions to stay or leave the company (Howard, 1993; Thwala et al. 2012). By examining the reasons behind turnover intent, organizations can develop and implement strategies to retain high-performing employees and reduce the costs and negative effects of turnover to company’s strategy (Long & Perumal, 2014).

An examination of the micro-level in strategy as practice examines how local narratives play a role in the construction of managerial and work identities (Beech & Johnson, 2005; Dunford & Jones, 2000). According to Laine and Vaara (2007), the definition and

interpretation of the role of "strategy practitioner" varies depending on who is speaking and in what context. In addition, the discourse about strategy employed by different groups of actors, such as corporate management and middle managers, can influence the organization's strategic identity and influence how the organization utilizes strategy (Laine & Vaara, 2007).

The macro environment is seen in strategy as practice as influencing who is a legitimate strategist and what it means to be one according to Fenton and Langley (2011). They argue that is important to note that grand narratives of strategy do not only define legitimate strategic practices, but also have implications for who is a strategist. Using Foucauldian discourse analysis, Knights and Morgan (1991) demonstrated that grand narratives of strategy enhance the dominance and prestige of managerial elites. Clark and Salaman (1998) have also concluded that macro-narratives serve storytelling functions for management gurus and contribute to managers' understanding of their roles. As a result, different macro-narratives or institutionalized practices may have different implications, thereby establishing different individuals as legitimate actors in the strategy process.

The role of top managers is to conduct goal-directed activities (Andersen, Grude & Haug, 2009). In order to support and shape the collective activity and commitment, top managers build relationships with their community. In order to influence others to be involved in the strategy, top managers make use of strategizing techniques (budget allocation, performance measures, face-to-face interactions) (Jarzabkowski, 2008). Although they are usually not seen as reflective parts of the practice, formal practices such as plans, budgets, and committees are essential to the execution of strategic plans (Vaara & Whittington, 2012). Top managers play an influential role in the strategy process as mediators in complex interactions between activities. Strategizing behavior is classified into three types by Jarzabkowski (2008): interactive strategizing, procedural strategizing, and integrative strategizing. Strategy is viewed as a dynamic, multilevel process that is continuously evolving. (Jarzabkowski, 2005; Vaara & Whittington, 2012; Jarzabkowski, 2008)

Interactive strategizing involves direct face-to-face interaction by top managers to shape how organization members instantiate strategy in their actions (Vaara & Whittington, 2012). By employing this method of strategizing, opinion leaders can be persuaded, and norms, powers, and meanings can be shaped within organizations. Procedural strategizing involves the use of administrative procedures to formulate a strategy (Jarzabkowski, 2008). The strategy is incorporated into performance indicators, plans, and targets in this approach. According to this view, the organization is dominated by the allocation of resources (Jarzabkowski, 2008). Direct interactions, as well as administrative procedures, can both be modified during integrative strategizing. In order to change the organization's strategy, the focus is on the actions of its members. It is expected that this approach will result in new norms for strategy size and scope. (Jarzabkowski, 2008)

2.3 Theoretical Framework

Summarizing the previous chapter, the strategy as practice perspective focuses on studying the factors affecting successful strategic actor activities, methods, and practices for developing strategies. There are three factors that explain the strategy as practice research direction: the success of strategic actors, the quality of operations, and the spread of practices (Jarzabkowski, 2005; Jarzabkowski et al. 2007; Johnson et el. 2007; Whittington, 2006). Strategic practitioners are likely to include every actor in the organization as well as potential influential parties outside the organization. As a result, the review is not limited to top management, but also includes each individual's actions toward achieving organizational goals. Practices refer to shared behavioral routines and activities that help put the strategy into practice and implement it. On the other hand, strategic praxis is a series of activities that occur within an organization, which together form an adaptive process for implementing a strategy.

The model made by Whittington (2006) is taken as framework for this study. There are three elements that constitute this integrative framework for strategy as practice, which encompass the micro and macro levels of organizations. As a result of examining the

micro and macro levels of strategy, it can be determined what strategy practitioners must actually do to implement the strategy. Therefore, a more micro and macro level understanding of current strategy issues can be gained and research about strategy processes at different levels in the organization, as well as the implementation of the strategy to practice and its success, can be made.

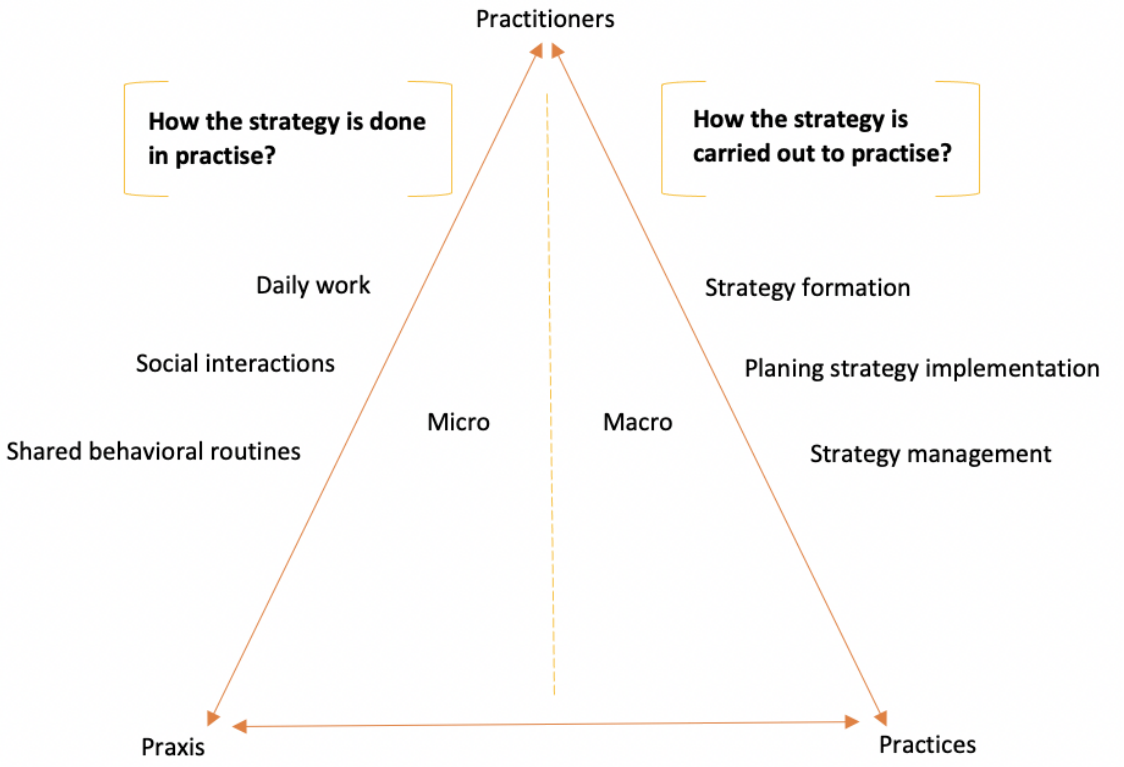

Figure 5 Theoretical Framework adapted from Whittington (2006)

It is important to define and summarize the terms used in the theoretical framework. In this context, micro-level action is defined as an individual or collective process and activity conducted at a lower level than the organizational level. Individuals and groups may participate in these activities by participating in discussions and other forms of interaction, or by being in psychological processes. The term macro-level refers to phenomena occurring at the organizational level in this study. In the context of organizational analysis, these phenomena may include organizational capabilities and strategies.

As well as managing strategic change, improving competitive advantage, and performance, these factors can also be related to achieving organizational objectives.

This framework provides the basis for empiricism in the research, in which the research material is used to answer the research questions. The answers are reflected in the theoretical framework in chapter 4.

3 Research Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a detailed description of the methods and techniques used to answer the research and sub-questions. The methodology is a crucial component of a research project as it provides a roadmap for the study and outlines the procedures used to collect and analyze data.

3.1 Research Methods

Traditional research methods are divided into qualitative and quantitative data. Research methods must be chosen according to the research theme, purpose, and data (Sofaer, 2002). In order to conduct research, an idea must be formulated first, followed by the formulation of a specific research question and topic (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007). The choice of the research method should be guided by the research question (Sofaer, 2002). It needs to be considered what materials are most suitable for answering the research question and what methods are most appropriate for analyzing the data. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007; Rynes & Gephart, 2004)

The term quantitative refers to any technique or method for collecting or analyzing numerical data. Comparatively, qualitative is used predominantly to refer to any non-numerical data collection or analysis method or process of categorizing data (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007). According to Stake (1995), quantitative and qualitative research differ in three significant ways: identifying the purpose of inquiry as explanation or understanding, identifying a researcher's role as one of both personal and impersonal importance, and distinguishing between knowledge discovered and knowledge constructed.

In qualitative research, phenomena are often examined in the context in which they occur naturally, and the meanings of social actors are used to elucidate the phenomenon. In order to make sense of the world around us, qualitative research aims to understand how social experiences are generated, given meaning, and depicted. It is not uncommon

for qualitative research to be designed and conducted concurrently; it requires highly contextualized individual judgments. An important function of qualitative research is to address questions about how social experiences are created, given meaning, and represented in ways that allow the world to be viewed. A qualitative researcher also attempts to provide well-substantiated conceptual insights in order to explain the research findings by providing examples that illustrate how broad concepts and theories are applied in specific circumstances. (Deniz & Lincoln, 1994; Van Maanen, 1998; Rynes & Gephart, 2004) A qualitative research process is a comprehensive, inseparable process that covers all aspects of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. There is a simultaneous activity in many areas of research during the research process. When the purpose of qualitative research is to uncover and reveal facts, it is possible to provide answers that are limited to the relevant context and time. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007)

A quantitative research method according to Goertzen (2017), involves collecting and analyzing structured data that can be represented numerically. In quantitative research, observations are numerically represented and manipulated in order to explain and describe the phenomena reflected in those observations. The objective of quantitative research is to build accurate and reliable measurements that can be analyzed statistically. Quantitative research can be classified into several types. As an example, it is possible to categorize it as survey research, correlational research, experimental research, or causal-comparative research. (Sukamolson, 2007; Goertzen, 2017) Table 1 illustrates the differences between qualitative and quantitative research.

