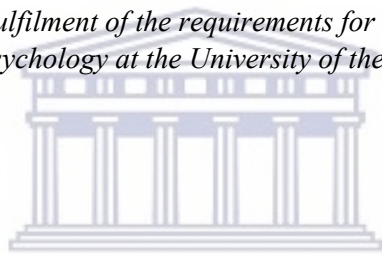


Exploring the factors influencing agility adoption in selected financial institutions in South Africa

by

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Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Industrial Psychology at the University of the Western Cape



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ABSTRACT

Due to the rapidly changing environments of our world today, huge pressure is mounting on organisations to find innovative ways to remain competitive and profiting. The goal of this study was to investigate factors leading to agile organisations using the case of selected financial institutions in South Africa. The study adopted the interpretive research paradigm, wherein primary data was collected using the qualitative exploratory design, based on concepts derived from literature. In this regard, fifteen respondents were chosen for the study through the purposive sampling technique. The data collection process involved one-on-one semi-structured in-depth interviews. To facilitate this, an interview guide was prepared beforehand by the researcher. This was required to ensure that the topics and issues under investigation were focused on until the end of each interview.

The findings showed that the following factors influence the organisational strategic direction which enhance agile organisations: innovativeness and learning ability of such organisations; clarity of organisational vision; customer-centredness; and performance-driven and management nature of such organisations. In addition, factors that influence leadership styles and which encourage agility include organisational leadership by example and a culture of collective leadership. The study also found factors affecting organisational structures that lead to agility to include good communication systems; sound operational models; and fast decision-making processes. According to the respondents, one of the factors influencing organisational processes that enable agility is a staff training and capacity-building program; well-defined roles and responsibilities; and a good change-management process. Similarly, this study showed that in organisations which have a staff accountability system, employees share the same vision; possess a growth mentality; and are able to collaborate as some of the factors that influenced employee culture that supports agile organisations. In terms of team effectiveness of organisations that aid agility, it was reiterated that agile organisations have staff cohesion and the employees in such organisations desire to satisfy their numerous customers.

The conclusion, therefore, is that if organisations in South Africa cultivate all factors discovered in this study, they may be strategically positioned to respond to the fast-changing environments of our current age, and remain competitive, viable and profiting. One of the recommendations is the need to commence and enhance routine capacity and leadership training for the executive or management team of various organisations in South Africa. The training should also aim at implementing the strategic drivers and leadership styles required

for agility adoption.

Keywords: Agile adoption, agile organisation, agile transformation, agility, customer satisfaction, employee satisfaction, financial institutions in South Africa, leadership styles, organisational performance.



DECLARATION

I Nontembeko Faith Kwali declare that this thesis has been composed by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Unless otherwise stated by reference or acknowledgement, the work presented is entirely my own.

Signed

Date



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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Organisations are steadily growing larger and becoming more dynamic. The need for efficiency in developing products quicker and delivering services faster to clients is becoming the benchmark that distinguishes thriving organisations from those that are not. The genuine objective of improving an organisation is to accomplish business agility, speedy attainment of predicted value, and high-quality output reasonably and sustainably (Brosseau, Ebrahim, Handscomb & Thanker, 2019). For this reason, organisations use models that would increase efficiencies such as six Sigma, Lean, and currently the agile work methodology (Brosseau et al., 2019).

Numerous organisations adopt agile status by utilising the most well-known structure without considering the distinctiveness of their organisation (Brockmann, Nagel, Kahl & Biermann, 2019). The focus of the agile work methodology is to ensure faster delivery of products, and to increase the organisation's competitive edge in the market in which it operates (Salo, 2017). Even though the objective might be clear, the execution differs from one organisation to another. In the quick-moving digital world, new specialised technological development is opening new markets, plans of action and new rivalry are emerging daily (Brockmann et al., 2019). When organisations change the work processes, there is also an opportunity to relook the way they make business decisions especially those relating to the people in the organisation.

Meanwhile, the success of any organisation depends not only on how innovative and efficient its processes are, but also on how the leaders in the organisations are able to adapt their leadership styles and practices to suit the environment (Zyngier & Owen, 2013). Leadership is therefore critical to achieving success in any organisation. This is an important aspect or principle when the discussion on the domains of change in the organisation is unpacked (Senge, 1991). As organisations strategically engage in vital processes, design, and execute policies, and employ relevant technologies, there is a corresponding need to put more effort on how the leadership of an organisation evolves to ensure that the changes are not a waste of time. In addition, the line manager's responsibility becomes key in change management, operationalisation of the change, and providing support for continuous learning that may lead to

improvement. Leadership and culture are the main aspects that contribute to the success of the agile organisation (Brockmann et al., 2019).

The way teams work in synergy and cohesion will also separate the teams that are effective from those that are not. As teams are made of individuals, it becomes important to examine the behaviours that motivate individuals to be high performing employees, and in turn contributing to cohesion in self-managing agile teams that ensure the organisation reach the set objectives.

1.2 Problem Statement

Most organisations at some point in their existence experience threats from their competitors (Brockmann et al., 2019). Nowadays, just being profitable is not enough since there is a greater need to be a market leader by winning recognition awards like the Top 100 Companies voted for by Sunday Times, Best Organisation in the World, Best Innovative Company, and the Employer of Choice Awards. Notably, organisations have been feeling pressure from both profit and employee competition (West, 2008). For most of the time, the focus of many organisations is to be ahead on innovation and products. According to Zyngier and Owen (2013), organisational agility is the extent of a successful adaptation to an unexpected change in technology, production methods, and economic situations as well as responding to new or created opportunities. The definition does not suggest the type of leaders in such organisations and the behaviours they exhibit (Zyngier & Owen, 2013). Just as it is evident that what defines leading organisations, and their systems is the high-end products and the knowledge of the market. There is an increasing need for leaders to display agile behaviour to determine what they need to leverage in terms of creating sustainability by turning the organisation from a traditional to an agile one.

Several studies have documented the factors that are evident in an agile organisation although according to Bussing (2017), only a few studies have investigated the factors that need to be considered to turn a functioning South African organisation into an agile one. The research initiating question is: “What are the factors that lead to an agile organisation in a South African organisation?”

1.3 Research Questions

1. What are the factors that lead to an agile organisation in a South African organisation?
2. What organisational strategic drivers and direction can lead to an agile organisation?

3. What structures and processes need to be in place to enable agility in the organisation?
4. What are the employee culture and team effectiveness principles that support and ensure a successful agile organisation?

1.4 Research Objectives

This study aims to investigate factors that lead to an agile organisation in a South African organisation. The specific objectives are as follows.

1. To determine the organisational strategic direction and type of leadership style that can lead to an agile organisation.
2. To determine the structures and processes that need to be in place to enable agility in the organisation.
3. To determine the employee culture and team effectiveness principles that support and ensure a successful agile organisation.

1.5 Rationale for the Research

This study is significant in several ways. First, the findings of this study would lend a voice to the research discussions on how to unravel factors that influence agility adoption in organisations both globally as well as in specific climes and countries. Secondly, this study serves as a resource to the management team of organisations as it provides insights into the enablers for the agile organisation in the South African context. This would improve the level of competition among organisations as it relates to profit and employee competition.

The study is equally significant as it would draw the attention of South African government agencies in charge of overseeing the running and operations of organisations to the demands of an agile organisation. This would enhance the global competitiveness of organisations in South Africa if eventually imbibed. Since there is limited body of work on factors affecting agility adoption in the South Africa context, this study would add to existing literature, especially in relation to South Africa.

1.6 Scope of the Research

1.6.1 Delineation

The theoretical framework employed for this study focused on the following concepts: i) agile way of work; ii) agile organisation; iii) organisational culture; iv) organisational

processes and v) organisational structures dimensions and the degree to which they contribute to ensuring high performance of agile teams in the workplace. In the spirit of keeping within the scope of the research, these concepts and their dimensions were discussed and analysed to determine the most effective enabling factors that lead to an agile organisation. The analyses were thereafter evaluated in reference to successful organisational agility. The literature used for these constructs has not been limited in any way because agile way of work has been growing at a rapid pace across the world, and therefore has a broad range of perceptions and concepts which are partly the focus of this research. Therefore, all available and relevant literature on agile, agile organisations and factors that lead to an agile organisation were reviewed.

1.6.2 Delimitation

The locus of context of this research is focused on active leaders who have been working in an agile environment and become successful within their respective organisations. These leaders include all line managers who held a leadership position or played an active role in agile change management and for transformation in an agile environment; and the employees who have participated in the process along with those who took part in the process. Typically, candidates who have experienced the change processes of different types of organisations would be best in giving an accurate indication of what factors need to be considered when transforming an organisation to an agile one successfully. Line managers who have also changed from waterfall to agile are also expected to narrate accurately how the traditional leadership practices hinder the efficient delivery intention of the agile way of work. Despite those characteristics of the individuals mentioned above, the results are less likely to be speculative, instead they are likely to be genuine because they are subjective and might have answered the questions posed to them based on their experiences.

1.7 Key Terms

Agile Methodology: “Agile development” is a term for several iterative and incremental software development/work delivery methodologies (Beck, 2013).

Agile way of work: A method of project management used that allows division of tasks into short phases of work and frequent reassessment and adaptation of plans (Beck, 2013).

Agile enterprise: A fast-moving, flexible, and robust company capable of rapid response to unexpected challenges, events, and opportunities. Built on policies and processes that facilitate speed and change, it aims to achieve continuous competitive advantage in serving its clients (Brockmann, Nagel, Kahl & Biermann, 2019).

Leadership: The activity of leading an organisation or a group involves clear vision, inspiration, performance contracting, reviews, and upskill to realise that vision. (Shmuel & Meni, 2006).

1.8 Overview of the chapters

This study is organised as follows:

Chapter 1 presents the general research overview, including, the introduction, background to the problem statement, rationale, aim, and objectives of the study.

Chapter 2 describes the comprehensive literature review conducted to lay the groundwork for this research and to give a theoretical foundation to reinforce and guide this study. All the variables of interest are described, explained, and examined using relevant and available literature from academic and non-academic studies on the issue.

Chapter 3 gives an in-depth description of the methods employed in this research. It further describes the study design, population, sampling method, and sample size. It also presents the data capturing and analysis techniques for each objective, the validity and measurement reliability of the research instruments, elimination of bias concepts and as well as ethical considerations.

Chapter 4 presents analysis of the collected data and provides detailed findings of the research. Furthermore, it interprets the data and discusses the findings. in relation to the three objectives.

Chapter 5 summarises the major findings of the study, the contributions to knowledge, and the study limitations. The chapter also recommends areas for future research.

1.9 Chapter summary

The problem being investigated in this research was clearly articulated in this chapter. The chapter also presented the specific objectives to be accomplished in a quest to effectively answer the problem statement, the rationale for the study, and the anticipated limitations to this research. The chapter ended by providing a foundation and structure for the rest of the research areas.



CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The key objective of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive overview of previous but relevant ideas on the subject matter of this study that is, factors that influence agility adoption in organisations. In this regard, the first section gives a background of the South African financial sector and the importance of agility in organisations. The second section focuses in detail on the concept of agility. The third section reviews studies on agile organisations as a concept. The chapter thereafter examines the fundamental operational aspects of agile organisations, and finally ends with an overview of the literature on certain operating models of agile organisations.

2.2 Background

The financial service sector is any financial institution that offers financial services to people and corporations. It generally consists of banks, real estate, finance companies, insurance companies, or any firm offering financial services. Financial sectors are considered the foundation of any nation's economy (South Africa inclusive). The more efficient and stronger the sector, the better the economy. The efficiency and effectiveness of any financial firm is measured by the quality of its services. However, the financial sector in Africa is still considered inefficient due to several challenges it faces (Nyantakyi & Sy, 2015). These challenges can be categorised into two main groups. The first category is linked to the challenges of customers' needs and satisfaction, and the second category is institutionally based.

Meeting customers' needs has been one of the most challenging tasks for financial sectors. According to Child et al. (2019), financial sectors such as banks are faced with a challenge and pressure to digitise and adopt modern technology now more than before. As they strive to adjust to the technological trend, they experience mixed reactions from clients/consumers. While the young consumers find the adoption to be effective, the adult customers (usually 65 years and above) find technology to be a burden as they cannot easily cope with its rapid growth (Musara, 2012). In today's era, it is crucial for institutions to respond swiftly and adapt to the current advancements to help improve their efficiency and

increase customer satisfaction, and one way to achieve this is by implementing agile methods (Deloitte, 2019).

Importantly, agility should be examined by the South African financial sector such as banking, to effectively adjust their operational model to drive innovative customer-centred services to compete with the digital entrants posing challenges to the traditional service providers. Camarate and Maritze (2018) illustrated this in the article on the digital disruption of the banking sector in South Africa.

The customer preferences and their approach have noticeably brought some level of flexibility in the banking operation while capitalising on the South African Reserve Bank (SARB)'s regulations that enable local bank players to comfortably increase their competitive advantage through customer experience and digital transformation. Deloitte (2019) alluded to this idea and added that employing business agility can assist the retail banking industry to respond faster and better to the fluidic world currently being disrupted by technology. Exploring the linkage between four best business practices namely technological capability, organisational learning, internal structure alignment, and collaborative innovation in relation to how agility affects the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in South Africa. Govuzela and Mafini (2019) found that the only way to stimulate their performance improvement is by properly aligning these best practices with the agility principles.

Walter, Kellermanns, Floyd, Veiga, and Matherne (2013), confirmed that proper strategic alignment and high-level strategic consensus encourage and promote high-level organisational performance. Govuzela and Mafini (2019) further highlighted the following proposals as contributing factors to enable proper adoption and implementation of business agility within the South African SME. These are value analysis, modular design, concurrent engineering and just in time, employee information access, internal collaborations within key functions.

Considering the future and the possibility of maintaining a good business presence, the management of Nedbank has opted for a collaborative and leadership-oriented culture (Oosthuizen & Scheepers, 2018) as a means of sustaining organisational success. In all, adopting area collaboration, talent, and innovative leadership becomes the driving force towards building capacities and capabilities, and supporting other financially struggling industries such as Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Bushe (2019) based on financial institutions supporting SMEs as reported by Oosthuizen and Scheepers (2018), reiterated

that the failure of this important sector of the South African economy is due to lack of a conducive environment leading to proper internal alignment, and their inability to compete and build capacity. The effects of lack of agility are also evident in job creation especially within a volatile country such as South Africa through the flexible legislation and anything outside that places a barrier on job creation (Kerr, Wittenberg, & Arrow, 2014). Evidently, agility cuts across and affects all spheres of life; hence, there is advocacy towards universal adoption of flexible practices of doing things.

2.3 Defining Agility as a Concept

Agile methodology is a process of producing short iterations with the focus on prioritised features and delivery of the product. According to Lotz (2018), the agile way of delivering to clients or customers is a response to some of the challenges highlighted in the waterfall approach. The waterfall approach to project management is a linear process where one stage of work must be completed and approved before the next stage is started. This process continues until every step is completed (Lotz, 2018). However, the process has been criticised for strictly following the project plan. Instead of documenting carefully the process that will be followed to develop a piece of work, the agile process encourages team members to verbally communicate and share knowledge through various agile routines where decisions can be made quicker (Hummel & Epp, 2015).

The main characteristic of agility is being lightweight on the processes with a focus on delivery and team dynamics. Adopting an agile approach is not as simple as one might think, it is more than just a change in the work process. Agile project managers often struggle with the need for predictions, planning, and functional controls (West, 2008). According to West (2008), the agile manifesto is explicit about the main values that are crucial to an agile environment to make it effective.

2.3.1 The Agile Manifesto

The agile manifesto was developed as an alternative to the already existing software development processes which were considered rather complex and inefficient. This was because software developers were more focused on following the contracts and gave little to no attention to customer satisfaction. This approach has caused a rapid failing rate of products and poor customer experience. According to (Beck et al., 2001), no software development methods or techniques enabled institutions to achieve satisfying results. Developers believed that there was a better way to deliver software products that would add

value to their products and customers. Owing to that, in 2001, 17 experienced and recognised software development experts met at The Lodge at Snowbird Ski Resort, in the Wasatch Mountains of Utah to discuss possible solutions and methods for software development (Fowler & Highsmith, 2001).

The goal of that meeting was to find common grounds in response to some challenges in the software industry. According to Fowler and Highsmith (2001), the outcome of that meeting was the Agile Software Development Alliance, and 12-point principles, which is today known as the agile manifesto.

2.3.1.2 The purpose of the Agile Manifesto

The purpose of the agile manifesto as spelt out by Fowler and Highsmith (2001) are as follows.

- Individual and interactions over process and tools
- Working software over comprehensive documentation
- Customer collaboration over contract negotiation; and
- Responding to change over following a plan

While the principles provided a clear-cut path to achieving the agile dream as perceived by the respondents in that meeting, the four-point purpose provides a rationale for the principles which to some extent, was a paradigm shift in thinking and business operations for the software industry.

2.3.1.2 The Principles of Agile Manifesto

The agile manifesto is a carefully mapped out plan of a new way of doing organisational business, which was expected to lift the industry as it was then to an envisaged agile organisation. This plan was divided into the following twelve carefully carved-out principles:

1. Our highest priority is to satisfy the customer through early and

2. continuous delivery of valuable software.
3. Welcome changing requirements, even late in development. Agile processes harness change for the customer's competitive advantage.
4. Deliver working software frequently, from a couple of weeks to a couple of months, with a preference for the shorter timescale.
5. Businesspeople and developers must work together daily throughout the project.
6. Build projects around motivated individuals. Give them the environment and support they need and trust them to get the job done.
7. The most efficient and effective method of conveying information to and within a development team is face-to-face conversation.
8. Working software is the primary measure of progress.
9. Agile processes promote sustainable development. The sponsors, developers, and users should be able to maintain a constant pace indefinitely.
10. Continuous attention to technical excellence and good design enhances agility.
11. Simplicity- the art of maximizing the amount of work not done- is essential.
12. The best architectures, requirements, and designs emerge from self-organizing teams.
13. At regular intervals, the team reflects on how to become more effective, then tunes and adjust its behaviour accordingly (Fowler & Highsmith, 2001).

2.3.2 Agile Success Factors

According to Aghina et al. (2017), one characteristic of an agile organisation is a flat structure made up of a network of self-organising teams that operate cohesively in ensuring high levels of performance standards where members hold each other accountable for their expertise and skills in achieving results. This description contains similar elements that Lencioni (2002) highlighted as key attributes of a cohesive team that consistently achieves results through commitment, vulnerability, accountability, result, and trust. In their investigation of motivation and cohesion in agile teams, Whitworth and Biddle (2007) similarly confirmed that the characteristics that contribute to motivation in these teams are related to cohesion and the agile team routines that allow continuous and open communication and collaboration. The next sections explore agile teams and common key attributes that contribute to the success of self-organising teams.

2.3.2.1 Agile Teams as Self-Organizing Team

Nayak and Patra (2008) posited that agility advocates the natural emerging teams. When individuals combine their energies and work together, they produce positive results. The responsibility of leaders is to facilitate healthy relationships between team members and ensure that they are motivated to reach their goals. The agile way of work allows a team to choose and prioritise their work. Additionally, the team members are responsible to hold each other accountable to deliver the agreed goals with the team. The agile work methodologies advocate that teams should naturally form as and when they are needed. That allows team members to join teams and then leave when they wish to allow the team to adopt a new team dynamic that will be able to keep changing to suit the environment. Big teams can be further organised into smaller teams that work simultaneously, and a self-organising team does not mean teams should occupy themselves with the support function of hiring and firing team members, but rather holding each other accountable and making members free to organise in order to reach a goal (Brosseau, Ebrahim, Handscomb, & Thaker, 2019).

Fewell (2013) summarised the intent of the self-organising team by emphasising that the intent is for teams to relinquish the detail and to continue to work hard and achieve goals. In agile teams, an analyst can tell an architect directly what the findings are. In this way, the flow of work moves faster as teams can make internal decisions. Moreover, leaders or bigger teams or managers can take a broader view and constantly ask themselves if the project is still relevant to answer the needs of the customer, and if that need has not changed. In addition to calling for self-organizing teams, the manifesto presents a concrete process for making them a reality (Fewell, 2013). Concerning how the manifesto can be used to build effective self-organizing teams, Fewell (2013) suggested the following:

a. Build teams around motivated individuals

In an agile team, there is a perception that motivated team members are critical to forming self-organised teams (Fewell, 2013). It was clear that teams with more motivated individuals can deliver results quicker and faster (Beck et al., 2001). While knowledge and skills can be developed, it is unsure that the effort employed to motivate the team members and to ensure they have a positive attitude required to withstand the constantly changing environment is a guarantee.

b. Provide the needed environment and support

Team members need tools and the environment to ensure that they can perform. They must have the tools and facilities to be as productive as possible (Brockmann et al., 2019). Additionally, they must have access to answers related to the business problem. Leaders have a responsibility to shorten the acceleration processes and to ensure that the outstanding questions from the business are answered promptly to ensure that there are no blockers. Leaders need to understand what that environment should look like and ensure that they continuously use the budgets to make the environment suitable for a performing and motivated self-organising team (Fewell, 2013).

c. Trust them to get the job done

According to Brockmann et al. (2019), agile success lies in the increase of trust between all stakeholders. The teams need to be trusted to do the work without supervision. If there are concerns that the team will make too many errors, then the process of upskilling and developing team members may be needed (Beck et al., 2001). Furthermore, trust does not mean anything if the time was not spent to empower the individuals to perform. Leaders need to focus on how the teams are functionally on board and are signed off for competence, and then left alone, and trusted to deliver what they have been hired to do.

2.3.2.2 Team Cohesion in Agile Organisations

According to Michalisin and Karau (2004), team cohesion is complex and has many underlying constructs. Many studies have been conducted on team cohesion and the link to team performance. In their study, Stashevsky and Koslowsky (2006) suggested that in a cohesive team, there are integral social and motivational forces that help facilitate team performance in teams. These forces attract and motivate members to contribute and stay in that team. Team cohesion is therefore defined as the extent to which members are attracted to their team and their desire to remain in it (Michalisin & Karau, 2004).

In the book, *Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, Lencioni (2002) used a model to explain the differences between teams that perform well and those that do not perform well. The model suggests five fundamental dimensions and group sequences every team should travel through, from one step to the other, until they come to the place where they perform and reach their goals. There are, however, other team effectiveness models in the literature that outline other constructs. Some include communication, assigning rules, roles and

responsibilities, and continuous feedback amongst members. In the last section of this chapter under operational models of agile, a detailed examination of this model as suggested by Lencioni (2002), and how it contributes to team performance in the agile environment are explicated.

2.3.3 Agile Routine

The agile manifesto is characterised by continuous engagements and interactions that ensure that decisions are made timeously and continuous improvements to the client’s solutions are made (Brosseau et al., 2019). According to Beck et al. (2001), Table 2.1 shows a presentation of meeting routines in the agile way of working.

Table 2.1. Meeting routines in agile way of working

Meeting	Purpose	Benefits
Sprint Planning	To determine realistic goals that the team can achieve after the sprint. The team goals will be prioritised to meet the client needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The team agrees on team goals and therefore commit to achieving them. ● The team openly communicates dependencies and identifies team capacity to set and commit to an achievable sprint goal. ● Sets the agenda for daily stand up.
Daily Scrum / Stand-up	To allow the team to get together and review progress toward their Sprint goal and assess any risks to their commitment to reach a goal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Creates synergy in the team about what is happening. ● Identifies blockers and solutions. ● Implements corrective actions. ● Building trust between team members. ● High visibility of progress ● Promotes self-organisation in the team as team members hold each other accountable for achieving their daily commitments.

Sprint Review (Demo)	To provide the platform for the Scrum Team to display what they accomplished during the sprint while creating the opportunity for stakeholders to inspect and adapt the product as it emerges, and iteratively refine everyone's understanding of the requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Early and frequent feedback from the business/client ● Stakeholders are able to respond immediately to the team about the product. ● Team building and collaboration <p>Maximizing quality</p>
Backlog Refinement (Grooming)	To review items on the backlog to ensure the backlog contains the appropriate items that are prioritised, and items that are at the top of the backlog are ready for delivery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Helps ensure that the backlog remains populated with items that are relevant, detailed and estimated to a degree appropriate with their priority. ● Enables the team to ask questions and have requirements cleared before sprint planning. ● Helps the team understand the project or product and its objectives. ● Helps the team break down larger stories into more manageable, smaller stories, which make for easier estimating, and saves time during the sprint planning session.
Sprint Retrospective	A meeting where the team discusses the just-concluded sprint and determines any changes to improve the next sprint. Look at the “how” or team delivery process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reflects on their process and agree upon a way of working. ● Collectively finds ways to improve productivity and reach goals. ● Determines and constantly updates the definition of done. ● Continuously improves and evolves. <p>Builds the team's sense of ownership and its self- management.</p>

Scrum of Scrums	Also known as a Cross-Teams Stand-up, and the purpose is to provide the platform for teams to share high-level updates on their respective team’s work, identify impediments and collaborate and plan on help needed from other teams.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Can be used as a technique to scale Scrum up to large groups (i.e., over a dozen people), consisting of dividing the groups into Agile teams of 5-10. ● Allows clusters of teams to discuss their work, focusing especially on areas of overlap and integration. Provides a platform to identify situations where teams need to coordinate. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Keeps people connected by making sure that at least one member from each team sees one from every other team once a day.
Release Planning	To commit to a plan for delivering an increment of product value that represents the amount of scope that a team intends to deliver by a given deadline. Enables multiple team’s plan development for a product release.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provides the team with a common vision about what needs to be achieved, and when. ● Provides the platform for collaboration across multiple teams to identify cross-team dependencies and sequence of work. ● Guides the team to make informed decisions based on dependency, capacity, and available skills.

Note. From “Manifesto for Agile Software Development,” by Beck et al. 2001, *The Agile Alliance*, p. 13. Copyright 2001 by Copyright Holder. Reprinted with permission.

2.3.4 Agile Organisation as a Concept

When defining an agile organisation, the definition of agility alone does not describe the type of organisation that will be left behind at the end of the transformation process. To define an agile organisation, we need to first describe what a traditional organisation is. According to Aghina et al. (2018), a traditional organisation is defined by static, silos, and hierarchical structures with strategic goals and decision-making flowing from the top level of leadership. A linear operation and a rigid slow movement with a focus on rules and governance (Aghina et al., 2018) supplement this. Contrarily, an agile organisation is said to be designed for both stability and dynamism and has a people-centred culture where a network of self-organising teams is staffed by empowered employees to ensure fast

decision-making top-down and bottom-up. This allows the organisation to quickly adapt the strategy to ensure that it responds to the fast-changing needs of customers (Aghina et al., 2018). The purpose of a traditional organisation is to ensure stability through product development, while the purpose for an agile organisation is focused on value creation and continuous search for value-protecting opportunities (Aghina et al., 2018).

An agile organisation is one that can quickly adapt or configure the strategy, structure, processes, people and technology toward value-creation and value protection for their customers (Salo, 2017). In addition, Salo (2017) stated that the focus of building or converting an organisation to an agile one is rising because leaders of organisations are realising that the world around them is changing, and they need to adapt accordingly. In their report, Brosseau et al. (2019), explained agile organisations as different from traditional organisations in that they have specific characteristics that support the agile way of working, which are: networking teams that are performing and delivering in a fast-paced environment where continuous learning is evident and that decision making cycles are shorter and frequent. The fundamental difference between the agile and waterfall approach is that not everything can be planned upfront. If organisations seek to operate in agility, then implementation needs to be iterative. The leaders of the organisation need to determine the iterations upfront and determine where to start, and how they will scale across the organisation. The transformation to an agile organisation touches every facet of the organisation and the impact can result in the enterprise-wide change (Brosseau et al., 2019).

2.3.5 Factors Necessary to Transform into an Agile Organisation

Ntinga Transformational Consulting Services [NTCS] (2016) asserted that when transforming an organisation into an agile one, there are different elements to consider, and they can be grouped into two components namely people and work. Seiffert-Brockmann and Ninova-Solovykh, (2019) also posited that there are key attributes that will be regarded as indicators of an agile enterprise. These include:

- A one unifying culture for the whole organisation
- Cross-functional effective teams
- End-to-end stakeholder responsibility for the delivery of value to the customer
- Adaptation of agile principles to ensure fit for purpose by business units or functions.

The Figure 2.1 provides a model explanation of how the people and work philosophy

according to NTCS (2015) is demonstrated.

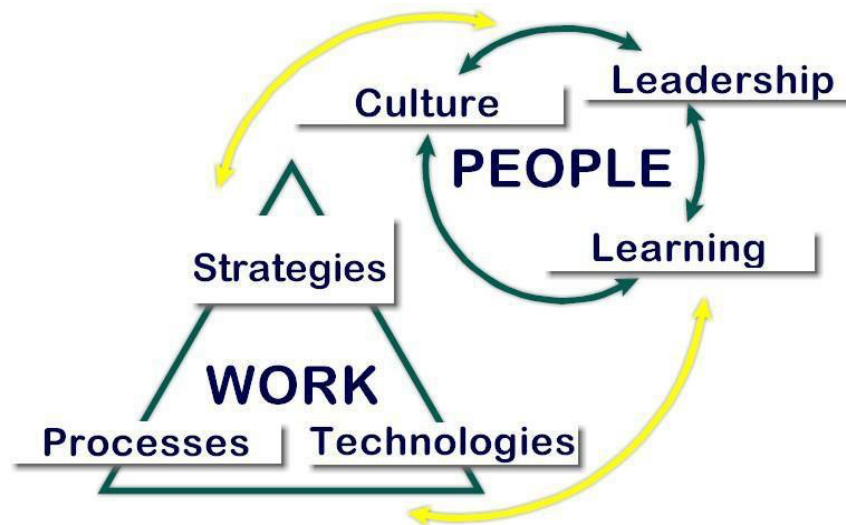


Figure 2.1. The organisation's sustainability model.

Reprinted from "Background to Our Work" by Ntinga Transformational Consulting Services, 2016 (<http://www.tcslearning.co.za/background.htm>). Copyright 2016 Ntinga Transformational Consulting Services.