Qualitative Research	Quantitative Research
Interaction between the researcher and the subject of the study	The researcher is independent of the subject of research
A personal, informal tone	A formal approach based on a set of definitions
An inductive process with mutual simultaneity	Cause and effect in deductive reasoning
Through verification, the information is accurate and reliable	Validity and reliability ensure accurate and reliable results
Measurements and observations in the natural environment, exploratory	The ability to focus on facts and reasoning, the use of controlled measurements and the formulation of hypotheses
An insider's perspective on data, information and knowledge	Taking an objective approach to data, information, and knowledge coming from outside sources
Holistic approach	Precise and analytical

Table 1 Qualitative and Quantitative Research

Words are the starting point and the ending point of qualitative research. The research process is naturalistic and interactive, and empirical data are qualitative by nature. Due to the lack of adequate observations, certain events cannot be analyzed using mathematical techniques in order to gain reliable analytical results. The qualitative method of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data involves observing what people say and do, how and when they do it, and then interpreting the results. (Gephart, 2004)

Based on the method and purpose of data collection, qualitative research can be further classified into five types (Crowe et al. 2011; Marshall & Rossmann, 1999; Hutton & Hutton, 1988). The purpose of *phenomenology* is to learn how individuals experience a phenomenon on a particular level. An *ethnographic* research approach focuses on the description of a group's culture. The culture of a group of people can be defined as the shared attributes, values, norms, practices, language, and material belongings. An inductive approach to research is *grounded theory*, which is developed from observations of data; it consists of a variety of data sources, including quantitative data, records reviews, interviews, observations, or surveys. It is possible to discuss past and present events within the context of the present condition through *historical research*, and to provide

solutions to current concerns and issues by studying the past. The *case study* is a type of qualitative research that provides a detailed account of an individual or group of individuals. In qualitative research, a case study provides a more holistic perspective. As one of the more versatile qualitative methodologies, they can be descriptive, exploratory or explanatory (Crowe et al. 2011; Marshall & Rossmann, 1999).

According to Gustafsson (2017) the definition of a case study is not easily explained due to its complexity. He suggests that the term "case study" refers to a study of a particular individual or group of individuals that aims to generalize over a number of individuals. As the name proposes, a case study focuses on a single unit (Jacobsen, 2002). A similar definition of a case study would be that it is an analysis of systems that are viewed comprehensively through the application of one or several different methodologies (Thomas, 2011). In contrast to case analysis, case studies provide a good method for defining cases and exploring a setting in order to gain an understanding of that setting (Cousin, 2015). According to Creswell (2013), the case study method entails a detailed, in-depth data collection process that involves multiple sources of information, including data derived from real-life, contemporary bounded systems (cases) or multiple bounded systems (cases).

According to Yin (2003), context has a significant impact on the outcome of the case study. He points out that a case study is a study of a phenomenon that is taking place in a particular context, in which the boundaries between the phenomenon being studied and the contexts in which it takes place are not always clearly apparent. Case studies may prove beneficial in gaining a deeper understanding of the context and processes enacted in the research (Morris & Wood, 1991). Saunders et. al. (2009) demonstrates that, when used appropriately, case studies can be an extremely valuable method of exploring existing theories. They argue that a well-developed case study strategy can provide a basis for challenging an existing theory as well as generating for example new research questions.

Unlike a single case study, a multiple case study involves the analysis of multiple cases in order to determine the similarities and differences between them (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Stake, 1995). Researchers should use a single case study if they are only interested in studying one specific thing or one specific group (Yin, 2003). It is possible to question old theoretical relationships when using a single case study and explore new connections. As a result, Dyer & Wilkins (1991) believe that a single case study makes it possible for the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the subject. According to Gustafsson (2017) one of the advantages of a single case study is that it is less costly and time-consuming than conducting multiple case studies. Whenever a writer wishes to develop a high-quality theory, single case studies are the most effective method, since they produce additional and better information (Gustafsson, 2017).

Kaplan (1964) defines a method as the set of tools, techniques, or procedures used to generate data. When conducting case study as qualitative research, it is important to recognize that interviewing is a set of techniques designed to generate data from individuals through structured, semi-structured, or unstructured questioning formats (Jackson, Drummond & Camara, 2007).

A semi-structured interview is an effective method of gathering data because it offers both flexibility and versatility (Kallio et al. 2016). The rigidity of the structure of this type of study can be varied based on the purpose of the study and the research questions being addressed, it can be used in conjunction with both individual and group interview methods (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Kelly, 2010). Galletta (2012) notes that one of the main advantages of semi-structured interviews is their ability to facilitate reciprocity between interviewers and interviewees. In this method, follow-up questions are improvised by the interviewer based on the responses as well as the expressions of the participants (Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Kallio et al. 2016)

Due to the fact that semi-structured interviews are based on previous knowledge, it is necessary to do some previous research in the research topic area in order to conduct a

successful interview (Wengraf, 2001; Kelly, 2010). An interview guide should be developed that covers the main topics of the study in advance of the interview (Mason, 2004, Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Taylor, 2005). There are some aspects of a semi-structured interview that are locked, but not all (Kallio et al. 2016). A good interview structure allows the interviewee to express themselves freely, however, following it strictly is not necessary to ensure a smooth conversation. This structure serves as a guide for collecting similar types of information from each interviewee in order to explore the research area. (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010)

A method of identifying interview topics is to identify them in the literature (Fakis et al. 2014). The chosen topic areas should be so broad that the true complexity of the phenomenon under study is revealed. Detailed topic areas can be prepared by creating a list of possible questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). By using this method, the purpose is not to limit or guide the discussion, but to ensure that the collected material could be used for research purposes. Without pre-guided responses, the interviewee is able to present his or her own interpretations, which are most descriptive about the topic. (Turner III & Hagstrom-Schmidt, 2022)

During an interview, the researcher will be interacting with other individuals in a social setting (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). It is a situation in which two people interact through the use of language. During the interview, the interviewer examines the content of the interviewee's statement. A research interview has a specific purpose and specific roles for participants: the interviewer is an ignorant party while the interviewee is knowledgeable about the subject matter (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). An interview is initiated by the researcher, and the researcher also directs or at least controls the conversation. (Turner III & Hagstrom-Schmidt, 2022)

Interviews can be classified into a variety of types (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). An interview may be conducted with a single individual or with a group of individuals. Interviews conducted individually are the most common and usual method of interviewing.

Researchers select individual interviews to avoid interference or influence from other individuals. As a disadvantage, the situation may seem artificial to the subject: the interviewee is removed from normal surroundings and the focus may be too much on the researcher and the researchers' questions. (Harvey-Jordan & Long, 2001) According to Saunders et al. (2009) the location in which the interview is conducted may have an influence on the results of the study. It should be considered the effect of the location on participants and their likely responses. It is important that the interview location is convenient for interviewees, comfortable for them, and free of disruptions.

In qualitative semi-structured research, information is typically acquired in a natural setting, using methods that allow multiple perspectives and voices of participants to be heard (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). A reliable study must consider the following three types of biases: interviewer, response, and participation biases. Figure 6 illustrates them more closely. This vulnerability of the interview situation is crucial to the success of the research. From a quality perspective, it is important to consider the type of data collected, who answers the questions, and how the questions are answered. (Saunders et al. 2009)

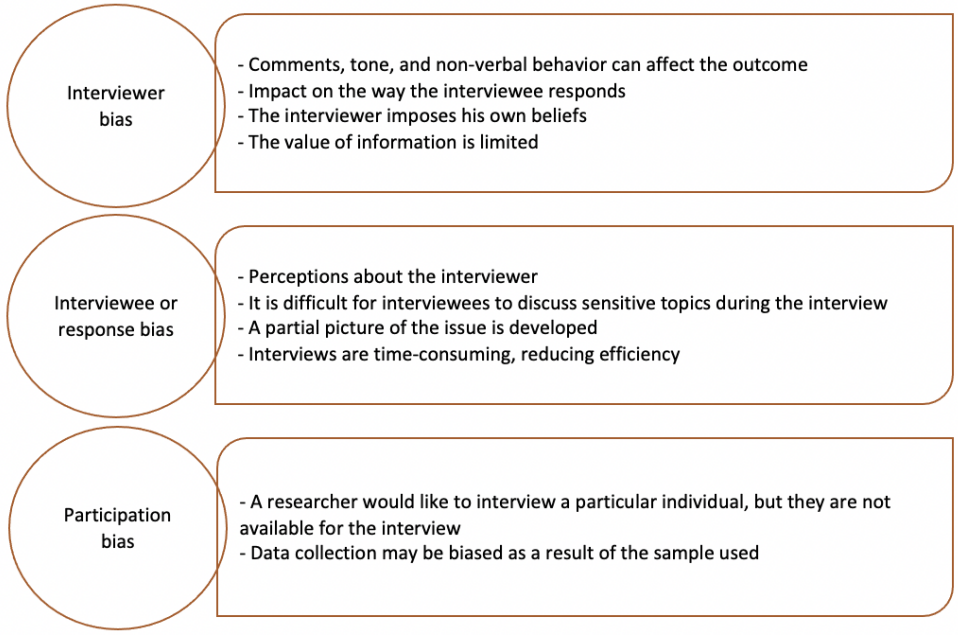

Figure 6 Data Quality Issues (Saunders et al. 2009)

It is essential to prepare for an interview carefully in order to conduct it successfully. It is critical to maintain a well-planned strategy during the interview in order to demonstrate credibility and gain the confidence of the interviewees. The credibility of an interview can also be enhanced by providing participants with relevant information before the interview. For example, providing a list of interview themes beforehand. It is important to construct the interview topics in such a way that the interviewee can understand and relate to it. From a theoretical standpoint, the answer should not involve a great deal of effort or be too demanding or challenging. It may sometimes be beneficial to be persistent when approaching participants. (Saunders et al. 2009)

Following the collection of data from interviews, content analysis must be performed (Weber, 1990). Using explicit coding rules, content analysis allows researchers to compress many words of text into fewer content categories based on a systematic, replicable method. This technique enables researchers to analyze large volumes of data in a systematic manner. (Berelson, 1952; Krippendorff, 1980; Weber, 1990) The content analysis used in this study is based on the technique used by Corley and Gioia (2004). The authors developed this three-phase coding technique that includes developing first-order concepts into second-order themes and combining them into aggregate dimensions.