According to the model (Figure 2.1), if organisations facilitate a change in the way of work, there is a need to do it through a process of performance leadership, continuous learning and shaping of the organisation's culture to ensure a review of current practices to suit the new environment (NTCS, 2016). The main challenge is to bring work and people together as leading competitors in the market. The main point to note is that it is fruitless to spend too much energy on any of the elements and hope for success as it could potentially lead to continuous changes which do not support the strategy of the organisation. This could further lead to another set of frustrations of seeing good systems and technology fail because of leaders and employees who are not prepared to adapt to the demand of people strategies required by the change being made, or work environment.

2.3.6 Factors Prevalent in Agile Organisations

Arell (2020) affirmed that for an organisation to be agile, it is not a matter of practice and compliance exercise, but it is about an overhaul of the organisation's culture which starts with the thinking or a mindset shift from the leaders of that organisation. Arell (2020) further confirmed that through observation of agile organisations of different sizes and from various sectors, there are certain characteristics that show that they all have their different cultures. The author stated further that these organisations are built on a solid systematic approach with the cognisance that every business is complex but able to adapt by applying the following five characteristics:

- a. They adopt a catalyst style of leadership.
- b. Their organisation is based on continuous learning from experiments.
- c. They foster an open communication style.
- d. Their governance is based upon long-term business value and adaptation; and
- e. Their members seek mastery in their respective skills.

For the organisation to be considered an agile, these characteristics do not have to be prevalent across the enterprise, but the parts where the transformation has started, meaning that all the parts that work together to provide a full value chain need to demonstrate agile culture to generate the benefit of the competitive advantage (Arell, 2020). According to Miller (2016), there are ten-character traits found in agile organisations. These traits describe the individuals that make the organisation an entity. The individual traits can however be classified and interpreted by describing the environment that would support them. These character traits propose that agile organisations:

- a. Help the employees achieve their work-life balance while consistently delivering on objectives.
- b. Its leaders understand that the best way to lead is by serving others and allowing collaborative decision-making.
- c. The whole company is focused on customer value with the understanding that it is what ensures sustainability and success.
- d. Create and foster a culture of continuous improvement to sustain profitability and company success.
- e. Employ top talents and encourages collaboration to benefit from the collective intelligence of diverse thinking.
- f. Allow faster decision making, which fosters both bottom-up and top-down decision-making frameworks.
- g. Allow flexibility and consistent pace, which assists individuals to deliver consistently through structures and agile routines.
- h. Allow faster and quality delivery by understanding that continuous feedback loops will always ensure solutions are adapted quicker and tested in time for the next release.
- i. Are passionate over roles by allowing employees to determine who to best contribute to achieving business objectives rather than confining them to roles; and

- j. Use data metrics to determine or measure commitment to agile adoption across all levels of the organisation.

A look at the ten-character traits of agile organisations as conceived by Miller (2016) suggested that they could also be summarised as organisational agility practices, and they were also classified as five characteristics of agile organisations according to Aghina et al. (2018). The suggestion is that it is only when all the five trademarks work together in a synergy that they can create or present a seamless organic organisation that supports agility. Across these trademarks is a mindset shift of all employees within the organisation.

2.3.7 The Characteristics of the Agile Organisation Workforce

There are eight common characteristics to individuals who thrive in an agile organisation (Benstead, 2019). According to Benstead (2019), every business approach agility adoption Key attribute that underpin agile organisations seem to bring a predictive level of success in individuals, and these are:

1. Goal-driven: This organisation would demonstrate a sense of shared purpose that clearly articulates the strategy and the purpose of the agile adoption. This strategy and purpose are shared and socialised across the organisation and is adopted by all employees.
2. Embrace technology: Reducing or getting rid of the mandate, tedious and repetitive tasks and allows the people to focus on the engagements with the customers and stakeholders while delivering on meaningful value. This process involves looking at the enterprise total digital transformation across all functions e.g., marketing, IT, Human resource, employee experience and engagements, employee location, training, recruitment, and internal and external communications to ensure that all have lived up to the promised value (Benstead, 2019).
3. Flexibility: According to Benstead (2019), the number of people in the UK who use flexible and remote working has doubled in the last 20 years to a whopping five million. In the agile culture, flexible working is deemed as a more radical work method than just start and end time. It includes the freedom to maximise efficiencies and the removal of barriers so that employees can work from anywhere.
4. Culture of trust and continuous learning: In a journey to becoming an agile

organisation, trust becomes a critical factor, as the agile way of working is dependent on collaboration between team members and across teams (Benstead, 2019). This means everyone has a role to play and in line with what Arell (2020), suggested as agile transformation being a culture of transformation where the leadership mindset, strategy and overall practices need to align to ensure the required agility is attained.

5. Creativity: Agile organisations need to be creative in providing value- generating solutions to the customers. This creativity becomes critical as the needs of both customers and stakeholders are evolving constantly, and therefore high levels of radical change and swift design and implementation processes need to be employed to remain competitive (Benstead, 2019).
6. Performance-driven: Benstead (2019) argued that agile workers can largely choose when and where they work from. The priority is to achieve the best results for your business, not to work a set of hours in a specific location. You may need to review how performance is measured as a result and being made as the next point to emphasize.
7. Embrace and adapt to change: The agile culture encourages continuous transformation and therefore supports organisational change to remain competitive and responsive to the needs of customers. Therefore, individuals who generally resist change would find this work environment difficult.
8. Compliant with data and information protection regulations: As agile is characterised by flexibility, and included digital transformation, there needs to be careful consideration of who should have access to what data to ensure no security is breached. This can be done through policies and governance structures.

2.4 Fundamental Operational Aspects of Agile Organisations

In this section, some of the basic operational aspects of agile organisations will be addressed. Such operational concepts include strategic direction and vision of agile organisations, leadership styles, and employee culture, which supports agility in organisations.

2.4.1 Strategic direction and vision of an agile organisation

An organisation's vision is a short statement that describes what the organisation is working towards daily (Harraf, Wanasika, Tate, & Talbott 2015). It is described as the organisation's future state to inspire the employees and to create a sense of direction. According to the

agile organisation framework, vision does not only have the statement but also create clarity on how that vision will be achieved. After the vision has been identified and clarified, the role of leaders of agile organisations is critical in ensuring that the vision and the strategy are known across all levels in the organisation and that it is translated into clear, actionable, and measurable priorities (Aghina et al., 2017).

The logic that agile organisations use to guide the agile capability building which informs the operating model, structure, process, and people practices are the strategy (Mahadevan, Paquette, Rashid, & Ustinov, 2019). When all employees in the organisation use their understanding of the strategy to make decisions that will be consistent with the institution's strategy on a day-to-day basis to do the right thing, the right way, at the right time, eventually creates a shared purpose. The organisational strategy must articulate the intent to transform into an agile organisation. Harraf et al. (2015) mentioned that if the agile strategic direction is focused on innovation, then the agility capability building should emphasise the customer focus and efficiency to allow the organisation to respond faster to the changing needs of the customers. Moreira (2013) emphasised that most companies use the Vision to Incentive Differentiator (AVID) model to ensure that they develop company strategies that emphasise the value of the customer while also being clear about the importance of employee engagement.

The AVID model is the strategy cascading model that emphasises alignment to ensure that individuals and teams are connected to the strategy and objectives of the organisation. Specifically, employees should also be able to identify with the vision, values, and company goals, that they are able to use their collective voices to contribute and that they are given a platform to share, and through continuous dialogues, everyone is informed, listened to, and allowed to raise issues for discussion (Moreira, 2013). A truly agile strategy is one that will focus on customer value, foster continuous customer definition and validation, use periodization principles, and truly understands the concept of minimum viable product techniques, which will achieve financial sustainability (Moreira, 2013).

2.4.2 Leadership style in an agile organisation

Arell (2020) argued that all leaders across the organisation require stepping into a catalytic leadership style. The catalytic leadership style is where leaders focus on inspiring others, ensuring cohesion across the whole value chain at all levels across the system. This style is centred on a trusting relationship that the leaders have with team members in the

organisation. Supporting this idea, Agile Business Consortium (2017) maintained that there are some principles of agile leadership that form a foundation of the key behaviours that should be demonstrated by leaders in agile organisations. These behaviours stipulated below, set the tone for agile transformation:

- a. Leaders need to lead by example in living the behaviours.
- b. Improved quality of thinking leads to improved outcomes.
- c. Organisations improve through effective feedback.
- d. People require meaning and purpose to make work fulfilling.
- e. Emotion is a foundation of enhanced creativity and innovation.
- f. Leadership lives everywhere in the organisation.
- g. Leaders delegate appropriate power and authority.
- h. Collaborative communities achieve more than individuals do; and
- i. Great ideas can come from anywhere in the organisation.

2.4.3 Employee culture that supports agility in an organisation

Abraham (2019) proposed a working definition of an agile culture. The author stated that agile culture is about creating an environment that is underpinned by values, behaviours, and practices, which enable organisations, teams, and individuals to be more adaptive, flexible, innovative, and resilient when dealing with complexity, uncertainty, and change. In their report, Agile Business Consortium (2017) defined culture as the way things are done in that organisation, as a glue that binds everyone in the organisation to achieve the ultimate competitive advantage. Organisations are not divorced from their stakeholders and customers, as a result, the extent to which the culture of the organisation is shaped by those engagements and interactions matters a lot to its health and progress (Moran, 2015).

Clarifying further on the definition of organisational culture, Abraham (2019) maintained that organisational culture is defined as shared beliefs and assumptions that have been entrenched over a period, through trial and error, solving problems and by also just engaging. This view suggests that the culture of organisations can be learned and passed on to other members joining it. Corroborating this idea, Moreira (2013), indicated that culture can also be represented as beliefs systems that give members of the organisation meaning and purpose, which then allow individuals from different backgrounds to have a collective shared purpose.

Moran (2015) further opined that when organisations seek to embark on a transformation journey to be agile, they look at the quick techniques as the answer that will help them reap the benefits of the transformation. People often think that agile will solve all their business problems, so they can reap all the benefits as if it is a badge that the organisation can wear without doing the hard work to align the cultural shifts required (Moreira, 2013). The implementation of mechanisms and mechanical processes alone is not enough to drive agile adoption, rather the change of mindset. That mindset change is a cultural disruption throughout the organisation and is never without challenges. Agility adoption is therefore about unlearning things and learning new skills, understanding the processes and changes in behaviours (Abraham, 2019). In this regard, Moreira (2017) stated that cultural change is behavioural changes in people in response to the change in values and assumptions of the organisation. This assumes that there is a new way of thinking of being, and success is seen and measured differently with the focus on customer value than just random activities, and this is a journey that takes time to implement and mature (Moran, 2015).

2.5 Operating models of agile organisations

An operating model is a new coordinated, and seamless way of running the organisation that focuses on optimising both digital and technological capabilities as well as operational capabilities in an integrated, well-sequenced way to achieve step- change improvements in profits, customer experience, and reduced cost (Brockmann et al., 2019). These capabilities include deciding priorities like where employees will work, how are the customers engaged, which products to produce, what and how it needs to be done to remain competitive while being efficient.

During the year 2020 (advent of the COVID-19 pandemic), companies that had already embedded their operating models responded better than those that had not (Conrella-Dorada, Grag, Thareja, & Vasquez-McAll, 2020). According to Comella- Dorda et al. (2020) for many companies, the apparent impacts of Covid-19 called into question business and operating models. The indication is that many organisations that have agile practices adopted in their operating models managed the impacts of COVID-19 better than those that have not. The authors also noted that many companies are successful because they embedded or adopted agility in small pockets of the business or projects. They opined that for the organisations to increase agility adoption across the enterprise, they need to look at the full operating model by rethinking the foundational processes, structures, and relationships. The authors further maintained that not even 20% of the organisations that

have adopted agile consider themselves agile organisations and have matured in the practice because they have not scaled the adoption across the whole organisation, but those that have scaled the implementation have seen an acceleration in innovation by 80%.

Therefore, for an organisation to facilitate an enterprise-wide adoption of agile, they need to make key changes in their operating models focusing on some areas (Comella-dorda, Lohiya, & Speksnijder, 2016). These areas include adapting the structure to be product and customer-focused, improving interactions between the business and its technology offering, redefining the roles across the business units and teams, and rethinking the budgeting and the planning models to support the agile vision and strategy as depicted in Figure 2.3.

The sections that follow discuss some reviews of agile organisational supporting models found in the literature. The first of the four models are the five distinguishing trademarks of agile organisations by Aghina et al. (2017). The second is an operating model for company-wide agile development by Comella-Dorda et al. (2016). The third is the team cohesion model by Lencioni (2002), while the fourth is the agile transformational model by Brockmann et al. (2019).

2.5.1 The Five Trademarks of Agile Organisations

This model was proposed by Aghina et al. (2017) to provide an understanding of the distinctive characters of any agile organisation to look out for. According to the proponents, these five characters cut across five areas of the organisation namely strategy, structure, process, people, and technology. Figure 2.2 presents the five trademarks of agile organisations as suggested by Aghina et al. (2017).

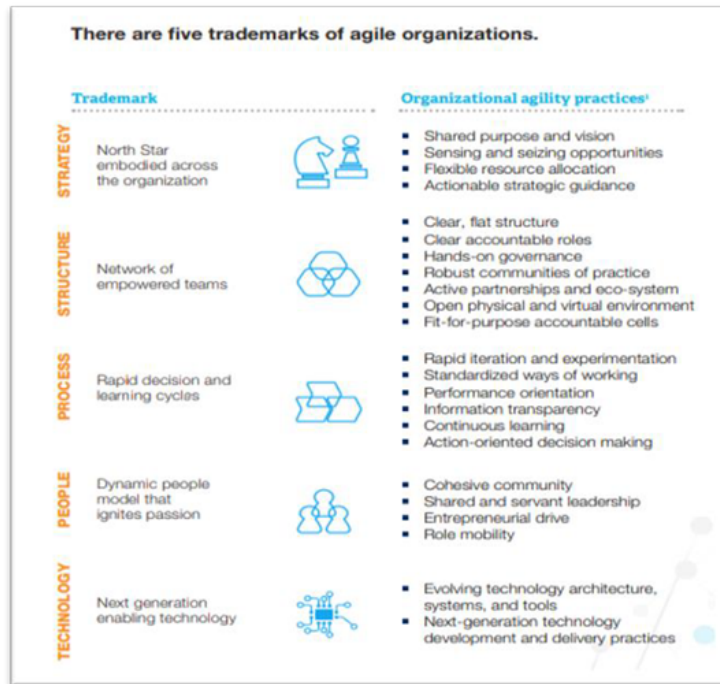


Figure 2.2. The five trademarks of agile organisations model
 Reprinted from "The 5 Trademarks of Agile Organisations" by McKinsey & Company, 2018
 (<https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/people-and-organisational-performance/our-insights/the-five-trademarks-of-agile-organisations#>). Copyright 2018 by McKinsey & Company.

According to Aghina et al. (2017) agile organisations are characterised by an operating model that maintains a stable top-level and yet trades in the traditional hierarchy with flexible, scalable network teams in lower levels of the organisation. In their research, it was suggested that networks are an organic way to optimise efforts because they strike a balance between collective coordination and individual freedom which are found in agile teams. Aghina stressed further that to build an agile organisation, leaders need to understand organic and structured human networks and how to build them and collaborate across them and how to nurture and sustain them as well. An agile organisation therefore needs a stable ecosystem to enable these network teams to operate and thrive. Based on this, Aghina suggested the following five principles as basic elements in setting up an operating model that will support the scaling of agile implementation in organisations.