Content analysis begins with open coding, which involves separating data into discrete parts and identifying them with codes (Khandkar, 2009). Using in-vivo codes, first-order concepts are identified through interviews, and descriptive phrases are formulated (Corley & Gioia, 2004). An in-vivo code refers to analyzing qualitative data so that it emphasizes the exact words that participants use during the discussion (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). As a result of grouping the concepts of the first step, second-order themes are generated by using axial coding (Corley & Gioia, 2004). With axial coding, as opposed to open coding, connections are drawn between different codes. The goal is to organize the codes that have been developed through open coding. (Scott & Medaugh, 2017) The next step consists of presenting the aggregate dimensions as a result of generating second-order

themes. Aggregate dimensions are the findings of the empirical study. (Corley & Gioia, 2004)

In order to create better-organized methodologies, Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) developed the research onion. The research onion is presented to summarize the research methodologies. As shown in figure 7, a research onion represents the various aspects of a research project which can be examined to develop the final design for the study.

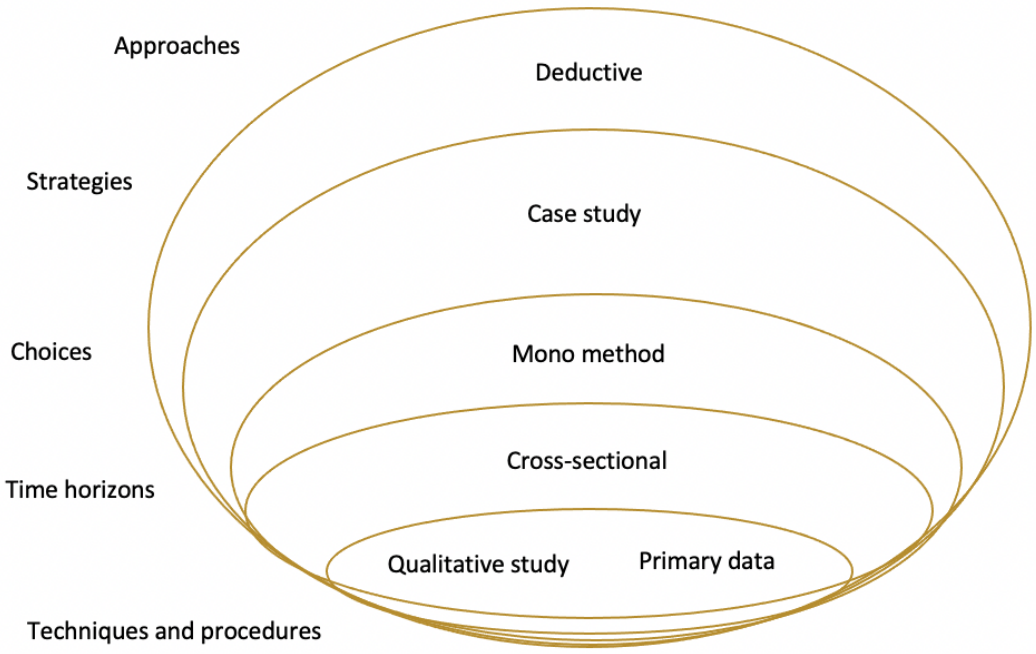

Figure 7 Research Onion

On the outermost layer of the research onion, it is suggested to select research approach that is appropriate for the study. A deductive approach begins with a specific hypothesis based on a literature review that the researcher has observed, and gradually tries to test this hypothesis in various situations. Alternatively, the inductive method begins with observations and then creates a new theory based on these observations. For the purpose of this study, the deductive approach is the most appropriate. This study is moving from

theory to data in order to understand causal relationships between variables. (Saunders et al. 2009)

As part of the second layer, it is expected to develop the study's strategy. There are several different research strategies that can be employed, including action research, experimental research, interviews, surveys, case study research, and systematic literature reviews. A strategy for data collection is selected based on the type of information that needs to be gathered and the purpose of the research. (Saunders et al. 2009) The case study approach is chosen to this study because it is recommended to use the case study approach when it is necessary to obtain an in-depth understanding of the context of a particular issue, event, or phenomenon, in order to gain an understanding of its real-life implications (Crowe et al. 2011; Marshall & Rossmann, 1999).

There are three types of research methods that may be employed in conducting research: mono-method, mixed method, and multi-method. A mono-method consists of a single method for conducting the study. An approach combining quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques and analysis procedures is referred to as a mixed methods approach. (Saunders et al. 2009) As the name implies, multi-method refers to the combination of multiple data collection and analysis techniques, within either a quantitative or qualitative framework (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). The mono-method approach is used in this study because a mono-method aspect provides the advantage of allowing the researcher to immerse in a particular topic and examine it from a variety of perspectives. The data can also be analyzed in a richer manner. (Manzoor, 2020)

According to Saunders et al. (2009) the research onion layer time horizons refer to the time frame within which the research was conducted. According to them the time horizon, observations can be classified as either cross-sectional or longitudinal. Most surveys use cross-sectional data when all observations are made over a brief period of time (Easterby-Smith et al. 2008; Robson, 2002; Sunders et al. 2009). The concept of longitudinal data entails the collection of observations over a period of time, including several

years, quarters, months or even days, for a particular variable. (Adams & Schvaneveldt, 1991; Saunders et al. 2009; Bouma & Atkinson, 1995) Data is collected in the case company over a one-month period. The data in this study is cross-sectional because of the brief period of data collection time period.

The final layer of the research onion consists of the methods and procedures used to collect and analyze data. The research onion framework is based on data as its central component. Researchers are expected to choose between primary and secondary data, as well as between qualitative and quantitative data collected, at this stage. This research is carried out as a qualitative study since qualitative data collection is used primarily for any data collection or data analysis procedure that generates or utilizes non-numerical information (Saunders et al. 2009). According to Church (2020) data collected by the researcher themselves are considered primary data and the term secondary data refers to data that has already been collected by another party. As the data for this study is collected through semi-structured face-to-face interviews conducted by the researcher, this research uses primary data.

In semi-structured interviews, questions related to the research are asked and the opportunity for an interactive discussion is created. In this case study, there are three main categories that guide the discussion which was formed from the research questions, theoretical framework, and the interest of the researcher: (1) strategy at different levels of the organization, (2) the implementation of the strategy into practice, and (3) the success of the implementation to practice. Questions related to the topics are prepared in advance so that they can serve as a guide for the discussion, see appendix 1. The collected data is analyzed based on the three-step technique used by Corley and Gioia (2004).

3.2 Introducing the Case Company

This study focuses on a case company operating in the energy sector. The organization operates both in Finland and in Sweden. Essentially, the organizations' purpose is to sell its products and services to consumers as well as companies. At present, the organization

employs approximately 60 individuals. The company's values emphasize reliability, responsibility and customer satisfaction.

During the year 2020, the company underwent a change when it was sold to a new owner. In the following years, many things changed in the company and the company's strategy was redefined. As the new owner of the company had been listed on the stock market, also the case company needed to do changes in their activities because they become a listed company. After the acquisition, the case company created a new strategy, and it was taken to practice in the company at the turn of 2020-2021. This study is about the company's redesigned strategy and its implementation to practice in between years 2020-2022. This study examines how the company's strategy work and process, as well as how its strategy in practice have succeeded between 2020 and 2022. The study takes place at three different levels within the organization: the top management level, the middle management level, and the employee level.

This study is important and current for the case company because the energy crisis in Europe began in early 2022, resulting in difficulties for many companies in the energy sector. Three factors can be considered the most significant causes of the current energy crisis, namely the war in Ukraine, European countries' dependency on Russian energy and the slow pace of the green transition. Since the company is operating in an industry in which tough times have recently occurred, the company is in a position where it has to make bigger changes to its own strategy. This research aims to provide the company with the necessary tools to begin implementing to practice a new strategy and to modify the mistakes made in strategy work before. By analyzing this research, the company is able to identify what areas of the strategy implementation to practice process are performing well, as well as where improvement should be made.

3.3 Data Collection

The research topic and its final formulation were influenced by the researcher's own interest in strategic implementation and its importance to the activities of organizations.

As the topic was further explored, the topic became more specific to discussing about strategy process at different levels in the organization, as well as the implementation of the strategy to practice and its success. Different levels of the company (top management, middle management, employees) were chosen as the aspect for the study.

As a result of examining the topic in greater depth, it was determined that the strategy process and strategy as practice research fields would provide the best starting point for conducting research. The researcher considered ways to implement the research in a relevant manner while developing pre-understanding. Alternative methods that could be used to obtain an accurate and comprehensive picture of the phenomenon fall within the scope of qualitative research. Qualitative research aims to understand, describe, and interpret the phenomenon under study, rather than generalize. Through the examination of the experiential knowledge and views of the study subjects, this method is appropriate for creating a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study.

The research was carried out using a qualitative case study. The empirical analysis was conducted using the Corley and Gioia (2004) -method. In order to collect data, semi-structured interviews were used, in which interviewees were asked to describe their interpretations and views of the topic face to face. As a result of preliminary research on the theoretical framework and case organization, the researcher developed a body of the interview (Appendix) that addressed three major themes in accordance with the main categories set and the guiding strategy as practice literature. The main categories of analysis were the understanding of strategy process at different levels of the organization, the implementation of the strategy into practice, and the success of the implementation to practice. Through pre-understanding and main categories, the interview frame contributed to the chosen focus, which was conscious choices that focused the conversation on research-relevant topics.