1. Ensure clear, accountable roles: For individuals to interact across teams in the organisation and focus on the work instead of trying to declutter the series of role duplication that create overlaps and lead to conflict and create line manager approval dependencies, individual roles and responsibilities must be made clear without any ambiguity.

2. Foster hands-on governance: This is where senior leaders' time is freed to focus on the systemic design and providing guidance and support to responsible members and empowering the team to focus on day-to-day activities. By pushing cross-functional team performance and decision rights to the teams, and closer to where it is relevant, a high-productive and limited coordinating forum may lead to increased efficiency and delivery.
3. Evolve functions: This is a part of the operating model that ensures knowledge management, as the teams evolve to become communities of knowledge with responsibilities that are attractive to top talent in and outside the organisation. This creates stability as there is always continuity that stabilises delivery and thereby meets clients' requests.
4. Create active partnerships: Create active partnerships and an ecosystem that extend internal networks and creates meaningful relationships with an extensive external network so the organisation can access the best talent and ideas, generate insights, and co-develop new products, services, and/ or solutions. In agile organisations, people work hands-on and day-to-day with customers, vendors, academics, government entities, and other partners in existing and complementary industries to co-develop new products, services, and solutions; and bring them to market.
5. Design and create open physical and virtual environments: These environments allow teams to contribute to the best of their potential and remain engaged. The environment in an agile organisation is designed to empower individuals as it allows opportunities to foster transparency, communication, collaboration and enhance encounters between team members where they can learn from each other and transfer knowledge.

2.5.2 An Operating Model for Company-Wide Agile Development

This model was suggested to assist organisations in thinking of expanding the scale of agility in their establishment (Comella-Dorda et al., 2016). The model has suggested many changes that need to be made for the organisation to achieve its goals. Four suggested areas are presented in Figure 2.3. The first suggested area where change is required is the organisational structure. It is suggested that organisations that used to be application-oriented based may need to be product- based. A second area is in relation to the interactions between business and IT. It is suggested that organisations whose development process has been managed by proxy product owner from IT, with input as needed from business, should

rather now be changed to an organisation whose development process is managed by a strong product owner from a business who works closely with IT at all stages. The third area of focus is how roles and responsibilities are carried out in the organisation. It was suggested that in organisations whose scrum teams used to be comprised of developers and testers, and for them to transform properly, all roles in the organisation must be integrated within self-organizing scrum teams. The fourth area where changes should be focused is the budgeting and planning area of the organisation. The suggestion is that, for organisations that used to operate the traditional yearly-styled budgeting, proper transformation may occur by adopting the venture-capital-style budgeting.

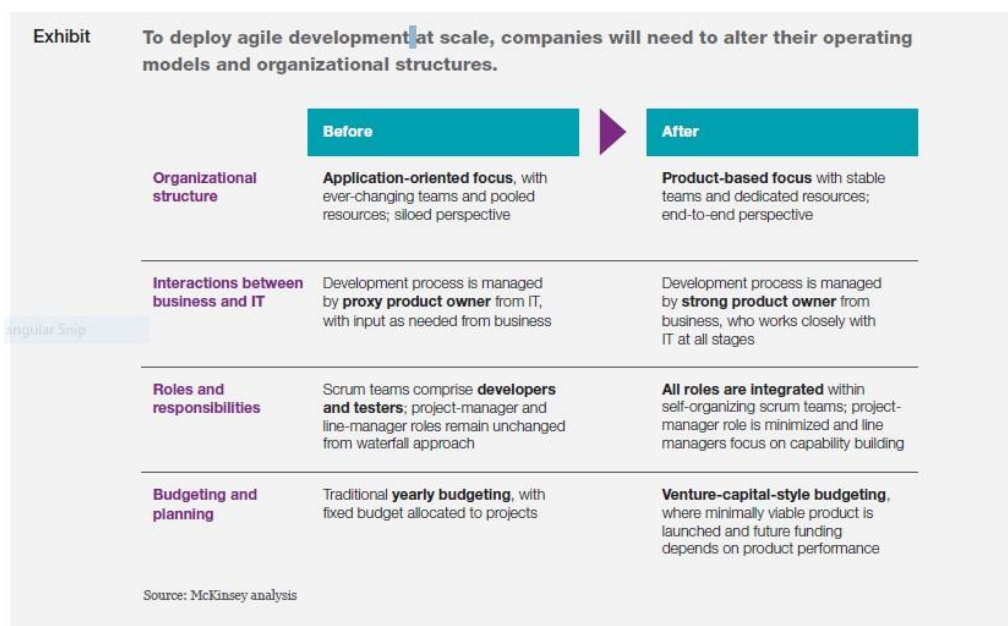


Figure 2. 3. An operating model for company-wide agile development
 Reprinted from "An operating model for companywide agile development" by McKinsey & Company, 2016 (<https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/mckinsey-digital/our-insights/an-operating-model-for-company-wide-agile-development>). Copyright © 2016 McKinsey & Company.

2.5.3 Team Cohesion Model

In this model, Lencioni (2002) suggested five characteristics of a cohesive team. These features are trust, conflict, commitment, accountability, and results. According to Lencioni, each of these behaviours builds upon the one before it and supports the others. Figure 2.4 shows the five-team behaviours, Lencioni (2002).



Figure 2.4. Team cohesion model

1. Trust for one another

Lencioni asserted that members of great teams trust one another on a fundamental, emotional level, and they are comfortable being vulnerable with each other about their weaknesses, mistakes, fears, and behaviours. They get to a point at which they can be completely open to one another without filters. This is essential because in agile teams, members work in feature teams when each member is removed from their team to get together for the sake of completing a piece of work. In addition, outcomes are evaluated for the team, and members have a responsibility to ensure that they have an open, retrospective conversations about challenges after each sprint.

2. Engage in conflict around ideas

Members of teams who trust one another are not afraid to engage in conflict around ideas that are key to the organisation success. They do not hesitate to disagree with challenges and question each other in the spirit of finding the best answers, discovering the truth, and making great decisions. The retrospectives can be heated when members are trying to determine reasons for non-performance. At times, the conflict arises during a planning session when members are challenging each other on the contracting for a sprint where there are different perceptions around how long it will take to finish a particular task.

3. Commit to decisions

Teams that engage in conflict around ideas can gain commitment to decisions, even when various members of the team initially disagree. That is because they ensure that all opinions and ideas are put on the table and considered, as well as instilling confidence in team members so that no stone is left unturned.

4. Hold one another accountable

Teams that gain commitment to decisions and standards of performance do not hesitate to hold one another accountable for adhering to those decisions and standards. Moreover, they do not rely on the team leader as the primary source of accountability.

5. Focus on achieving collective results

Team members who trust one another engage in conflict around ideas, gain commitment to decide, and hold one another accountable are more likely to set aside their individual needs and agenda and focus on achieving collective results. They do not give in to the temptations to place their departments, career aspirations, or ego-driven status ahead of the collective results that define team success.

In their study, Shmuel and Meni (2006) reported that cohesion is one of the factors that influences performance in teams. When cohesion exists, team members tend to be motivated to contribute to the success of the team. Even though the leader is required to possess certain traits, team cohesion is listed as one of the functions of team performance.

2.5.4 Agile Transformation Model

According to Brosseau et al. (2019), the transformation to an agile organisation needs to be both comprehensive and iterative to ensure that the focus is on the delivery of the strategy by creating a synergy between the strategy, structure, process, people, and technology. Additionally, apart from being comprehensive, it should as well be iterative in that not everything can be planned upfront (Brosseau et al., 2019). Table 2.4 depicts the transformational touchpoints in the organisation when striving for agility as conceived by Brosseau et al. (2019).

A comprehensive transformation touches every facet of the organization, including people, process, strategy, structure, and technology.



Figure 2.5. Agile transformation model

Reprinted from "The journey to an agile organisation" by McKinsey & Company, 2019 (<https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/people-and-organisational-performance/our-insights/the-journey-to-an-agile-organisation>). Copyright 2019 McKinsey & Company.

The operating model for this study will be based on the team cohesion model and the agile transformation model. Both models concentrate on the importance of building strong teams through a cooperative and collaborative work environment, which is one of the main foundations of agile organisations.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a detailed literature review on agility and agile organisations. It provided some details of existing ideas about the study, and to show how it fits into the wider field of research. For easier understanding, the chapter was divided into four main aspects. The first defined the concept of 'agility', and various issues also examined in this section were the agile manifesto, the purpose of the agile manifesto, principles of the agile manifesto, agile success factors, as well as agile routine. Similarly, the second aspect reviewed the literature on the agile organisation as a subject. Various aspects of concern were how agile organisations are defined, factors necessary to transform into an agile organisation, factors prevalent in an agile organisation, as well as characteristics of agile organisations. The third section focused on some fundamental operational aspects of agile organisations. In this regard, issues of concern were strategic direction and vision of agile organisations, leadership styles in agile organisations, as well as employee culture that supports agility in agile organisations. The last section reviewed the literature on certain operating models of agile organisations. As such, four agile models were reviewed. The first

two were the five trademarks of agile organisations by Aghina et al. (2017) and an operating model for company-wide agile development, by Comella-Dorda et al. (2016). The third was the team cohesion model by Lencioni (2002), while the fourth was the agile transformation model by Brosseau et al. (2019). The basic emphasis of this chapter is that, when it comes to transforming into an agile organisation, there are no quick fixes or a silver bullet-kind-of-issue, per se. The process is a journey of transformation where an organisation needs to change its very own core traits into a learning organisation that focuses on continuous learning and innovation (Brockmann et al., 2019).



CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter gives an in-depth description of the methodology employed in this study. It starts by describing the research paradigm, research design, population, sampling method and sample size. It further describes the data collection and analysis techniques for every level, as well as ethical considerations.

3.2 Research Paradigm

This research adopted an interpretive model. It sought to understand how the surrounding society identifies and interprets information and design a solution based on the information (Bell, 2005; Thanh, Thi, & Thanh, 2015), hence the model justifies the decision of choosing the interpretive research paradigm. In this study, the researcher explored the perceived factors that influence agility in selected financial institutions in South Africa. Rowlands (2005, p. 81) suggested that “the foundation assumption for interpretive research is that knowledge is gained, or at least filtered, through social constructions such as language, consciousness, and shared meanings”. To counter for methodological flaws such as bias and subjectivity, the researcher considered every participant's contribution, categorising every piece of information into themes.

Qualitative research is frequently associated with the philosophy of phenomenology, which is concerned with how people understand their surroundings. This scientific approach is motivated by human interest. This emphasises the various research approaches that involve people instead of objects. It is therefore considered to be subjective, inductive, and dynamic, and it is realized through a variety of research methods such as assessment, action research, case studies and ethnographic observation (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019).

The current study is inductive, which means that it is both descriptive and interpretative. As a result, the research methodology needs to identify, analyse, and establish patterns or themes in the data collected. The phenomenological philosophy model was used as the basis for this qualitative study's research paradigm. The prototype questionnaire guideline was designed to support the study philosophy of a lived experience by collecting narrative data, which consisted of natural observations of behaviours, circumstances, or perspectives in real-world surroundings.

3.3 Research Design

The primary data collection techniques used in this study were qualitative- exploratory design based on concepts derived from literature. Exploratory research is often used to study broad and less researched problems with little or no data available in the literature for reference. This approach is known for its flexibility since it allows the researcher to come up with fresh ideas and methods for approaching his or her research, as well as future research directions (Yin, 2009). Saunders and Lewis (2012) pointed out that the exploratory method is employed when the study in question seeks new perspectives on the topic and aims to ask new questions and look at the topic from another angle.

An exploratory research approach was chosen for this study because the researcher was looking for new perspectives and ways to analyse and evaluate the issue in question. Myers (2009) favoured this choice by stating that qualitative research is the best approach to use if one wishes to study a specific subject in depth, for instance in one of a few organisations. Haradhan (2018) and Denzin (2001) reported that the qualitative research method produces a thorough explanation of the thoughts, experiences, and opinions of the respondents as well as the interpretation and significance of their actions. It also allows the researcher to learn how the thoughts of the respondents are formed.

In addition, qualitative research enables the researcher to modify and adapt the structure of his/her research to some extent (Maxwell, 2012). Denzin and Lincoln (2002) viewed qualitative research to be multidisciplinary since it encompasses a greater range of opinions, ideas, research methods, and diverse interpretive methods of comprehending the topic.

Besides the advantages, qualitative research has some drawbacks, and some of them were encountered during this study. In their book, Lune and Berg (2017) emphasised that qualitative research can sometimes be difficult to comprehend. As a result, data analysis and interpretation involve time, high cost, and a certain level of knowledge from the researcher (Haradhan, 2018). Due to time constraints, this type of approach usually involves smaller sample size, therefore, qualitative research is not used to seek generalized conclusions, rather it is employed to provide a more contextualised and comprehensive understanding of the subject through a thorough study of human experience (Polit & Beck, 2010).

Similarly, Shidur (2017) affirmed that in a qualitative study, some cultural context and values may be overlooked. Additionally, Nunes et al. (2010) argued that qualitative research ignores contextual sensitivity and focuses more on the knowledge and experience of the

respondents. This has been noted in a study of educational teachers' writing assessment procedures in their classes. For instance, Cumming (2001) concentrated primarily on highly skilled instructors, and disregarded other factors such as geographical location and culture. These variables had a big impact on the results. Finally, because qualitative research is subjective, it cannot be quantitatively or numerically assessed or measured (Haradhan, 2018). Notably, the outcomes of qualitative studies are determined by the respondents as much as the researcher. The results can also be influenced by the level of understanding and knowledge of the researcher.

Meanwhile, qualitative research methods, despite their drawbacks are widely used in the domains of psychology, political science, education, and sociology (Alasuutari, 2010). Almeida, Superior, Gaya, Queirós, and Faria (2017) believed that qualitative research is concerned with the strengthening of understanding of a specific problem rather than numerical representation. According to Magilvy and Thomas (2009), a qualitative study is a tool that allows the researcher to obtain answers to research questions and other probing questions regarding the human experience of an event. The power of qualitative research largely lies in describing human experiences.

The qualitative design was used in this study to investigate various elements that must be considered while transitioning a traditional organisation into an agile organisation in South Africa. The researcher asked the respondents specific questions that allowed them to discuss their experiences at firms where they were involved in the agile transformation process.

In the event of a newly created questionnaire, the instrument must be piloted before it can be utilised. This is a procedure of requesting respondents to read and complete the questionnaire to ensure that errors found are corrected earlier in the process to ensure quality data collection (de Vos, Straydom, Fouche, & Delport, 2011). It implies that those that have partaken in the pilot cannot participate in the actual study.

The goal of the pilot was to assess the instrument's content validity and calculate how long it would take to conduct the interview. The pilot study also helped to identify ambiguous questions and pinpoint those that were framed differently but elicited the same answer from the respondents, thus allowing duplicate items to be re-created. The pilot also allowed the researcher to analyse the trustworthiness of the data acquired through virtual reality, as well as identify the feasibility of the study methodologies and novel modifications made in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. The pilot study also helped to determine how

practicable those modifications were, what would work best, identify any problems in data collection, and assess the reliability of the data that was collected through virtual applications and test the sound and duration of the transcription.

The pilot study involved four colleagues, and their feedback served as a guide to design the final questionnaire, which was subsequently revised, and some changes like rewording of the questions were made to provide more clarity and eliminate perceived ambiguity.

Pilot population

Gender	Race	Age	Role
F	C	40	Head of HR
F	A	35	Head of Communications
M	W	47	Agile Project Delivery
M	I	42	Head of Business Intelligence

3.4 Population

The population for this study comprised all individuals with three or more years of experience in agile transformation work. Individuals must have actively participated in the transformation process as a transformation coach or as a business leader with the ability to influence the process in that organisation. The second criterion was that the individuals had worked with agile in a financial institution.

Furthermore, the researcher identified all large South African financial institutions which implemented agile ways of working in the past three years as it takes three to five years for the organisation to mature its agile transformation journey, according to Aghina et al. (2017). Three years may be considered as the midpoint of the process where the respondents would have had enough insights into the challenges with an adoption based on the feedback and progress, they observed. Individuals in organisations that have successfully implemented an agile way of working, as well as those who have attempted and failed to implement an agile way of working in South Africa in the last two to three years met the population eligibility criteria. The current study's site comprised all financial organisations

that met the eligibility criteria, which was 2 in the life insurance sector, 1 banking sector and the 2 were in the asset management or investment sector.

Due to the classic and rare nature of the populations in the financial institutions that meet all set criteria, snowballing (chain-referral) method was adopted for data collection. According to Hogan, Loft, Power and Schulkin (2009); and John Dudovskiy (2018), snowballing (chain referral) is a non-probability sampling technique used for data collection when the population has no definite disposition and are difficult to locate. Snowballing techniques involved the initial steps of identifying and recruiting the first set of respondents based on the set criteria for the research. Then after engaging the respondents, referral of those who may meet the requirement of the study is requested from within their network (Agnew, 2017). An exponential non-discriminative snowball sampling technique was used throughout the data collection stage. In this method, the researcher engages with referred respondents and selects those who meet the criteria.

3.5 Sample and Sampling Method

The researcher selected a small group of people (sample) to engage in this research and the sampling procedure was done to deliver the most accurate answer to the research questions.

There have been several debates among academics worldwide on the accurate sample size in a qualitative study. Couch and McKenzie (2006) suggested less than 20 respondents for a small number of cases as this will expedite the researcher's close connection with each participant and enhance the validity of little details of the study and eliminate too wide views that could mar the in-depth understanding of the study.

This study chose a sample size of 15 respondents from various departments and positions such as agile coaches, program implementation leaders, organisational leaders, and employees from selected South African financial organisations that have successfully implemented agile ways of working in their day-to-day operations. The practitioners or respondents mentioned above were recruited because they were deemed suitable, based on their level of knowledge and experience on the factors that promote, challenge, or impede the successful implementation of agile methods of work within their respective institutions. The number of selected respondents met the criteria of sufficiency and saturation. It was believed that 15 respondents recruited for this study were sufficient due to their relevant experience and various levels of maturity attained in their organisations. The 15 respondents met the saturation as similar responses were provided as the interview process was

progressing (Vos et al., 2011).

Based on the nature and purpose of this study, purposive or judgmental sampling was implemented. This type of sampling allows the researcher to use his/her judgement and knowledge in the area when selecting the respondents. Taherdoost (2016) showed that purposive sampling is convenient and ideal for qualitative- exploratory research methods. According to Marshall (1996), purposive sampling can take the form of maximum variation method, whereby the researcher finds a variety of traits in the target population, and then selects a sample of subjects that match those traits.

One type of purposive sampling is the snowball sampling. This method is based on a network. The researcher learns about other possible respondents from those he or she has previously chosen (Etikan & Bala, 2017). Snowball sampling is mostly dependent on the first few respondents recognised because they are likely to know others with similar characteristics (Siegle, 2002). Similarly, Devers and Frankel (2000) affirmed that purposive sampling is intended to improve the understanding of selected individuals' perceptions to develop theories and concepts. This study helped determine the factors to consider during an agile transformation in an organisation by comprehending each participant's perceptions of factors that influence the agile way of work.

According to Taherdoost (2016) purposive sampling is subjective and does not allow for generalisation. It is also prone to research bias as the researcher selects respondents based on broad assumptions. Data interpretation is also subject to the researcher's interpretation and judgment, and that may reduce accuracy (Jawale, 2012). When sampling method is based on a network, the quality of all respondents will be highly influenced by the respondents chosen at the outset of the selection process, and only persons belonging to a specific clique may be chosen (Etikan & Bala, 2017).

Despite these disadvantages, purposive sampling is time and cost-effective. Unlike other studies, purposive sampling focuses on people with certain skills, abilities and experiences/backgrounds who can help with the relevant research. As previously stated, it is expected that the information gathered from respondents will be sufficient to provide the most insight into the research question (Magilvy & Thomas, 2009). Given the flaws in the sampling techniques used, the researcher was also aware of the fundamental homogeneity risk of sampling and attempted to mitigate this risk by selecting respondents from different financial organisations.

3.6 Data Collection Instruments/Methods

Qualitative research uses spoken or written words as a basis for analysis (Creswell, 2014). Creswell hypothesised that these words could have been spoken during individual or group interviews. This implies that the researcher may be required to analyse verbal words from an interview(s) or words already documented in a diary record. Devers and Frankel (2000) also explicated that there are two major factors that influence the structure or type of research instrument used. The first factor is the purpose of the research, which is more exploratory and seeks to discover theories and concepts. The second factor is the extent of perceived knowledge about the subject.

The analysis conducted in this current study was based on the perceptions of selected respondents on factors influencing agile organisations in selected South African organisations.

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher conducted one-on-one, face-to-face, or virtual semi-structured in-depth interviews to obtain the views of the selected respondents. An interview is a process in which the researcher obtains a direct interchange with the individual who is assumed to or is known to possess the required characteristics (de Vos et al., 20011). According to de Vos et al. (2011), the quality and length of the interview are determined by how the interviewer manages the exchange relationship. Because the interviewer did not seek to exclude opposing viewpoints from the respondents, an inclusive approach was taken to ensure that the data collection process included a variety of perspectives. de Vos et al. (2011) reiterated that it is common for individuals to hold opposing viewpoints on a topic, especially when dealing with a complex phenomenon.

An interview guide was used to ensure the researcher kept the conversation focused on the topics and issues under investigation. It also revealed the sequence of events that occurred during the interviews after the interviewees had answered the final question (see Appendix A).

The interview guide consisted of ten questions designed to gain insight into each of the research objectives. de Vos et al. (2011) maintained that it is critical for the researcher to prepare the main questions before the interview, and must be related to the research objectives, and then used for probing questions to gain more clarity and obtain additional

examples.

Atlas.ti is widely used in the fields of applied science, health, psychology, criminology, arts, humanity, communication, business and engineering (Woods, Paulus, Atkins, & Macklin, 2015). In numerous studies, this software has been widely acknowledged as a crucial instrument that aids researchers in conducting well-organized, methodical, effective, and efficient data analysis (Lu & Shulman, 2008; Rambaree, 2013; Smit, 2002; Soratto, Pires, & Friese, 2020).

Atlas.ti interprets data through coding and annotation (Smit, 2002). Coding simply means categorising data of similar meaning and interpretation as referred by Dey (1993). Atlas.ti also provides a diverse set of alternatives to aid in the analysis process. It includes features such as interview transcripts within the software. Atlas. ti has a very straightforward operation technique as the researcher only needs to upload the study data which can be in the form of text, video, PDF, audio recording, questionnaires / surveys. The software then helps find patterns and meanings in the data. This is accomplished by organising and describing data in categories. Similar responses are then grouped together and given a theme or label that prompts discussion of the results.

3.8 Data Analysis

Depending on the nature of the study and the method of data collection, the researcher uses a data analysis approach to better understand a phenomenon and enrich the description of the respondents (Devers & Frankel, 2000). This study, therefore included narrative analysis to identify common themes or factors. Chinyamurindi (2016)'s data analysis procedure/approach was adopted.

After the interviews, the recorded data was transcribed, and each response was labelled with unique references (Respondent 1, Respondent 2). Unique labels were used to protect the privacy of the respondents. Thereafter, the transcriptions were then loaded into the software for categorisation. On the grounds of the present study and data collection method, the procedure was formulated on three levels of understanding. The analysis was done by grouping different themes depending on the participant's similarities (Rhodes, 2000).

“Thematic analysis is a technique for encoding qualitative information,” (Boyatzis, 1998, p.5) “Encoding necessitates the use of an explicit code. This could be as basic as a list of topics, as complex as a model with causally related themes, indicators, and qualifiers, or

anywhere in between” (p. 5). This strategy was utilised by the researcher to find topics that were pertinent to the research question. The discovered themes contained a wealth of information; including similar experiences shared by all respondents and could be used as discussion points throughout the study.

3.9 Strategies to Ensure Data Quality and Reporting

To ensure data quality and reporting, this study adopted the four steps mentioned by Chinyamurindi (2016): (i) Four agile project managers of the same profile were selected to partake in the pilot study. The interviews were conducted the same way it would be done in the study to determine the practicalities of how the interviews would be conducted regarding how to request access, how to conduct the interview and determining the researcher skills and familiarise with the questions (de Vos, Straydom, Fouche, & Delpont, 2011). The outcome of the pilot study revealed that question 10 was duplicated, and it was revised to reduce confusion. The grammatical component of questions was also edited to ensure clarity on what was asked. (ii) To maintain and ensure the credibility of all data collected, the interviews were recorded, and the transcription was done within 24 hours. de Vos, Straydom, Foche, & Delpont (2011) maintained that data capturing refers to field notes or recording in the interview process. As the interviews were conducted electronically on MS Teams, the researcher also used the recording device to ensure that should there be connection issues on the device, the recording will also capture the responses.

Furthermore, de Vos, Straydom, Fouche, and Delpont (2011) stated that researchers need to work in pairs to discuss and compare notes. The researcher took notes to ensure that the context of the response is also recorded and not lost at the later stage when doing the analysis. (iii) The transcribed interviews were sent to the respondents through email to ascertain that all the information contained in the transcription was accurate and tallied with the interviews. Thereafter, a thorough reflexivity was performed to safeguard the objectivity of the research objective and eliminate any form of bias from the researcher (Lewin, Taylor & Gibbs, 2005).

During the research work and data collection, the researcher took comprehensive note of all the steps taken in the process to add more depth and quality to the outcome as supported by Chinyamurindi (2016). The researcher took caution not only to ensure participation but also to guard against soliciting desired responses from the respondents. According to de Vos, Straydom, Fouche, and Delpont (2011), a researcher needs to make sure they guard against

the risk of changing the relationship with the respondents into a therapeutic one and that the intimacy that may develop does not threaten the quality where the respondents find the interviews emotionally inappropriate.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

3.10.1 Informed Consent

Goodwin and Rossow-Kimball (2012) affirmed that ethical considerations are pertained to thinking that guides our engagements with others in terms of what we think, what we say and what we do. The researcher needs to examine their moral dilemmas when conducting research. The constant state of awareness about the ethical dilemmas enables the researcher to regulate and ensure the engagements and conduct can be evaluated against the good intentions and be found fit to be morally correct. Clark-Kazak (2017) highlighted key issues including the need to treat the respondents with respect and care as there should not be an attempt by the researcher to impose their views on the research. The participant consent form was sent in advance to the respondents; furthermore, a meeting was held where each participant accepted or confirmed their voluntary participation in the study.

According to Babbie and Mouton (2007), participation in scientific research can be inconvenient and time-consuming for respondents, hence it is critical that the researcher informs them of their right to decline as well as the study's contents. The University's ethical approval and consent from the organisations involved in the study were sought. In addition, the respondents were assured of full transparency about the study's focus, motivations, and any questions about the study were answered. In the study, the following ethical considerations were followed:

3.10.2 Confidentiality and anonymity

The respondents were given the option of remaining anonymous, so they were not pressured to provide any personal information. The respondents were promised confidentiality, that their information would not be shared and would only be utilised to compile the study's results (Babbie & Mouton, 2007). Confidentiality is defined as the commitment to give the person's response but not in public, and that no names or personal information would be included in any material (Babbie & Mouton, 2007).

3.10.3 Beneficence

Babbie and Mouton (2007) believed that researchers should not injure the people that are participating in the study even if they volunteer to undertake a harmful act. Harm is not restricted to physical and emotional only. It includes reputational harm and anything that will leave the participant worse off. During the study, the researcher ensured that such issues were considered and avoided.

3.10.4 Non-maleficence

According to Bell and Bryma (2007), a researcher needs to ensure that their participation in any research is without risk and cannot be considered harmful to the welfare of the respondents during the research process. There was no risk or harm related to the study as the respondents shared their observations during agile implementation and highlighted those factors that could help with its adoption.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter described the research methods and procedures utilized to collect and analyse data to achieve the study's objectives. In this section, the scope of the research, the research technique, the research instrument, and the sampling strategy were discussed in detail. A detailed description of the data analysis technique utilised in this research, as well as data quality and reporting protocols were also explained. In the next chapter the data from the respondents will be discussed and presented to determine the factors that affect agility adoption in the organisation based on their experiences.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on achieving five basic objectives. The first provides a summary of respondents' demographics. The second presents an understanding of each respondent's views on the subject under study. As a result, the chapter presents findings based on the study's key objectives. It also presents findings on the structures and forms that enable agility in organisations. The chapter's final viewpoint demonstrates discoveries about what constitutes a working culture and group viability standards that may lead to fruitful agile organisations.

4.2 Biographical information of respondents

Characteristics of respondents though sometimes not the subject of research, are crucial elements because they assist in understanding individual's behaviour or adoption tendencies (Shaw & Constanzo, 1970). Analysing such elements may enhance the understanding of the adoption-decision making processes of any population of the study (Lategan & van Niekerk, 2007). Table 4.1 is a presentation of all respondents' biographical information considered for this study. From the findings, the sample consisted of 64% females and 36% males. In terms of racial affiliation of the respondents, the following results emerged: Indians (36%); White (29%); Coloured (21%); and Africans (14%) respectively. This categorisation is in line with the Employment Equity Act (No. 55 of 1998) of age, race, and gender. The average age of the respondents is 42. Table 4.2.1 indicates the roles/positions the respondents hold in various companies.

Table 4.1: Characteristics of respondents of the study

Respondents	Gender	Race	Age (Years)		Role
			Actual	Average	
Respondent 1	M	I	33	42	Digital transformation
Respondent 2	F	W	45		CEO
Respondent 3	F	I	48		Head IT

Respondent 4	F	I	38		PMO
Respondent 5	M	W	38		Consultant
Respondent 6	F	W	47		Agile Coach & PMO
Respondent 7	M	I	36		Head digital
Respondent 8	F	C	41		Agile Coach
Respondent 9	F	A	33		Agile Analyst
Respondent 10	F	A	43		Agile performance consultant
Respondent 11	M	C	40		CIO
Respondent 12	M	W	60		Master facilitator HR head
Respondent 13	F	C	39		Head of Talent
Respondent 14	F	I	51		Executive Consulting

M= Male; F= Female; A= Africans; C= Coloured; I= Indians; W= White

4.3 Themes and sub-themes

The findings of this study have revealed several themes (central idea in a narrative) and sub-themes (secondary idea in a narrative) that unfolded from the respondents' narratives. In this section, each of these sub-themes is presented and linked to the overall objectives of the study as outlined in chapter 1. Table 4.2 presents these themes and sub-themes based on the findings.