Six interviewees were selected so that two people were randomly chosen from each level of the company (top management, middle management, and employees). The

reason is that the organization's different levels are essential for this study, as well as how the strategy process is viewed at each level. The invitations to interview were initially sent to six individuals, of whom five accepted the invitation. One more invitation was sent, and it was accepted. In the end, four of the interviews were conducted on-site and two were conducted remotely via Microsoft Teams. On-site interviews were conducted in the company's meeting room in order to provide a suitable environment for the subject of the study. In order to increase the comprehension of the questions, interviews were conducted in Finnish, since Finnish is the language used primarily by the interviewees. In this study, the ethical considerations of informed consent and data privacy were addressed. All participants were informed of the purpose of the study and the anonymity of the participation. The participants' personal information was kept confidential and anonymous, and their data was stored securely.

As a result of the first interviews, the interview body was refined to address themes that had been identified as lacking during the first interviews. The interviews took place during the period between December 2022 and January 2023. Based on the author's estimate, the actual interview took approximately one hour. By sending interview topics in advance, the interview process was sped up. As soon as the interviews were completed, transcription of the interview material began, creating a general understanding of the material. The interviews were recorded, so the first step in the data processing process was to convert the recordings into text. Through this process, it became possible to focus on the factors relevant to the research and to structure the research into relevant topics.

The empirical material was analyzed in accordance with the Corley and Gioia (2004) - method, which categorizes the indicators that emerged from the interview material into main categories. Based on the observed indicators of the main categories, factors relevant to the occurrence of the phenomenon were examined, as well as aspects of the theoretical framework.

Using empirical findings as a guide, a theoretical reference framework was developed that closely ties together categorization and indicators. Therefore, in accordance with qualitative research, empiricism, theory, and results were integrated. In the end, based on the themes arising from the material, the research results on the implementation of the strategy into practice were developed. According to the findings of the study, the set sub-research questions were answered, enabling the results to be reflected in the current scientific discussion with a dialogue between empiricism and theory.

3.4 Data Analysis

Based on the interviews, it was evident that the interviewees had a positive attitude toward research. Each interviewee freely expressed his or her views on the subjects of the interview and spoke openly about the themes discussed. Each interviewee understood the central concept of the interview, and everyone understood what the company's strategy meant. In table 2, all the interviewees' information has been collected. The organizational level in the table refers to the position of the interviewee within the company's structure and management level. This is divided into three levels: employee, middle manager, and top manager. The duration of the employment relationship is divided into the following four categories: 0-3 years, 4-6 years, 6-9 years, and 10 years or more. In this study, the age groups are categorized as follows: under the age of 20, 20-30, 30-40, 40-50, 50-60, and over the age of 60. There were half men and half women participating in the study, but they are not separated, as gender does not appear to affect the subject matter of the study.

ID	Organizational level	Employment Duration (years)	Age group (years)	Interview duration (min)	Transcript length (pages)
E1	Employee	4-6	30-40	48	11
E2	Employee	4-6	30-40	63	13
M1	Middle Manager	0-3	30-40	53	12
M2	Middle Manager	0-3	40-50	77	17
T1	Top Manager	0-3	40-50	55	11
T2	Top Manager	7-9	30-40	58	13

Table 2 Summary of the Interviews

Due to the narrative approach, free discussion, and the need to protect identities later on, only the position in the organization of the interviewee is mentioned in the citations from the interviews in this study. The original interviews were conducted in Finnish and have been translated into English. The language translations have been made as accurately as possible so that the messages of the interviewees remain the same.

In order to analyze the data obtained from the interviews, first-order concepts, second-order themes, and aggregated dimensions were categorized. The logic of the data analysis is illustrated in figure 8 to clarify the data analysis process.

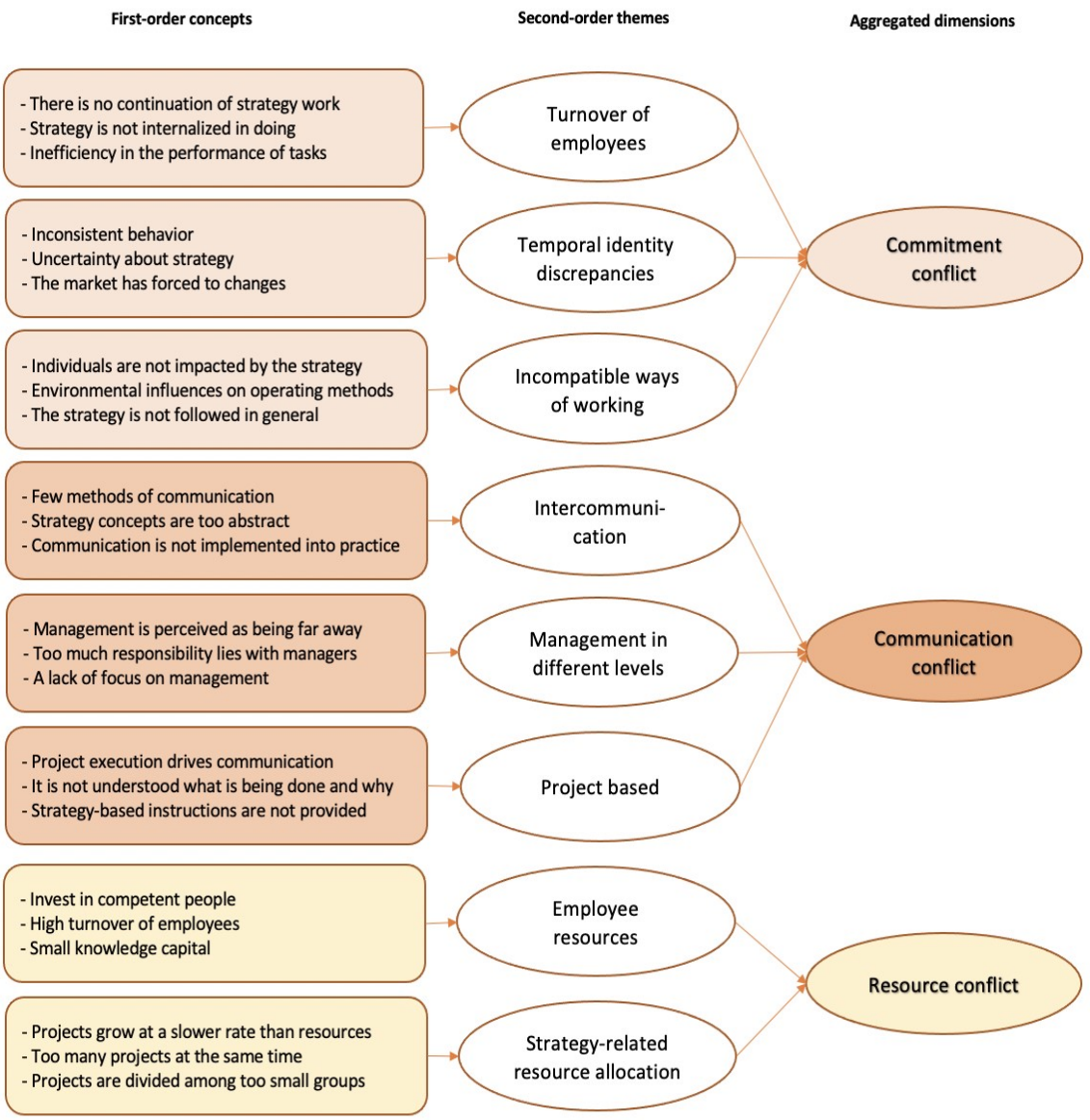

Figure 8 Coding Collected Data

According to the findings provided by the interviewees, eight first-order concepts were developed. These formed eight second-order themes, which may be divided into three aggregated dimensions. This study is structured around these aggregated dimensions, which form the main themes that emerged as conflicts: commitment conflict, communication conflict and resource conflict.

4 Findings

In this chapter, the findings of the interviews are discussed. The first step is to present the results of individual interviews conducted with employees, middle managers, and top managers. Following the coding of the interview data in the previous chapter, this chapter will analyze the interviews based on three aggregated dimensions. This chapter concludes with a review of the research questions and a discussion of the results in conjunction with the theoretical framework.

4.1 Strategy Work

As part of the interview process, the interviewees were able to describe what strategy means in general to them. They also were able to describe what kind of expectations they have regarding the strategy work of the company. Based on the perspectives of two interviewees, the company's strategy serves as a road map for its future development. Two interviewees described the company's strategy as its action plan. According to one interviewee, the strategy "... is such a guiding star that we follow, believe in and act according to » (Top Manager). Three interviewees also stated that vision and mission play a significant role in the case company’s strategy.

According to employees, top management's role is to formulate a strategy. When formulating a strategy, management should still consider internal ideas and opinions, according to the two employees interviewed. The management is responsible for communicating the company's strategy downwards, according to them. Employees need a clear model from higher levels regarding how they should behave.

> *« In that [strategy], there must be a specific plan for all levels and for different groups, what is your task and what is another's task, so that everyone knows what the strategy is about » (Employee)*

> *« ... of course you can always ask what the whole company thinks about the strategy and its content, but yes, it is definitely the task of the management and the owners to create a strategy and for others to act accordingly » (Employee)*

The development of a company's strategy begins with its goals and expectations, according to middle managers. Since the top management team has the most in-depth understanding of the market and the capabilities of the company, it is their responsibility to develop the company's strategy. Middle management emphasizes the importance of communication starting at the top and continuing down through middle management to employees.

> *« Communication as clear as possible, so that no one is unclear about what the goals are and what the steps and measures are... the responsibility for that communication should flow down » (Middle Manager)*

> *« The strategy flows from the top down when it has been locked up there... it [strategy] should naturally flow down.... middle managers then take it up again with their own troops » (Middle Manager)*

Similarly, at the top management level, it is thought that it is up to the top management to develop and implement the strategy, but that the strategy should also be influenced by middle management. The top management emphasizes the importance of incorporating strategy into everyday activities and practices.