Table 4. 2: Themes and subthemes of the study

Theme		Subthemes
Agility as a term		Mindset or culture of employees The pace of response to change Continuous learning process Team effectiveness
Organisational strategic direction that enhances agility		Innovativeness Clear-cut goals Customer -centeredness Performance management
Leadership styles of organisations that enhance agility		Leading by example Collective leadership
Structures and processes that enable agility	Organisational structures	Communication process Operating model Decision-making process
	Organisational processes	Training and capacity building Roles and responsibilities Change management
Employee culture and team effectiveness principles that support agility	Employee culture	Accountability Shared purpose Growth mind-set
	Team effectiveness	Team cohesion Results-driven

4.4 Agility: organisational perspectives

This section explores respondents' perspectives and understanding of the term 'agility in organisation'. This is necessary to provide a good background understanding on the subject under study, based on respondents' lived experience. Based on the findings, four running sub- themes seemed consistent across the given responses.

The findings indicated that the respondents first viewed agility in organisations as a mindset or culture displayed by its employees. In this regard, agility is rather a lifestyle or attitude by which organisations do their day-to-day business, and not just a transient phenomenon. This sentiment was echoed by most of the respondents in this study (Respondents 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10 and 13). For example, Respondent 1 maintained that:

“Agile organisation is an organisation that adopts the agile culture, the agile mindset in their operations, in their ways of thinking about work, in their ways of engaging with their customers, in their ways of developing solutions for clients”.

Respondent 3 similarly stated that:

“Agile, right at the beginning is a mindset. Agile is a way of thinking, a way of life, a way of understanding how to manoeuvre the highly competitive and highly globally open market”.

The overarching principle in this perspective is that agile organisations have the agile culture or lifestyle embedded in them right from how they think about work, down to their daily operations.

The second perspective on agility based on the respondents’ narratives was that agility is the pace at which organisations respond to change. By implication, the respondents believed that agile organisations could respond quickly to changes around them based on current market demands. Most of the respondents (Respondents 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 12, and 13) shared this view. For example, Respondent 1 stated that:

“Agile organisations are organisations that are able to respond quickly to change, to adapt to markets; new market requirements; and new customer expectations. So, it’s the ability to change quickly, in order not to be stuck in one way of doing things”.

Respondent 1 supported this sentiment with the history of how the term ‘agile’ came about. It was said that the term ‘agile’ evolved from the IT industry due to the inefficiencies that plagued software development at the time. This problem was what led to the development and adoption of the 12 philosophies of agility today. This sentiment was also supported by

Respondent 7, who stated that:

“The idea of agility is that you move fast, but with the inputs from your stakeholders, you are designing solutions fast that will meet clients’ needs”.

Therefore, the essence of agility in this perspective is the ability to change as quickly as the market.

A third perspective on agility based on the respondents’ narratives was that in organisations it is a continuous learning process. In this view, the respondents saw agility as a process that grows and develops with time, with necessary improvements as it grows. The majority of the respondents (Respondents 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, and 13) held the above-mentioned view. For example, Respondent 6 stated that:

“About what matters most to its customers, ..., is being able to action those insight or learnings faster than its competitors. I think the whole thing about being a learning organisation and mind-set should be linked to agile because the danger is that you do the wrong thing faster with agile”.

In addition, Respondent 7 echoed the same sentiment that:

“Our learning and development feels like we do things in best form, but it is almost like afterwards, we do not measure if it is being successful and if we see a shift”.

Similarly, Respondent 10 emphasised that:

“The other key thing is that an agile environment is one that exhibits a culture of continuous improvement”.

Concurring further to this view was Respondent 13 who maintained that:

“Agile is not a destination ...”

From this view, the process of agility is like a continuum that keeps developing and improving with time, as market demands keep changing.

Furthermore, the respondents viewed agility in organisations as teamwork. This view was however a suggestion from the minority of respondents (Respondents 1, 3, 4, 5, and 13)

respectively. This notion suggests that no organisation can truly be said to be agile when only some of its members exercise the agile trait. Agile therefore as teamwork, means that all members of the organisation understand the culture and live by it. According to Respondent 4:

“The definition of agile is against a network of empowered teams that are aligned, accountable and collaborate in order to deliver”.

Similarly, Respondent 5 said:

“An agile organisation is where the end-to-end value chain is all performing, and execution is agile. So, you can’t have a part of the value chain working agile and the other part of the chain what they refer to is a waterfall methodology”.

Supporting this, Respondent 13 stated that:

“Agile is not a one fit all approach, but it is rather asking us the hard question, to say, how do we take it and apply it for us as an organisation in a way that makes sense, in a way that it actually will help us as an organisation to address and tackle certain challenges?”

Based on some respondents’ perspectives on agile organisations, the overarching sentiments were that firstly, have agility as a culture or lifestyle, through which business operations are conducted. Secondly, such organisations have developed measures to be able to respond quickly to changes based on current market demands. That is why efforts are usually based on studying what is currently obtainable in the market to be able to respond accordingly. Thirdly, agile organisations operate as a process of continuous learning where necessary improvements are made, notwithstanding its mistakes or successes. Finally, agile organisations operate as teamwork. In other words, every sector of the organisation understands the culture and does its daily operations accordingly.

4.5 Organisational strategic direction and leadership styles that lead to an agile organisation

Two main themes were found in this section. These are organisational strategic direction that leads to agile organisations, and leadership styles that lead to agile organisations. Four sub- themes were observed through the respondents’ narratives in relation to the first theme. The sub-themes are learning or innovative organisations; value creation (clear goals); client-

centricity; and rewards for performance/performance management. Concerning the latter, two sub-themes emerged in the responses by the participants, and these are leadership by example and collective leadership.

4.5.1 Organisational strategic direction that leads to agile organisations

As indicated, four sub-themes namely innovativeness, clear-cut goal, customer centeredness, and performance management emerged from the respondents' narratives. While the first four factors were advanced by most of the respondents, the last factor was mentioned by the minority. These are discussed as follows:

4.5.2 Innovative or learning organisations

According to the respondents' views, one sub-theme mentioned by most of the respondents (Respondent 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 10 and 14) in relation to organisational strategic direction, which leads to agility in organisations was that such an organisation is an innovative or a learning one. For example, Respondent 1 maintained that:

“A company that is agile can adapt quickly to change, respond to market conditions, develop new services faster and keeps on growing, learning and improving”.

Similarly, Respondent 2 stated that:

“The world is changing all the time, and so one must be able to change with it and keep on learning”.

Respondent 3 supported this assertion with an illustration. It was suggested that big organisations sometimes believe they are too big to fail. It was however said that sometimes this mindset can be a major setback to learning new things, and as such fail to move or change for the better. Respondent 3 further maintained that the essence of this notion is that the real issue about being agile is to be able to move and progress speedily, and all agile organisations need it, and achieving this ultimately results from their ability to learn.

4.5.3 Clear-cut goals/value creation

Another feature associated with the organisational strategic direction that leads to an agile organisation is the issue of developing clear-cut goals. In other words, from where you are, you know where the organisation is going or should go; you are not mistaken about it; and

no matter how many things come across as you tread along the agile path, you are not confused. In the pursuit of clear-cut goals and values, customers must be defined and carried along. These were the views of most of the respondents (Respondents 1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 11, 12, and 13). Respondent 8 opined that:

“The most important thing in the agile journey is your business strategy and business philosophy. You need to know where you are going, what you want and the kind of capability you need for your future”.

Elaborating on this, Respondent 3 maintained that although traditional agile methodologies emphasize aspects like behaviour-driven development and test-driven design, which seem to be more customer-centric, it means that external customers are not the only customers of the organisations, but the employees also. The advocacy, therefore, is that value creation and/or creating clear goals, must consider this. Similarly, Respondent 7 said:

“We can meet short term goals on a continuous basis. We do not have to focus on long-term goals, which by the time we miss them, we have actually lost much more time than what we thought. We actually need clear short-term goals which we have the ability to meet”.

4.5.4 Client centricity or customer-centeredness

Another recognized factor in organisational strategic direction that leads to an agile organisation is the phenomenon of client centricity or centeredness. The point here is that organisations cannot exist without their customers. Meanwhile, there must be a way that customer satisfaction takes the centre stage in every agile organisational operation. Most of the respondents (Respondents 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 10, 11, 13, and 14), shared this view. According to Respondent 11:

“There is a very close connection between the organisation and its customers or clients”.

Supporting this view, Respondent 6 maintained that another side of the coin that should be recognized as organisations grow in their agile position is the ability to draw a link between clients, as they differ in their worth. Organisations therefore should draw a balance; sometimes it could be towards the external, and other times towards the internal. The respondent concluded that, in a pure agile organisation, one would only work with external.

4.5.5 Performance Management and Rewards for Performance

Another aspect in organisational strategic direction that leads to agile organisations is the level of performance management of the organisation. When any organisation in their cultural definitions and dimension include employee performance systems and reward performance, sooner or later, such organisations would become agile. The minority of the respondents of this study (Respondents 2, 4, 6, and 7) held this view. For example, Respondent 14 posited that:

“Performance management would be very driven by the manner of performance and obviously there would be training and development to continuously up-skill people”.

In addition, Respondent 2 maintained that employees hardly leave such establishments where a reward system for high performance is observed. Furthermore, Respondent 2 said that in a reward system, staff motivations for performance usually proceed out of the rewards attached to performance, thus driving more motivations for higher performance. Other aspects of performance management spoken about are incentives for work, which may not necessarily be in monetary terms, but investments by the organisations in facilities that encourage staff comfort and development. Respondent 11 emphasized how people are incentivized within organisations, whether in the form of performance measurement or performance monitoring frameworks, as obtainable in a more traditional organisation, only result in a system where performance is driven out of voluntary motivations, and not through any commanded control. Relatedly, Respondent 2 submitted that organisations who are not scared in this regard, place themselves on a good pedestal to be agile.

4.6 Leadership Styles that Lead to Agile Organisations

The second theme that leads to agile organisations and which is addressed in this section, is the type of leadership styles of the organisation. The findings have indicated only two running sub-themes through respondents’ narratives. These sub-themes include leadership by example and collective leadership.

4.6.1 Leadership by Example

Observations from various narratives in this study have revealed that any organisation that

wants to become agile must start with the leaders/executives. According to Respondent 1, the unfortunate reality in many organisations is that leaders expect all employees, except themselves, to be agile. As such, sometimes, in their quest for agility, they go and invite agile consultants to train their staff on agile principles, but they as the leaders hold on to their rigid old tradition of leadership. Respondent 1 reiterated that until leadership shows the way, agility is impossible. This problem is said to be one of the main reasons why many organisations have never become agile. This sentiment was shared by most of the respondents (Respondents 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10,11, 12, 13, and 14).

Respondent 10 suggested that:

“...that it is not about leaders, it is about the practice of leadership. So, in agile, you will have to look at leadership as a practice rather than as a competence that sits in one person”.

Similarly, Respondent 6 revealed that:

“leadership plays an enormous role in the discussion of agile organisations”.

Illustrating further, Respondent 6 said that if the most senior executives in the South African or African context are prepared to walk the talk and be part of a required change, rather than just talk about it, and tell everyone else to do it, it is believed such action will immensely increase the chances of achieving agility.

4.6.2 Collective Leadership and Always Open to Learn

By implication, collective leadership and leadership that is always open to learning is the leadership that seeks to carry others along and ensures their input in the organisational processes is valued and respected. This was the view of Respondents 3, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13. For example, Respondent 5 lamented that one giant pitfall of agile organisations is not involving people early enough in big decisions being made. Respondent 10 queried that:

“How do we build leadership as practice that is, leadership of collectives and not as a central power? How do we challenge the ‘how’ that the power is exercised in the hierarchy?”

Drawing an analogy from crop cultivation, it is usually advisable that the very first thing is to master how to cultivate before you bring in the tools for cultivation. Respondent 3 emphasized that:

“I don’t believe that an organisation is actually led by its leadership. I believe that an organisation is led by its employee”.

Furthermore, Respondent 11 posited that:

“Leadership is inclusive. There are a lot of related terms used, such as serving leadership, inclusive and involved leadership, which should be how we describe agile organisations”.

Moreover, a collective leadership style that will lead to agile organisations must as well be very open to learning. According to Respondent 3, the greatest hindrance to agility in organisations is leadership. This relates to the inability of the organisation’s leadership to understand what agile truly entails, and how to buy in and support the process. Such understanding in this context is essential because, at the end of the day, the leaders would be the ones to set the measurement. One of the challenges is that most of the leaders in organisations are already advanced in years, and therefore think in very traditional ways (Respondent 3). The implication is that they are generally very conservative, and not open to understanding what it is to be a truly agile organisation. Respondent 9 stated that:

“If change is not driven from the top, then it becomes difficult to implement at the lower levels within the organisation. That tends to be a bottleneck in some companies, whereas, in other companies, senior management is willing to learn and change, and thus easier to implement change and to move with agile processes”.

The general view by most of the respondents was that it takes leadership that embraces ideas from others and with a listening ear to drive the agile dream in organisations.

4.6.3 Structures and Processes that Enable Agility in Organisations

In this section, two main themes namely structures and processes that enable agile organisations are presented. In terms of the former, three sub-themes have been found based on the respondents’ narratives. These sub-themes include issues of communication; operating model; and decision-making method of the organisation. From the latter, three sub-themes emerged, and these are training and capacity building; roles and responsibilities; and change management.

4.7 Organisational Structures that Enable Agility

In terms of organisational structures that enable organisations to be agile, three sub-themes were found in the respondents' narratives, and they are communication; operating model; and decision-making method of the organisation. These sub-themes are presented below:

4.7.1 Issues of Communication

Communication as generally understood is key to the success of any relationship, including organisational. It speaks of how information is disseminated within and outside of the organisation. It includes how information filters among leaders, between leaders and staff, among staff members, and between the organisation and its publics. The importance of good communication in the agility process was echoed by most of the respondents (Respondent 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9 and 13). According to Respondent 9, adequate communication throughout all spheres of the organisation is non-negotiable and building a streamlined team in this regard is very crucial to achieving agility. Similarly, Respondent 4 maintained that:

“Normally, in agile companies, you would see higher forms of engagement, because if communication does not work in agile organisations, agility does not work”.

According to Respondent 1, lack of communication has been one of the challenges they had to confront along their way to agility. Furthermore, Respondent 6 also emphasized that one can never underestimate the risk for not doing enough communication on while attempting to achieve agility.