> *« People often say that strategy is a top-level thing, but I see strategy as actually guiding the day-to-day work that we do... for it to be of any use, strategy must be part of the company's everyday life » (Top Manager)*

> *« Strategy should be something that you constantly keep in mind and the strategy should be simple so that it stays in your mind at least in some way » (Top Manager)*

The interviews revealed that the company has an annual cycle for strategy. In the autumn, the strategy is always reviewed together with board members of the parent company in the form of workshops. The strategy is monitored on a yearly basis because the aim is to keep the strategy up to date. Through the workshops, the management, together with the board, decides about the strategy for the following year.

> *« It [strategy] does not need to be revolutionized every year, but it does need to be checked at regular basis to ensure that it is still correct, that we do not steer the organization into doing the wrong things, so yes, it is monitored on an annual basis » (Top Manager)*

Strategy work in the company is done visibly through the main strategic activities. Through these activities, there is internal awareness of which are the most essential strategic projects that need to be taken forward in the company on an annual basis. The strategic activities are planned by top managers in the company together with middle management. The middle management is the most important part of the strategic activities, they are the ones who practically make and implement the strategic activities. Each department also has its own departmental strategy, which is defined by the heads of department, the middle management, together with their superiors, the top managers.

> *« From my point of view, top management does all the thinking and planning and then middle management, so they must somehow receive the information and then pass it on and then we who are there at the employee level so then implement the plan that they have thought » (Employee)*

> *« Top management has planned and created this strategy and they have walked it forward to the whole company and hopefully also gone through it in more detail with their own subordinates and how this will be implemented department by department, I assume that has happened » (Employee)*

> *« It is the top management's task to create a strategy, we have taken quite strongly middle management into it ... middle management will be involved when we discuss the key activities related to the strategy » (Top Manager)*

When interviewees were asked to talk about the company's strategy, the current strategy of the company was identified at each level of the organization. All interviewees mentioned the company's vision, mission and values and were able to outline the strategy. Several interviewees also mentioned the model the company has built to outline the strategy in its internal communication. However, the internal strategies of the department were very unclear to the interviewees. The interviews revealed a high turnover of middle management, and only a few of respondents had been involved in the design of the company's current strategy.

« I started a year ago, so I hadn't really had time to get involved in the strategy work, it was sort of decided for me » (Middle Manager)

« I didn't have any influence on the initial one [strategy]... I wasn't involved from the beginning because I was not yet in the company at the time » (Middle Manager)

« I jumped in 1.5 years ago ... maybe it was a bit difficult to understand what it [strategy work] means and how we do that part of the work » (Top Manager)

However, at every level of the organization, the company perceives that the strategy is well formed and clear.

« I think we have succeeded in creating a clear strategy, I don't see that there are any ambiguities » (Middle Manager)

« The vision and mission are clear » (Top Manager)

« Of course the management always thinks that we have done very well [in terms of clarity of strategy] » (Top Manager)

« The format is pretty clear » (Employee)

« Clarity of strategy... there are really good points and we have succeeded in that» (Employee)

4.2 Commitment Conflict

By coding the interview data, commitment conflicts emerged from the first and second-order codes. This commitment conflict section is divided into three different themes: turnover of employees, temporal identity discrepancies, and incompatible ways of working.

In the interviews, the interviewees revealed that the company has experienced a high turnover of its employees over the past year. This has impacted the company's strategy and execution of strategic activities. Employee turnover is perceived as causing a skills shortage, but it has also brought new resources to the organization.

« Now when new people have been hired, of course, they are not the same people, they also have added value, but they are starting from scratch, they are now in new positions, for example, and then it takes 2-3 years for them to get the same level of competence as the employees who have left... then we try to learn how to do it at least somehow, as we have sometimes been at the level of how it could have been developed to do it better » (Employee)

« We have failed, when the strategy was presented and implemented, it was adopted as our own, but then the fact that this has not been taken into account that when employees have changed, there has been no talk of strategy and it is no longer done in practice » (Employee)

At middle management level, it is also felt that the high turnover of employees has affected the company's knowledge base and knowledge of processes.

« Turnover has been really high in this year [2022] ... there has been a loss of skills quite a lot and it makes it difficult to develop everything » (Middle Manager)

The turnover has been particularly high at middle management level, and in the case company the middle management is one of the most essential performers of strategic activities. The top management level feels that employee turnover makes it difficult to implement the strategy continuously.

« ... if a key person who has just been involved in these strategic activities leaves, for example, then these strategic activities may not be carried out within the timeframes originally planned » (Top Manager)

« The good thing is that there comes different perspectives, the bad thing is perhaps that the team has changed and perhaps we do not get continuation for the work and it may get interrupted » (Top Manager)

The interviews revealed that employees feel that the strategy and operating practices have changed from the original strategy. A temporal identity discrepancy currently exists in the company. This means that they do not really know where they are heading or what they would like to be in the future. At the employee level, this is perceived to have been influenced by employee turnover, which has affected internal communication and communication within the company.

« ... communication has been lost over the last year as people have changed and the strategy is not being implemented at the moment » (Employee)

« It is perhaps my opinion that now we do not really know where we are going but I do know what I have to do but I do not really know where we are going » (Employee)

At middle management level, it is felt that the strategy has become unclear, and action made in the company is not based on the planned strategy. They believe that all activities should be based on the strategy that has been created.

« Now we are of course in a situation where it is a bit unclear what our strategy really is because these changes have come, and they have not been clearly communicated as to what part of our strategy has changed and what our overall strategy is at the moment » (Middle manager)

« We can't just decide and say what we are, we need to be so on a practical level » (Middle Manager)

« All communication with the customer should be based on strategy, for example how we greet and start the conversation with the customer and how we answer questions... the whole conversation should be based on strategy » (Middle Manager)

When top management examines the reasons for what has happened, it becomes clear that the strategy has no longer been able to be implemented. It is very much related to the energy crisis and the challenges it brought. As a result of the energy crisis, the market in which the company operates has changed.

« The market is changing so fast that some of the activities are already outdated... at this point in time it is no longer strategically rational to carry out these activities because the market is changing » (Top Manager)

« The market has made us look at our strategy from a new perspective... the market has affected the implementation of our strategy because we have had to focus on other things because of the energy crisis » (Top Manager)

The interviews revealed that different levels of the organization currently have very different ways of operating on a day-to-day basis. Employees feel that there is a lack of communication about changes in strategy and therefore a lack of understanding about what to do in a consistent way. The interviewees feel that the company is facing a kind of identity crisis.

> *« If there was a bit more open communication, then maybe people would get the impression that "I too understand" or "now I too know where we are going and I understand why we are doing something in some way" » (Employee)*

At middle management level, it is felt that the strategy should be communicated more clearly, so that it would be easier to understand it and it would be easier to act according to the strategy. At this level, it is also felt that activities are no longer based on the planned strategy and the company's identity is lost.

> *« Probably one of the biggest sins is that it [strategy] remains kind of rhetoric... our top management is not hundred percent committed and the top management does not make decisions based on the strategy, they make decisions opposite to the strategy » (Middle Manager)*

At top management level, it is also perceived that practices are not based on strategy. They give more information about why the action has moved away from the strategy. This is because the market situation has changed so much that the old strategy is no longer viable.

> *« This old business model maybe doesn't exist and doesn't work the way it did when this strategy was made... the market was very different then, this was a very relevant strategy, but now there has been a change in the overall market situation » (Top Manager)*

In the future, however, there is a perception at top management level that there is a desire to act based on strategy.

> *« I would like to see the actions in meetings and discussions based on the strategy... we need to get everyone on board and understand which way this ship is going to turn next and why » (Top Manager)*

4.3 Communication Conflict

There are challenges in communicating the company's strategy within the organization, based on the results of the interviews. At the employee level, it is believed that strategy should be discussed in turn and that strategy should stimulate discussion. In addition, employees report that the content of the communication has been challenging and that it has been implemented differently at different levels of the organization.

> *« ... sometimes there is something like an e-mail first, sometimes there is something like a meeting, but I think it could be perhaps more like a selection of things that could be discussed properly so that there is not just one person who just rants something of his own and half of employees understand and half do not understand ... should be a little bit in the way that everyone understands what is at hand and that it might also create the courage to discuss that there will be a discussion circuit, not like a lecture » (Employee)*

> *« There is a bit of an impression that communication has been communicated a bit differently, as if to different departments » (Employee)*

> *« ... at this stage, I think management should act in a way that how the strategy says that it no longer needs to communicate but needs to show in practice » (Employee)*

Middle management sees that the strategy is communicated in a way that is too difficult to understand. Strategic communication has remained too simple, both in terms of content and channels. Interviews revealed that strategy communication has only been done through PowerPoints.

> *« Very often strategy and related concepts are talked about on such an abstract level... it should be made to touch the person itself so it is much better understood and then it should act as a guiding factor in the day-to-day work » (Middle Manager)*

> *« It is not communicated to the practice in any way ... someone may have presented slides, but at that level it has remained ... decision-making and action do not base on the strategy on my opinion » (Middle Manager)*

> *« The more memorable way it is to bring the strategy out the better it would be, when you get the impression that kind of everyone is sitting in the lounge and listen*

to the topic related to it so it is a bit boring ... somehow it could be related to something fun and would develop a little bit fun way to bring the issues out it could be much more meaningful » (Middle Manager)

Top management level sees that communication is very limited and could be more in the company. Communication is based around strategic activities, they are monitored in joint meetings and when a strategic activity is completed, it is highlighted.

« I would argue that not enough is communicated and from experience I can also say of other companies that many times they remain in PowerPoint slides » (Top Manager)

« It [communication] is perhaps more like projects that are taken forward and their communication ... the story around them [strategic activities] is perhaps missing » (Top Manager)

« Probably once a year we are reminded of the strategy ... but then it is more concrete through strategic activities and their development. It is in every monthly meeting we go thru where we are going with strategy activities » (Top Manager)

At the employee level, it is felt that management at different levels is a challenge. Employees feel that management is distant and does not act according to strategy.