4.7.2 Operating Model of the Organisation

According to some respondents, one of the organisation's structures that enables agility in organisations is the type of model upon which the organisation operates. This view by most of the respondents (Respondents 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 14) was based on the question: what system of operation does the organisation thrive on? According to Respondent 1, two types of operating models could be found in many organisations, but hamper agility. The first one is a top-down model. This is where an organisation is so rigid to the extent that everything must flow from the top. The respondents stated that more often, agility is driven from the bottom. In this regard, staff have been empowered with the requisite training, so that they

can turn organisational objectives to maximum success. Similarly, there is what may be called a paradoxical approach of operation. In this kind of approach, leaders speak differently from what they do. For example, they may want every staff member to operate in agile ways, but they retain elements of their old traditional and conservative ways of leadership. Respondent 1 also spoke of another approach in organisations, which favours agility. This is what he calls flat structure. According to this view, advanced agile organisations have a flat structure in operation whereby the managers and executives are not seen as controllers, but enablers. Also, they are not seen as giving out orders and controlling people and things but as enabling staff to function efficiently. In this regard, managers bring themselves down to the same level as the team members to help them function efficiently.

In addition, Respondent 3 maintained that an underlying factor that cannot be ruled out in agility is breaking down the verticals of organisations. Based on this view, big organisations have high vertical walls. In this regard, the organisational structure is split into very steep vertical walls. It was advised that if such organisations desire to be agile, they must flatten those walls to become horizontal in the reporting lines. Respondent 6 spoke of two models of operation in organisations. The first is a customer centred process. In this process, human-centred design or design thinking is inferred. The other observed model is a culture of experimentation. This is the extent to which people are provided with tools and infrastructure to test ideas and the extent to which decisions are daily driven and teams move from ideas to hypothesis, to experimental results.

4.7.3 Decision-making process of organisations

Another structural aspect of organisations that enables agility is the process of decision-making. The question is, how fast is the decision-making processes of the organisation? This process matters a lot if that organisation can become agile. Most of the respondents (Respondents 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, and 12) in this study held this view. According to Respondent 8, to know agile organisations, you need to ask questions like, are employees empowered to innovate, to make improvements, and to make decisions from the very lowest level of the organisation? Supporting this, Respondent 10 maintained that one benefit of agility is quick decision-making of the organisation. The truth is, if the decision-making cycle of an organisation is too long, there is no way that the organisation can become responsive, which is the main character of agility.

In many organisations, the process of decision-making is very long and tedious. This was

one of the concerns expressed by Respondent 7, who used her organisation as a case study, indicating that there sometimes seemed to be a problem of lack of trust to delegate, and this delays the speed of work. For example, the release of funds for what must be done may drag as it is ultimately related to issues of budget:

“We are slow to make decisions. We have to wait for the next budget cycle to get resources approved so that in the following year we can get things done. It’s just the pace of decision- making, the pace of releasing capital to get things done”.

The rate of decision-making can either enable agility or hamper it, depending on how the management of the organisation views it. Respondent 7 further stated that:

“You need to speed up decision making and the only way to speed it up is if you delegate it down. I think what we need is better decision-making frameworks or defined outcomes so that we can all be aligned to it”.

4.8 Organisational Processes that Enable Agility

The next main issue addressed by this study is organisational processes that enable agility, and three sub-themes were captured from the respondents’ narratives. The sub-themes are training and capacity building; individual roles and responsibilities; and change management process. While the first, third and fourth factors were views held by most of the respondents, the minority advanced the second factor.

4.8.1 Training and Capacity Building

According to Respondent 1: *“everyone must understand what agile is, which is very difficult to instil”*. Therefore, for organisations to be agile, they must invest in training and capacity building. However, Respondent 1 noted that in many organisations, there seemed to be a gap in this assumption. This is where leaders or executives both desire and encourage agility amongst their employees. Some even go the extra mile to bring agile consultants to conduct training for their staff, although the executives remain the same in their operational and leadership styles. Respondent 1 stated that this was one of the reasons why agility goals have been difficult to achieve in some quarters, suggesting that the desire for the required training must start from the leaders. That is how agility may succeed. The respondent stressed that:

“First of all, leadership must be trained and educated on what agility is all about, and they must be willing to start applying those agile principles, and changing also the way they do things, as well as their way of engaging with employees and other people in the organisation. That is why it is leadership first”.

Most of the respondents (2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 14) also shared this similar sentiment. Using the case of his establishment as an example, Respondent 7, maintained that:

“You need someone skilled to guide the team and to help steer them to agility. We did not have that initially and we did not invest in training the staff”. Supporting the crucial role of training and development, Respondent 9 emphasized, that *“As much as you want to push the change for agility, at the same time you need to ensure that the requisite skills are on the ground for the required change”.*

Similarly, Respondent 14 echoed that:

“We have to look at the skills and competencies within the organisation to see if it meets the required organisational needs. We have to revisit the functionality of the organisation to see if it’s not bloated. We have to refine it to make it more lean. We have to obviously look at the performance and development of the right skills needed”.

Respondent 3 for instance argued that the first place to begin from in the agile project is what was called human resources/human capital. The picture was painted better in the following statement.

“When it comes to being agile in organisations, I believe that you don’t start in IT. I believe you start at human capital because, if you think of it, human capital is the face of the company when it comes to meeting and managing prospective employees, introducing training, development, and learning. Human capital, in my opinion, generally needs to lead the way of an agile mindset because they need to transform first”.

4.8.2 Individual Roles and Responsibilities

Another organisational process that enhances agility is individual roles and responsibilities. This view was expressed largely by the minority of the respondents (1, 3, 5, 6, and 11). According to Respondent 1, an important question that must be cleared in the agile journey process is: what are the various roles and responsibilities in the journey? This is because, sometimes, resistance comes from some quarters of the organisation in the bid to become agile. This sometimes can arise because of fear from certain employees that they are going to lose their relevance in the organisation. The reason is that, once agility is embraced, certain roles and responsibilities might have to change, thus giving room for agile culture.

Based on the view of Respondent 1, adequate clarification and communication is required by management as agile processes do not mean that certain persons will lose their jobs or relevance. Respondent 3 said thus:

“From a people point of view, everyone needs to identify their roles, responsibilities and how they are likely to change with agility”.

To help the challenges that come with roles and responsibilities as organisations seek to be agile, Respondent 3 suggested that:

“To split the organisation into logical bits and pieces; understand the various pros and cons or barriers to progression in each of the business units. Try and find similarities between the business units, understand the various players and people that work within these units, test the overall alignment of the workforce and employees, then roll it upwards”.

4.8.3 Coping with Change and Change Management

Another agile enabling factor in organisation processes is how people cope with change, and how change is managed. This was the view of most of the respondents in this study. According to Respondent 1, change usually brings along with it the problem of fear and anxiety. Many people are scared, largely because they lack knowledge of the change itself and the overriding benefits. Due to this challenge, Respondent 1 advocated that change managers or people who will manage the change process are crucial if the expected benefits of the change would be realized. Supporting the above idea, Respondent 9 stated that:

“Change management is very important when it comes to implementing agility

because in as much as we want to be agile, the organisation needs to be prepared for the change associated”.

Respondent 4 also spoke about a company being a change-management fit. It was stated that any company that is not a change-management fit, cannot succeed in implementing agility. Using their own experience, Respondent 13 said that two problems that have stood against agile change were the problem of a lack of buy-in by top management, and that of change management. According to Respondent 5, among the ‘who’ questions to ask during the agile project is, who needs to manage this change and communicate with people? In this regard, Respondent 7 said that most times, the expected change associated with agility is too big for people to make at once. Therefore, change management capability is solicited for, which relates to communication, marketing, training, learning and development. Other respondents who held similar views were Respondents 2, 7, 10, and 14 respectively.

4.9 Employee Culture and Team Effectiveness Principles that Support Successful Agile Organisations

This section introduces two main themes in the agile discourse. These are employee culture, and team effectiveness principles that support successful agile organisations. These two concepts are dealt with in the following subsections.

4.9.1 Employee Culture that Supports Successful Agile Organisations

Given the findings of this study, four sub-themes emerged from the respondents’ narratives in relation to employee culture that supports successful agile organisations. These sub-themes include staff accountability; shared purpose; growth mindset; and staff collaboration. While the first two factors were advanced by the minority of the respondents, the last two were views held by the majority.

4.9.2 Staff Accountability and/or Responsibility

The first culture of employees that supports agile organisations as indicated by findings is staff accountability and/or being responsible. This view was however advanced by the minority of the respondents. According to Respondent 13, accountability and responsibility should be seen from both the angle of individual employee level, and at the level of organisation. The understanding is that, once there is accountability in mind, the set objectives for agility will be much easier. Respondent 13 cited an example that employees at the time of production should ask the question: are my customers satisfied with this

service I am giving? Also, organisations should as well ask the question: are our employees satisfied to be part of this organisation or part of the production process of this good or service? Both questions have a great deal in improving steps toward agility (Respondent 13). Furthermore, Respondent 1 maintained that there should also be accountability between employees and that they need to show commitment in delivering whatever they have committed themselves to. In other words, people must be more accountable for their work. Further, Respondent 13 posited that change as in agility, does not always mean people should become complacent, but rather, people should ask, how do I recreate myself, so I can remain relevant with change to keep delivering what the end customer wants. While emphasizing the importance of accountability amongst staff, Respondent 3 said that at the end of the day, the person going to hold organisations accountable is the customer. That is why lack of accountability will eventually hinder agile transformation goals.

4.9.3 Shared Purpose

Another employee culture that favours agile organisations according to respondents, is shared purpose. It relates to the situation where everyone in the organisation understands the vision of the organisation and the laid-down processes to get there. In other words, everyone speaks the same language. This was the sentiment of the minority respondents in the study. For example, Respondent 3 said that the success factor in the agile project is when everyone in the organisation has the same mindset, the same ideology, and aligns with the overall vision of the organisation.

Explaining further, Respondent 3 said:

“The moment you can ask every employee what the vision is, what the strategy is, or what the overall objective is for the organisation, and everyone is able to give the same answer, that is the success factor”.

Similarly, Respondents 5, 6, 9, 11, and 14, maintained that it is important for all teams and members of teams in an organisation to embrace agility, and to begin aligning their operations accordingly.

4.9.4 Growth Mentality/Mind-set

Due to the uncertainties associated with change, it is mostly resisted. This is a running theme identified as one of the employee cultures that promote agility. Most of the respondents supported this view. According to Respondent 5, in organisations, you will have from even

the start of the transformation journey have people who do not like change, and as such, they will seek to resist it. In this regard, Respondent 4 emphasized that such people always look for the slightest opportunities or problems with the change to show that they were never really in support of it. This sentiment was also shared by Respondent 6. It was said that not everyone likes to change or wants to innovate. The findings have therefore revealed that organisations which lack employees with a growth mentality may suffer in the quest for agility. For agility therefore to succeed, Respondent 13 stated that:

“There should be a moving away from the fixed mindset to a mindset that wants to learn; the mindset that says, we have not arrived, we want to learn mindset; we want to see how we can improve mindset”.

As such, Respondent 3 argued that what is needed is that organisations will have to start developing generalists as opposed to specialists because cross-functional ability speaks to mindsets and understanding how things work together. In all, any move towards agility is a move towards growth and improvements, and without gainsaying, this is usually the mindset of all agile organisations. The above notion was also held by Respondents 1, 2, 8, and 14 respectively.

4.9.5 Collaboration of Employees

Collaboration of employees in organisations is another main culture of employees that enhances agility. This factor in the agility process was advanced by most respondents. For example, Respondent 6 posited that collaboration is the extent to which ideas, insights and solutions correlate. Furthermore, it was said to be the extent to which employees cut across disciplines, organisations, geographic boundaries, and to work together as teams. Moreover, Respondent 3 emphasized that collaboration is very important in the agile project as it is a driving force of transformation towards agility. It was stated further that collaboration is a sign of an organisation that has successfully transformed into an agile organisation. To emphasize certain factors that aid agility, Respondent 13 submitted that:

“Agility revolve around the organisation’s culture and then rotates around people. If we want to gauge whether an organisation is ready or not for agile, the first thing you need to gauge is their culture. Looking at this, then you look at various aspects of the organisation’s culture, such as, how teams are set up. The next thing will be, how the teams engage with one another (collaboration),

and then, how work is delivered from start to finish, with the end customer in mind”.

Other respondents who emphasized collaboration as a factor for achieving agility were 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 12. According to Respondent 4, using the examples of the two global agility organisations’ leaders, Microsoft, and Facebook; competence in collaboration is much higher in organisational operations. Adding to the definition of collaboration as a factor of agility, Respondent 1 spoke about organisations and extending collaboration to customers.

4.9.6 Team Effectiveness Principles that Support Agile Organisations

Working as a team is one of the major keys to the success of any business endeavour as it is generally said that ‘together we stand, divided we fall’ Dickinson (1748). This view was expressed as one of the main factors required for the success of agile organisations. From the findings, two sub-themes namely cohesion among team members and results-driven were found from the respondents' responses. The first factor was the notion expressed by the minority of the respondents, while the last was echoed by the majority.

4.9.7 Cohesion among Staff and Team Members

Cohesion means the degree to which employees of an organisation work together as a unit. This was expressed by the minority of the respondents of this study as one of the elements of team effectiveness principles that promote agility in organisations. According to Respondent 1, when there is a spirit of togetherness, everyone realizes that they are a part of the objective, and cannot work in isolation, which is a great booster for agility in organisations. He went on to justify his view with an illustration of how the idea of cohesion works to promote agility. He narrated the following:

“Let’s say I finish my part of the work and there is another team member who has not finished, when there is cohesion of team, I am expected to assist so that the whole team can finish on time as a team, instead of taking another piece of work”.

In the view of Respondent 8, to favour the agile course, management must aim at ensuring that everyone is at par with the idea and is working towards it. The respondent said that:

“The agile capability has to spread around all functions. As an example, you

cannot implement an agile methodology in IT department only and not in HR or across all the other functions and the rest of the business”.

In realizing the agile dream, Respondent 1 re-echoed that:

“We need to make sure that everyone knows and has the same vision”.

Supporting this, Respondent 7 maintained that to succeed in the agile dream:

“Everyone needs to be aligned and everyone needs to work together. You cannot just do it in pockets”. This sentiment was also echoed by Respondent 11, for agility to work, everybody in the organisation is aligned with overarching sense of purpose”.

4.9.8 Result-driven

Customer satisfaction is the driving force for any agile-driven organisation because the more customers are satisfied, the more the organisation’s market grows, and thus more enlargement for the organisation. This again was one of the team effectiveness principles indicated by most of the respondents (1, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14). Respondent 14 suggested that:

“At the end of the day, the customer wants an environment where they can come in, get what they need when they need it and at the time they need it. So, if organisations can be effective enough to do that and deliver on their customer needs, then agility is inevitable”.

In support of this point, Respondent 1 submitted that predictability is the hallmark of all agile teams. According to this respondent, these are the matrices of measuring agile teams. In other words, they are usually driven to achieve results. Agility transformation helps organisations focus their production processes to meet customers’ needs in a good space of time (Respondent 14).