« It would be good if it felt that this person is now our leader, as if this is now the manager on the site or I do not really feel that there is someone like that here on the site... it would be a bit like a stiffer leader, but I feel a bit in the way that now at the moment there is no such a person who would even say hello in the hallway » (Employee)

« The current top management must also think of the strategy and do their work in their own position in accordance with it… when they have subordinates then be a support to this middle management and help them to get the strategy forward so that each individual who is here at work wants to do their best and wants to act according to that strategy » (Employee)

The interviews revealed that middle management has a great responsibility in communicating and implementing the strategy, but also in carrying out strategic activities.

> *« … maybe the most important group is middle management that they really have bought the strategy and that you can sell it to them because if they don't buy it then the company won't act according to the strategy » (Top Manager)*

When Top Manager was asked how employee level participate in strategy formulation, the answer was "Well, I guess not in any way, I guess I can say this?" (Top Manager) However, the company's aim is to involve employees more in the strategy work in the future.

> *« We have not yet had the time to think about what the forums are where the employee level might be able to make their own voice heard from a strategic point of view » (Top Manager)*

The interviews revealed that the company's strategy is mainly implemented through strategic activities. However, strategic activities and their execution are not evenly distributed in the company, but it is felt that the responsibility is shared by a small group of middle management. Middle management feels that the reasons for strategic activities are not clearly explained and that there is a lack of awareness of their purpose.

> *« We are now faced with the dilemma that we should be able to develop things in the middle of the rush so that we have time to develop more... resourcing issues should perhaps have been put in order well in advance before we started to implement the strategy because we are then trying to take forward many strategic projects with the same small resources » (Middle Manager)*

> *« All those strategic projects are not necessarily open to everyone if you are not working on the topic in question... it might be good to open up more to everybody what this thing is » (Middle Manager)*

Top Managers are not involved in strategic activities, but they monitor how they are carried out. Top Managers feel that the strategic activities may have been too broad.

> *« ... there have been 11 or 12 of them [strategic activities], so I can't say whether there have been too many, but they have at least been too broad » (Top Manager)*

4.4 Resource Conflict

The interviews revealed that the company has a high turnover of employees. This affects employee resources and at the employee level it is perceived that employee turnover eats into resources that the company once had. At the employee level, it is seen as the role of middle management to look after these employee resources and to ask higher up to increase them if shortages are identified.

> *« … then we try to learn how to get it done at least somehow when we have sometimes been at the level of how it could have been developed to do it better » (Employee)*

> *« They [middle management] must have the desire to make their own department the best so that it is good to work there but that we do things efficiently and if they [middle management] do not feel that they get enough support so they must keep a louder voice to the management side and not just pretend that everything is OK » (Employee)*

Due to turnover, the change in employee resources has also been evident to middle management. This has led to a feeling that the company's processes have been taken out of the employees' hands. Middle management understands the need for more employee resources.

> *« One challenge at the moment is that I do not think that anyone knows very comprehensively about our overall technical architecture and how our work and processes work as a whole » (Middle Manager)*

> *« More resources simply by hiring more competent people or then, alternatively, from somewhere outside purchase the competence » (Middle Manager)*

In addition to human resources, the interviews revealed that the company also lacks many resources to carry out the strategy. The significance of these factors has been highlighted at the level of middle management that is responsible for implementing the strategy through activities. According to the interviews, top management believes that financial challenges are one of the reasons for a lack of resources.

« The limitation has been that time is a limitation and then also the fact that the operating methods have changed a little all the time and then our system is not very reliable, so then it seems that we struggle more with putting out the same fires than that we would be able to develop that work further » (Middle Manager)

« Then when there are any kind of surprising changes required by legislation, of course they always come before strategic projects, however, then we are very strict that in a way, I think we should invest more in development resources like that so that there is a team that has time to develop and not always react to all the fires » (Middle Manager)

« We make an absurd amount of the same incompetent work that could really be done smarter, but no one has the time, prerequisites or resources to change that whole thing so that it works smarter » (Middle Manager)

« Impossible to implement [strategy] when we don't have those tools » (Middle Manager)

4.5 Summary of the Results

The theoretical framework of this study is based on Whittington's (2006) research about strategy in practice, which has a focus on both the micro and macro levels of strategy. This theoretical framework was designed to determine understanding regarding what strategy practitioners must do to implement the strategy. The results of the study are combined with the theoretical framework in figure 9.

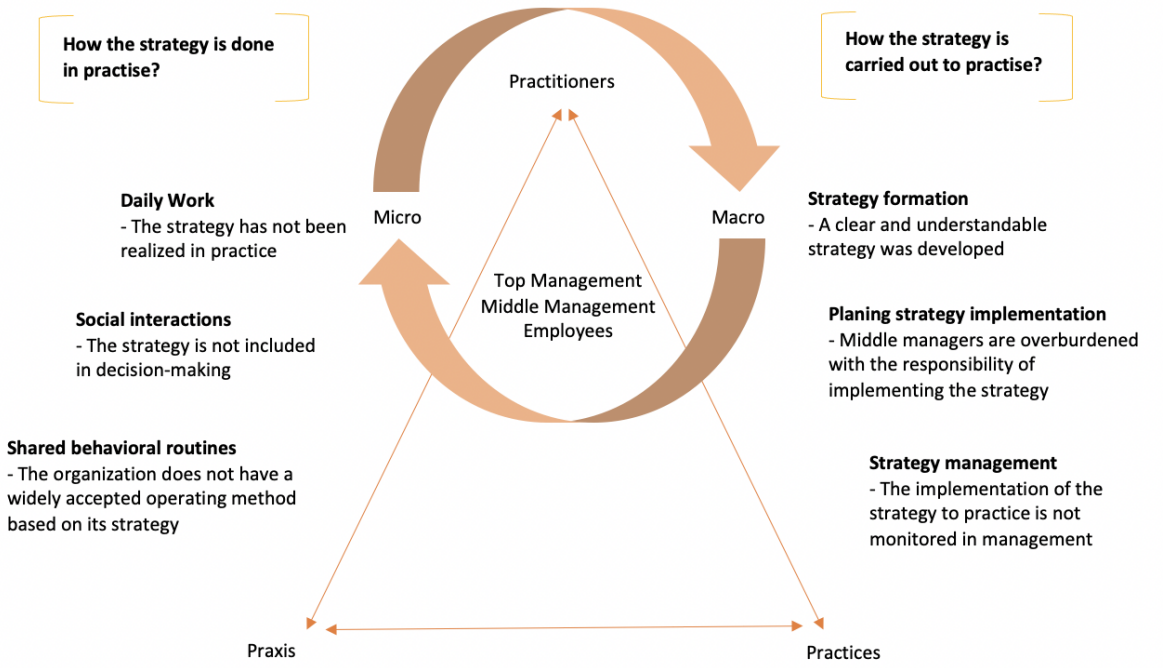

Figure 9 Interpretation of Research Results Based on Theoretical Framework

At the macro level, the focus is on how the strategy is put into practice. Based on the results of this study, macro level lays the foundation for implementing the strategy while micro level is responsible for executing the strategy daily. A failure at the macro level will result in a failure at the micro level. In the case company the strategy is formed well, and it is understood, but the middle managers are overburdened, and the strategy is not realized into daily work. When strategy has not been realized in practice, the strategy is not included in decision-making and social interactions. Strategy is not monitored, and management permits actions knowing they are not in accordance with the company's strategy. According to shared behavioral routines, the organization does not have a widely accepted operating method based on its strategy.

Next the research questions of the study are presented and answered. We start with the sub-questions, of which there were three, and after that the summarized answer to the main question is presented. The sub-research questions were as follows:

1. *How has the strategy been implemented at different levels of the organization?*

2. *How do the different organizational levels understand the strategy?*
3. *Has the implementation of the strategy been successful at different levels in the organization?*

The company's strategy was formulated by the management and the board of directors, but the middle management was also able to influence it. The company's strategy can be seen in the big picture through its strategic activities, which have been planned and executed by the middle management in coordination with the management. There is a feeling within the company that the strategic activities are too broad, and their reasons are not adequately explained. When the strategy is formed, it is communicated, and after that, it is communicated in conjunction with the strategic projects and their implementation. Management communicates the company's strategy at the level of the entire organization. The company uses PowerPoint slides to communicate, and communications are held in company-wide meetings.

The top management of the company is aware of the current state and resources of the company. It is clear to them where the company wishes to go in the future. The top management is responsible for developing the strategy, planning its implementation, and communicating it. Since the energy crisis has created challenges for the market, the top management has decided the created strategy cannot be implemented. There is a decision by the top management to act in opposition to the company's strategy, but the reasons for this decision are not communicated to the rest of the organization.

It is the middle management that is responsible for putting strategy into practice. They remain responsible for daily communication within the organization. The role of middle management is to ensure that the company's strategy is implemented in practice. The position of middle management is challenging because they act as an intermediary between the upper and lower levels. Middle management receives instructions from management, and the middle management feels that the management's instructions do not reflect the strategy. The middle management passes the management's instructions on to the employees.

Employees are responsible for carrying out instructions from above. The employees feel that the company's operations are not based on strategy and that the instructions are contrary to the strategy and in conflict with different departments. The employees do not receive sufficient information about why things are done the way middle management dictates and why operations do not follow the strategy communicated.

The organization's strategy is clearly communicated at different levels. A good form of the strategy has been developed and the strategy is easy for each level of the organization to understand. As a result of the market situation created by the energy crisis, top management has decided to act contrary to the strategy. Based on research, top management has been required to make so many rapid changes to the strategy that they do not have a clear understanding of what the strategy will look like after the mandatory modifications have been made. The company's management has not communicated these changes and their guidelines to lower levels.

By participating in the development of the company's strategy and executing strategic activities, the middle management has a clear understanding of the company's strategic direction. The turnover of middle management has been high, resulting in a lack of continuity in strategic work. With the departure of the old employees, the company has lost valuable knowledge capital. The middle management is not provided with clear information regarding why the communicated strategy is no longer being implemented in the organization.

Employees have limited opportunities to influence the strategy. They have not been involved in the development of the strategy. Employees do not need to be involved in the development of the strategy but are free to contribute their opinions and ideas. It is the employee level's responsibility to follow the instructions relating to the strategy and perform its work accordingly. Employees perceive that the management does not fully understand the created strategy, since the instructions do not reflect that strategy.

The discussion will be concluded by reviewing the answer to the main research question as follows:

Has the strategy been successfully implemented to practice?

As a result of the research, it can be concluded that the company has departed from its strategy and has failed to effectively implement it in practice. The company had defined a clear strategy, which had been implemented in terms of communication at various levels within the organization. However, the activities have not been conducted in accordance with the country's planned strategy. These results indicate that the company requires a new strategy. During the implementation of a new strategy, it is important to focus on the conflicts presented in the study: communication conflict, commitment conflict, and resource conflict.

A *communication conflict* exists between the company and its employees, which is caused by the company's communication being too simple and monotonous. To communicate strategy, the company does not utilize different channels and does not plan its communication on an annual basis. The company communicates strategy through strategic activities which are carried out by middle management. Strategic activities are not sufficiently explained and opened for them to be internalized within the organization. As a result, the employees feel that the management is out of reach, and there is no one who can clearly show and determine the direction of the organization. There is too much responsibility for communication left to the middle management, which is busy with strategic activities.

There is a *commitment conflict* at the company because of a high turnover of employees. When employees change, strategy work cannot continue, and the efficiency of the company's processes suffers. As a result, the company's identity is lost, and the employees' working methods differ from one another rather than being in accordance with the strategic direction. Even though the strategy is understood, there are ambiguities. As a result of the market, management was forced to alter its strategy, which has led to uncertainty and different methods of operating between departments.

Currently, the company suffers from a *resource conflict* because of the changes in the workforce, which has resulted in the knowledge capital leaving the company along with the employees. Compared to the scale of the projects, the resource allocation related to the strategy has not grown at the same rate as the projects. As a result of the lack of resources, the company is undertaking too many projects at the same time. Projects are distributed among too few employees.

5 Conclusions

This chapter begins with a discussion of the research results that are reflected in the literature review. The target organization is then given recommendations based on the results of the research. In addition to evaluating the research and its accuracy, this chapter also presents possible future research directions. In this study, the purpose was to determine whether the case company had successfully implemented the strategy to practice.

The conclusions drawn from the research align with the theory of strategy as practice. It suggests that a strategy is not only a plan or vision created by top management, but it also emerges and takes shape through the collective practices of employees at all levels of the organization (Jarzabkowski, 2004; Whittington, 1996; Whittington, 2007; Suominen & Mantere, 2010). The company's departure from its strategy and ineffective implementation can be seen as a failure to engage in strategic practices that embed and reinforce the strategy throughout the organization (Jarzabkowski, 2004; Whittington, 1996; Whittington, 2007; Suominen & Mantere, 2010; Jarzabkowski, Seidl & Balogun, 2022). The communication conflict, commitment conflict, and resource conflict all demonstrate a lack of alignment between the strategy and the actions and experiences of employees, which is a key component of the strategy as practice perspective (Jarzabkowski, 2004; Whittington, 1996; Whittington, 2007; Jarzabkowski, Seidl & Balogun, 2022; Golsorkhi et al. 2015; Vaara & Whittington, 2012; Balogun et al. 2014). The study highlights the importance of focusing on these conflicts during the implementation of a new strategy to ensure it becomes a shared and enacted part of organizational practices.

To address these conflicts and effectively implement a new strategy, it is important to focus on aligning organizational practices with the strategy (Whittington, 2006). This could include ensuring clear and consistent communication of the strategy, addressing high turnover to maintain commitment, and allocating adequate resources to support the strategy (David & David, 2013; Rothaermel, 2012; Belogun & Johnson, 2005; Stensaker, Falkenberg & Gronhaug, 2008; Jarzabkowski, 2004). By doing so, the company can

better embed the strategy into its organizational practices, which will reinforce and sustain its success over time.

The theory of strategy as practice highlights three main elements: praxis, practitioners, and practices (Whittington, 2006). Praxis refers to the actions and behaviors that shape and reinforce a company's strategy (Jarzabkowski, Balogun & Seidl, 2007; Paroutis, Heracleous & Angwin, 2013; Jarousse 2015), while practitioners refer to the individuals who carry out these actions and behaviors (Reckwitz, 2002; Jarzabkowski, Balogun & Seidl, 2007). Practices refer to the collective routines and activities that are enacted by practitioners and shape the strategy of the organization (Reckwitz, 2002; Jarzabkowski, 2004; Whittington, 2002).

According to strategy as practice theory, praxis refers to the practical, social, and symbolic aspects of strategy-in-action (Whittington, 2008). The findings in the research highlights several issues in the company that reflect a lack of praxis in their strategy implementation. First, there is a communication conflict between the company and its employees, which is caused by the simple and monotonous communication of the company's strategy (Jarousse, 2015). This indicates a lack of practicality and embodiment in the company's communication approach, as it does not utilize different channels and is not well internalized by the employees (Whittington, 2006). Second, there is a commitment conflict resulting from a high turnover of employees, which affects the efficiency of the company's processes and leads to a loss of the company's identity (Johnson et al. 2008). This highlights the need for more embodied and situated strategy implementation, where employees are engaged and invested in the strategy (Johnson et al. 2008). Finally, the company is facing a resource conflict due to changes in the workforce, which has resulted in the loss of knowledge capital. This indicates a lack of practical and situated consideration of resources in the implementation of the company's strategy, as the resource allocation related to the strategy has not grown at the same rate as the projects. Therefore, the findings suggest that to effectively implement their strategy, the company needs to focus on praxis, by engaging and involving its practitioners in the

implementation process and aligning its practices with its strategy (Sztompka, 1991; Reckwitz, 2002; Jarzabkowski, Balogun & Seidl, 2007).

In the context of the findings, the practitioners are the employees, middle management, and top management within the company because they are the individuals that actively influence strategic decisions through their activities (Vaara & Whittington, 2012; Jarzabkowski, Balogun & Seidl, 2007). The results of the research highlight that the company has failed to effectively implement its strategy in practice due to various conflicts, such as communication conflict, commitment conflict, and resource conflict. These conflicts can be linked to the practitioners, specifically the middle management, who are responsible for communicating the strategy and carrying out strategic activities but are not effectively doing so due to lack of explanation and too much responsibility placed on them (Jarzabkowski, Balogun & Seidl, 2007; Reckwitz, 2002).

The high turnover of employees also has a significant impact on the implementation of the strategy, leading to a commitment conflict and loss of the company's identity (Price, 2001; Thwala et al. 2012; Long & Perumal, 2014). The employees, as practitioners, play a crucial role in the implementation of the strategy, but the constant change in workforce hinders the continuity of strategy work and leads to ambiguities (Whittington, 2006). In terms of resource conflict, the company's current practices, such as distribution of projects among too few employees, contribute to the lack of resources and knowledge capital leaving the company. This highlights the importance of considering the practical aspects and resources available to the practitioners in the implementation of a strategy. Therefore, the findings suggest that the company requires a new strategy that considers the role and capabilities of the practitioners, such as the employees and middle management, and aligns with their practical realities and resources.

Practices refer to the repeated patterns of behavior and action that organizations engage in to achieve their goals (Reckwitz, 2002). In the context of organizational strategy, practices refer to the specific actions and behaviors that are necessary to successfully

implement and execute a strategy (Jarzabkowski, 2004; Whittington, 2002; Jarzabkowski, Balogun & Seidl, 2007). These practices can include communication, decision-making, resource allocation, and other activities that organizations engage in daily.

In the conclusion, the emphasis on communication and resource allocation as factors affecting the implementation of strategy highlights the importance of practices in successfully executing a strategy (Jarzabkowski & Whittington, 2008; Concannon & Nordberg, 2017). The communication conflict, commitment conflict, and resource conflict demonstrate the need for well-designed and properly implemented practices that support the execution of strategy. In the strategy as practice theory, practices are seen as crucial to the success of organizational strategy (Jarzabkowski, Balogun & Seidl, 2007). The theory posits that organizations develop and implement strategy through practices that are embodied in the behavior and actions of individuals within the organization (Jarzabkowski & Whittington, 2008). By focusing on practices, the theory provides a way to understand the connection between strategy and the daily activities and behaviors of organizations (Jarzabkowski, Balogun & Seidl, 2007).

The conclusions drawn from the research can be related to both the micro and macro levels of the organization. On a micro level, the communication conflict and commitment conflict experienced by the company are examples of how internal practices can impact the implementation of strategy (Whittington, 2006). The lack of clear communication and the high turnover of employees demonstrate how the micro-level practices within the organization can affect the company's ability to effectively execute its strategy (Laine & Vaara, 2007).

On a macro level, the resource conflict can be seen as an example of how external factors, such as changes in the workforce and the market, can impact the implementation of strategy (Whittington, 2006). The study shows how the company's resource allocation has not kept pace with the growth of projects, which has resulted in too many projects being undertaken simultaneously by too few employees. This highlights the need for

organizations to consider both internal and external factors when developing and implementing strategy, as well as the importance of adapting to changes in the macro-level environment (Fenton & Langley, 2011).

5.1 Managerial Implications

Based on the findings of this research, it is possible to offer the case company development ideas related to the strategy and its implementation in practice. Currently, the company is not following its current strategy due to the energy crisis. Consequently, the company's current strategy is no longer relevant, and it is no longer being implemented in practice. It may therefore be necessary for the company to make major changes to its strategy or to develop a completely new one.

Based on the findings of the study, the management has formed the strategy with the middle management, however, the employee level has been excluded from the formulation of the strategy. When a company begins to make new changes to its strategy, it would be beneficial for it to receive suggestions from every level of the organization, and this was also desirable among the interviewees. According to the organizational hierarchy, information would flow from employees to middle management and from middle management to top management. The interviewees suggested that the company could implement a system offering the service or a feedback/idea box for strategy-related ideas.

According to the interviewees, the current number of strategic activities (12) should be reduced. There should be a more equitable distribution of strategic activities to a wider group of individuals to avoid burdening the same individuals repeatedly. In terms of strategy implementation and communication, middle management is responsible for too much, so the company would be wise to consider how this responsibility can be distributed to other parties as well.

The company faces significant challenges in communicating its strategy. To effectively communicate the new strategy to the organization, the company should consider how it is communicated and who is responsible for communicating it to different levels of the organization. Communication could be incorporated into a company's annual clock strategy and implemented accordingly. The future communications should emphasize how strategic projects are based on the company's strategy and how their implementation moves the company forward.

As the company lacks resources, it is imperative to preserve the current competence and keep the current employees committed to the organization. The company has had difficulty working on its strategy due to employee turnover. A loss of skills and dysfunctional systems emphasize the need for the company to streamline its daily operations. In the future, the company will be able to cope more easily with the state sanctions and challenges brought about by an unexpected crisis if its daily processes are in order. To improve the basic processes of the company, the company might purchase temporary expertise from another source in the form of consulting services.

5.2 Limitations and Suggestions for Further Studies

A single case study and qualitative semi-structured interviews have several limitations that must be taken into consideration during the evaluation of a study. These limitations include generalizability, bias, representativeness, validity, reliability, and data saturation. The results obtained from a single case study and qualitative semi-structured interviews should be interpreted with caution. (Maxwell & Chmiel, 2014)

One of the major limitations of a single case study is its lack of generalizability. Due to the limited research size, the results obtained from this case study may not be easily generalized to other companies or situations. This study was conducted based on a specific case and the results may not be applicable to other similar situations or cases. (Gobo, 2004; Brown-Saracino et al. 2008; Maxwell, 1992) In this case study the observations are limited to a specific industry with certain characteristics. Because the review focuses on

one organization and industry, it lowers the overall representation when the majority of the organization's actors are not represented. Despite this, the purpose of the thesis was not to generalize the phenomenon across all contexts in which it occurs. As a result, the size of the material has no direct impact on the success of the study, since the purpose of the study is to derive perspectives based on theoretical analysis.

A single case study also has the disadvantage of bias (Maxwell & Chmiel, 2014). Research results can be affected by the researcher's personal biases and subjective interpretations, resulting in inaccurate or incomplete findings. It is possible that the researcher has pre-conceived notions regarding the topic under study, which can influence the analysis and interpretation of the data. (Charmaz, 2016; Mills et al. 2006) It is important to note that the author of this study has worked in the case company for four years. Since the researcher knows the company, its employees, and operating methods well, this can affect the research results. The fact that the author of the research works in the company in which the research is conducted may have influenced the answers given by the interviewees.

One of the limitations of a single case study is its lack of representativeness. Because the case study is based on a single situation, it may not represent the larger population or phenomenon under study. (Gobo, 2004; Gaskell & Bauer, 2000) A limitation of the thesis may be considered representativeness because the sample size is relatively small. A case organization also ties the research results to a specific context and industry. Therefore, the findings of this research reflect the views of the interviewed actors and do not reflect the strategic awareness of the entire organization.

The validity of the findings may also be questioned, as they are based on subjective interpretations and may not accurately reflect the experiences of the participants. (Gaskell & Bauer, 2000; Ryan, 1999; Peräkylä, 2011) This thesis aims to describe the progress of the research in a transparent manner, as well as to present the guiding theories and background assumptions that influenced the thesis. In addition, extensive familiarity

with the topic has enhanced awareness of its research, allowed a comprehensive treatment, and confirmed the prevailing scientific debate.

Reliability is another limitation of a single case study and qualitative semi-structured interviews. The findings may not be replicable, as the same results may not be obtained if the study were repeated with different participants or by a different researcher. (Armstrong et al. 1997; Gaskell & Bauer, 2000; Maxwell & Chmiel, 2014) Clearly defining the research question and objectives was a crucial first step in ensuring the reliability of this case study. This involved clearly identifying the research problem, the questions that need to be answered, and the objectives of the study. Choosing representative participants was also an important factor in increasing the reliability of the case study. Participants have been chosen based on their experience and knowledge of the topic being studied. A standardized interview protocol involves asking the same questions in the same order for all participants (Maxwell & Chmiel, 2014). This helped to ensure that all participants were asked the same questions and that the results were comparable and consistent. By recording the interviews, the data was captured accurately and would be referred to later when needed.

Data saturation is the final limitation in this study. The data collected from a single case study and qualitative semi-structured interviews may not be sufficient to fully explore the topic being studied, as it is limited to the information gathered from a single case and qualitative interviews. The data collected may not be comprehensive enough to provide a complete understanding of the topic being studied. (Glaser, 2001; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Maxwell & Chmiel, 2014) By recording and transcribing the material, the researcher can handle the material transparently throughout the research process, allowing every part of the material to be attributed to its original source. A transparent presentation of the material samples in the results enables the reader to draw their own conclusions from the information presented. In this way, the reader can make their own interpretations of the material samples and compare them with the interpretations that have been presented.

In this research, the case company is provided with valuable information regarding the current state of the company's strategy and areas for development. This study explores the reasons why the case company has encountered challenges with its strategy. As a result of the research, the company has a better understanding of what it should do with its strategy next and what should be paid attention to when putting the strategy into practice. Research provides a solid foundation for the company to start doing strategy work from the beginning and enable them to succeed in this endeavor. Using the research results, the case company can avoid repeating the same mistakes in the future.

It would be interesting to investigate in greater depth the commitment of the employees to the strategy, as well as the impact of employee turnover on the implementation of the strategy. In this study, it is concluded that these things do have an effect, but the study does not focus sufficiently on this particular issue. Several organizations could be studied to obtain a broad sample of employees' commitment to the strategy and how it affects the execution of the strategy. In terms of the success of a strategy, a study of this kind could provide more information on how important it is for employees to commit to it.

This study points to the energy crisis as the reason why the company has gone off the rails in terms of strategy, so an extensive study of the impact of the energy crisis on the strategies of energy sector companies would be of interest. The research should also include a large sample of companies to be able to observe the effects on a large scale. Although the energy crisis is currently prominent in the energy sector, the research could also cover how companies' strategies in general are able to cope with a variety of crises.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Haastattelun runko

Haastattelu sähköyhtiö X
Haastateltavan etunimi ja sukunimi:
Haastateltavan työsuhteen kesto vuosina: 0-3, 4-6, 7-9, 10 tai enemmän
Haastateltavan ikäjakauma vuosina: alle 20, 20-30, 30-40, 40-50, 50-60, yli 60

Sopiiko, että nauhoitan haastattelun?

Johdattelu aiheeseen:

1. Mitkä ovat vastuualueesi ja keskeiset työtehtäväsi?
2. Mihin tiimiin kuulut ja miten asemasi sijoittuu organisaation kokonaisuuteen?
    a. Työntekijä / Keskijohto / Ylin johto
3. Mitä strategia tarkoittaa mielestänne?
    a. mitä sillä tavoitellaan?
4. Kerro millaisia odotuksia sinulla on yrityksen strategiatyöstä yleisellä tasolla?
    a. Kenen tehtävä on luoda strategia?
    b. Kenen tehtävä on viestiä strategiaa?
    c. miten koet, että strategiaa kuuluisi toteuttaa käytännössä?

Strategiaprosessi yrityksen eri tasoilla:

5. Kerro mikä on yrityksen strategia?
    a. Kerro mitkä ovat oman tiimisi tavoitteet ja miten ne linkittyvät strategiaan?
6. Kerro miten olet itse ollut mukana strategiatyössä?
    a. Kerro strategiatyön tavoitteista?
    b. Kerro oletko vaikuttanut strategian muodostumiseen?
        i. Jos olet, kerro millainen strategian luomisen prosessi oli?
        ii. Jos et, kerro haluaisitko olla mukana ja miten?

Strategian suuntaisen toiminnan toteuttaminen yrityksessä:

7. Kerro miten yrityksessä strategiaa viestitään sisäisesti?
    a. Voit eritellä ajanjaksot, strategian käyttöönotosta tähän hetkeen.
8. Kerro miten yrityksessä strategian suuntaista toimintaa toteutetaan?

   a. Kerro onko strategian toteuttamisessa käytössä joitakin työkaluja tai erilaisia menetelmiä?
   b. Kerro tarkemmin yksilön tasolla sinun arjessasi ja laajemmin tiimissänne?
9. Kerro miten mielestänne strategiaa kuuluisi toteuttaa teidän tiimissänne?
10. Kerro miten tärkeäksi te koette strategian toteuttamisen yksilötasolla, kun mietit sen vaikutusta koko yrityksen kannalta?

Strategian onnistuminen:

11. Kerro miten mielestäsi yritys on onnistunut strategiatyössä (mm. strategian muoto, strategian selkeys, strategian tavoitteet, strategian viestintä, strategian toteuttaminen)?
   a. Missä asioissa on onnistuttu ja miten?
   b. Missä asioissa on epäonnistuttu ja miten?
12. Kerro miten strategiaprosessia voisi mielestäsi kehittää tulevaisuudessa?
   a. Mitä neuvoja antaisitte yrityksen johdolle / keskijohdolle strategiatyöhön liittyen?
   b. Mitä neuvoja antaisitte yksilötasolla kaikille yrityksen jäsenille strategian toteuttamiseen liittyen?

Haastattelun lopetus:

13. Tapahtumia, huomioita tai kommentteja haastattelun teemoihin liittyen?
14. Kiitos haastattelusta!