4.10 Conclusion

This chapter presented various respondents’ perspectives as concerned agile organisations which many of the respondents first viewed as organisations that have agility as a culture or lifestyle. In addition, these organisations were said to respond quickly to changes based on market demands. In addition, the respondents said the organisations continuously improve

with time, learning from both mistakes and successes. The chapter indicated further that every member of the organisation, beginning with the executives must understand the agile principles and they must do their work accordingly. Based on the objectives of this study, various themes, and sub-themes emerged in respondents' narratives. Based on the objective that addresses organisational strategic direction and leadership styles that lead to agile organisations, the findings were in form of four sub-themes, and implied that agile organisations are an innovative and a learning organisation; everyone is clear about the agile vision; they are very customer-centred; and they have a performance management system. In respect of the latter, two sub-themes were discovered from various respondents' narratives. These sub-themes indicated that agile organisation's leaders lead by example, and they also cultivate a culture of collective leadership.

Similarly, this study also endeavoured to investigate organisational structures and processes that enable agile organisations. According to the findings, three running sub-themes were discovered based on the respondents' narratives as they relate to the former. These sub-themes showed that agile organisations have good communication systems; their operational model is sound; and their method of decision-making is fast. In terms of the latter, agile organisations have a training and capacity building program for their staff; issues of individual roles and responsibilities are well addressed; and they as well have a good change management process. The final focus of this study was to address employee culture and team effectiveness principles that support agility. Concerning the former, findings have shown that four sub-themes were seen running through the respondents' narratives. The sub-themes showed that agile organisations have a system of staff accountability; everyone in the organisation shares the same purpose/vision; they all possess a growth mentality; and they know how to work with each other (collaboration), whether within or outside the organisation. About the latter, two sub-themes were however discovered from the respondents' narratives. These themes have revealed that in agile organisations, there is adequate cohesion among staff and all employees are driven with the desire to satisfy customers, or what may also be called result driven.

The subsequent chapter presents the interpretation of the results and the conclusions drawn from them.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

The discussion of findings also known as the interpretation section is the stage in a research process, where inferences are drawn from analysed data. According to Kothari (2019), through a discussion of findings, researchers search for broader meanings of research findings. The original intent of this study was to:

- 1 investigate factors that lead to an agile organisation in South Africa;
- 2 to determine the organisational strategic direction and type of leadership style that can lead to an agile organisation;
- 3 to determine the structures and processes that need to be in place to enable agility in the organisation;
- 4 to determine the employee culture and team effectiveness principles that support and ensure a successful agile organisation.

This chapter, therefore, is divided into four distinct subsections, against the backdrop of literature. The first part looks at some findings regarding the respondents' perspectives on agile organisations. The second aspect discusses the findings about organisational strategic direction and the type of leadership styles that lead to agile organisations. The third aspect addresses issues relating to those findings concerning organisational structures and processes that enable agility in organisations. The last part discusses the findings on employee culture and team effectiveness principles that support and ensures successful agile organisations.

5.2 Agility: Organisational Perspectives

Based on these study findings, the respondents' perspectives on agile organisations were classified into four distinct categories. The first perspective viewed agility in organisations as a mindset or culture displayed by employees of the organisation. The notion is that real agile organisations have developed agile principles as a lifestyle, which is understood and displayed at all levels of the organisation. This view agrees with Njoki (2020), whereby the study emphasized that knowledge- centred culture is strongly anchored on strategic management, and which is the main feature of agility in organisations. This view was also stressed by Aghina, Handscomb, Ludolph, Róna & West (2020); and Nafchi and Mohelská (2020). Though three types of organisational culture were put forward by Nafchi and

Mohelská (2020), the innovative culture however stood out as the type of culture that is more relevant for the execution of Industry 4.0 (the fourth industrial revolution), which employs all principles of agility. Buttressing further, Horlach, Drechsler, Shirmer, & Drews (2020, p. 6198) stated that, “To be effective, agility on the team level also requires a corresponding agile mindset ...” Arell (2020) thus argued that, for an organisation to be agile, it is not a matter of practice and just a compliance exercise, but it is about an overhaul of the organisation’s culture, which starts with the thinking or a mindset shift from the leaders of that organisation.

The second perspective on agility as shown by the findings of the study was that agility in organisations is the pace of response to change. In other words, agile organisations are very quick to respond to changes based on market demands and changes in their environments. This is the essence of the term itself, ‘agile’. This view has been supported by several researchers. For example, Vejseli, Rossmann, & Connolly (2020) maintained that agility is defined as the ability for organisations to respond operationally and strategically to changes in its external environment; and when doing so, the response will have to be very quick and effective for the organisation to be regarded as an agile organisation. Aghina et al. (2018) & Miller (2016) also supported this finding. According to Aghina et al. (2018), agility allows an organisation to quickly adapt the strategy to ensure it responds to the fast- changing needs of customers. Similarly, agility allows faster decision-making, allows for flexibility and consistent pace, and allows faster and quality delivery by understanding that continuous feedback loops will always ensure that solutions are adapted quicker and tested in time for the next release (Miller, 2016).

The third notion on agility in organisations, as this research findings have indicated was that agile organisations are continuously in a process of learning. The perspective from this study found agility in organisations as an ongoing process, where necessary adjustments and improvements are made, as new ideas and opportunities emerge. According to Njoki (2020), formulating and implementing an agile strategy should be valued as a continuous process of learning, in which the quality of strategies employed should depend on the learning mechanisms of the organisation. This perspective is congruent with the third phase of the five operating- model dimensions of agility suggested by Aghina et al. (2020). The phase is the ‘process’ phase, where organisational decisions have to be rapid and fast, and a learning cycle is incorporated, as part of the operational culture of the organisation, if it will be able to meet up with objectives of agility. This finding is also consistent with the fourth suggested

character trait found in agile organisations, which suggests that agile organisations create and foster a culture of continuous improvement to sustain profitability and company success. Furthermore, this finding is consistent with the fourth key agile organisations' workforce attribute, as suggested by Benstead (2019), which is the attribute of trust and continuous learning.

The fourth and final perspective, borne by respondents of the study considered agility in organisations as teamwork. This perspective revealed that organisations that are matured in agile principles work as a team. Every employee has been able to understand and develop the agile culture and work for the common good of achieving organisational goals and objectives. In the five operating-model dimensions' suggestion from Aghina et al. (2020), this phenomenon is called the 'structure' phase, which is, the phase where agile organisations develop a network of empowered teams. In a journey to becoming an agile organisation, trust becomes a critical factor as the agile way of working is dependent on collaboration between team members and across teams (Benstead, 2019).

5.3 Organisational Strategic Direction and Leadership Styles that Lead to Agile Organisation

The first major theme as findings of this study have revealed associated with agility in organisations, indicated the strategic direction of organisations. The strategic direction of an organisation is a defined path envisaged by an organisation's leadership. According to Waithira Ng'ang'a, Waiganjo, & Njeru (2018), strategic direction is commonly referred to as strategic intent; meaning a short statement stating where an organisation intends to be in the future. Following Glesne & Pedersen's (2020) study, established firms that are implementing agile ways can adapt and renew their strategic direction if factors such as agile management and learning culture are in place. Based on the findings of this study, four strategic direction-related groups of factors, which enhance agility in organisations were discovered in this study. These include innovativeness; leadership practice; clear-cut goals (value creation); customer centeredness (client-centricity); and performance management.

According to Njoki (2020), the innovative mindsets of employees is very crucial, because it leads to the innovativeness of the organisation, reduce costs, and bring about business transformation, which is a great asset for developing agile organisations. Aghina et al. (2020) also emphasized the role of innovativeness as a factor for agility. In their view, due to the rapidly changing environments of our world today, huge pressures are mounting on organisations to find innovative ways to remain competitive. Geiger, Elshaw, & Jacques

(2020) also provided another definition of organisational agility, and this further clarifies this factor in enhancing agility. According to them, organisational agility is a firm-wide capability to handle changes that often arise unexpectedly in the environments of business through quick and innovative ways that exploit changes as platforms grow and prosper.

Similarly, the factor of clear-cut goal was emphasized by the respondents as an enabler of agility in organisations as it relates to its strategic direction. This factor addresses issues of where an organisation wants to be in the next one year, five years, or 20-30 years. The findings of the study emphasised that ensuring the goal of the organisation is clear and explicit is one factor that ensures agility in organisations. An organisation's vision is a short statement that describes what the organisation is working towards daily (Harraf, Wanasika, Tate & Talbott, 2015). This finding seems congruent with Wright's (2019) argument that agile transformation all starts with a vision or a goal; the most successful organisations today are those that have clearly defined what they are trying to achieve. This is where many organisations, unfortunately fail in their agile transformation project.

The next strategic direction-related factor that enhances agility in organisations as discovered in this study is customer centeredness/centricity. This is regarded as the process where customer satisfaction is at the heart of organisational operations. Using a case study of a telecom operator from Asia-Pacific on how they transformed into an agile organisation, factors such as improved employee engagement, increased customer-centricity, and faster time to market were their main tools (Aghina et al., 2020). Supporting this, Glesne & Pedersen (2020) in a study titled, 'Strategic agility: adapting and renewing strategic direction' maintained that as organisations become agile, four characters do emerge in such organisations. These are increased frequency of incremental innovations because of the outcomes of being flexible; increased speed; customer focus; and employee engagement. Njoki (2020) thus concluded that one outstanding benefit of agility is that it builds value for consumers, or what may also be called customer fortification.

A final organisational strategic direction-related factor that leads to agile organisations based on the findings of this study is performance management. In this regard, performance management is an organisational system where there is a measure in place to assess staff performance, and perhaps corresponding rewards for good performance. This according to findings is very crucial for agility transformation in organisations. Geiger et al. (2020) contended that measures such as these are present in virtually every aspect of human endeavour, and their role is undeniable in both individual and organisational performance.

Contending further, Geiger et al. (2020) suggested that their mere existence often have several benefits for the organisation, and the benefits include stirring changes in individual behaviour; providing a means to quantify success; contributing to the development of effective incentive structures; and motivating towards achieving higher-level objectives. In support, Njoki (2020) submitted that among many things emphasized by agile organisations are performance management and customer service.

A second main theme that enhances agility in organisations as suggested by this study is the leadership style of the organisation. This finding agrees with some previous findings. For example, Njoki (2020) posited that the leadership type endorsed by an organisation is an important factor necessary for agile transformation. How leaders of organisations show leadership qualities turn out to be a great benefit for employee wellbeing and performance (Njoki, 2020). Rzepka & Bojar (2020) also suggested that leadership in agile organisations has great potential for the organisation provided agile qualities are developed in such leaders. There are characters of leaders that enable agility. However, indications in the literature (Rzepka & Bojar, 2020) are that, due to the complexity in the definition of character traits of leaders, it is impossible to have a universal list of attributes that suit all situations of leaders. Therefore, there will always be differences of opinions among authors. For example, Breu, Hafner, Weber, & Novak (2005) suggested the following attributes, namely, speed of response to changes in market environments, continuous development of one's skills and their proper assessment, ability to adapt to new working situations, quick implementation of changes, use of mobile technologies, as well as knowledge sharing. Additionally, Plonka (1997) suggested attributes like quick adaptation to the necessities of new equipment; ability to lead teams that employ other working methods; ability to do several activities simultaneously; developing positive relationships with junior staff members; ability to make efficient decisions relevant to the organisation; ability to adapt to new work methods; ability to classify situations in the context of opportunities and threats.

Nonetheless, the findings of this study suggest that two strategic direction-related characteristics of leadership styles enhance agile transformation. These styles include the factor of leadership by example, and collective leadership and always being open to learning. Although other styles like flexible leadership, leadership that is always learning, and leaders that trust others were also suggested, however, their significance was found to be too small for consideration in this study due to the number of persons who suggested them. Regarding leadership, agile leaders are leaders who do not demand what they cannot

do. They lead by example. The overarching relevance of leading by example in an agile transformation project agrees with Arell (2020), who observes that all leaders in agile organisations need to develop a catalytic leadership style because it focuses on inspiring others to perform. This finding is like Agile Business Consortium's (2017) suggestion of the set of nine behavioural principles for agile transformation. The first of these principles is that leaders need to lead by example in living the behaviours.

By implication, collective leadership and leadership always open to learning seeks to carry others along and ensures their input in the organisational processes is valued and respected. According to Miller (2016), agile organisations are organisations whose leaders understand that the most effective way to lead is by serving others and allowing room for collaborative decision-making. Collective leadership is what Glesne & Pedersen (2020) also called leadership unity or collective commitment. They implied that it is the ability of an organisation's leadership to speak and act as one, and it is the ability of the senior management to make and carry out what is called bold joint strategic decisions quickly without creating a perception or opportunity for a loss. Aghina et al. (2018) suggested that the environment in an agile organisation is designed in such a way to empower individuals in that it allows opportunities to foster transparency, communication, collaboration, and chance encounters between team members where they can learn from each other and transfer knowledge.

5.4 Organisational Structures and Processes that Enable Agility in Organisations

Organisational structure is another main theme revealed by this study as an enabler of agility. According to Hesselberg (2018), the traditional organisational structures such as the functional and divisional focus on optimizing resource control and compliance; however, agile organisational structures focus on speed and agility. As in the case of leadership styles that enhance agility, there is no one correct agile organisational structure or design, but rather, it is dynamic, flexible, and ultimately aims at optimizing customer value (Hesselberg, 2018). Based on this, the findings of this study have suggested that agile organisational structures include an organisation's communication system; operational model; and decision-making process.

Moreover, the communication system and processes in an organisation are said to be a major factor in agile transformation (Gandomani et al., 2013). Nakano, Muniz, & Batista (2013)

have also maintained that the existence of good communication channels in conjunction with an environment of trust, and high degrees of honesty is perceived to possess a high vibrant atmosphere for implicit knowledge partaking which is one agency for agility. This finding supports Njoki's (2020) report that one of the factors that aid agility in organisations is a clear organisational communication channel. Another factor based on the findings of this study is the organisation's operating model. This finding is in line with Whitworth & Biddle's (2007), submission after they investigated motivation and cohesion in agile teams. According to their findings, agile team routines that allow for continuous and open communication was one of the factors that contributed to agile team cohesion.

The type of model upon which an organisation's daily operations is centred is another major organisation's structural factor that enables agility in organisations. Aghina et al. (2020) also mentioned that this factor is the fourth part of the five operating-model dimensions required for agility. It is the phase in the transformation cycle of organisations, where there is a dynamic people model that ignites passion amongst all employees to commit to the vision of agility. An operating model is defined as a new coordinated, seamless way of running the organisation so the organisation can achieve step-change improvements in profits, customer experience, and reduced cost (Brockmann et al., 2019). The type of model on which an organisation operates plays a significant role in its agile transformation process. Using the rapid changes associated with the advent of COVID-19 as an example, Comella-Dorda, Lohiya, & Speksnijder (2016) stressed that for many organisations, the level of COVID-19 impact called for questioning of their operating models. Stressing further, the authors stated that one main lesson from the year 2020 is that organisations that had already embedded their operating models responded better to the COVID-19 pandemic than others (Comella-Dorda et al., 2016).

The third organisation's structure-related factor that enables agility, according to the findings of this study, is the speed of decision-making of the organisation. Due to the high levels of bureaucracies in traditional organisations, decisions are often very slow. This is one of the main problems agile transformation processes seek to address, especially due to the unpredictable nature of markets nowadays. In the five operating-model dimensions for agility suggested by Aghina et al. (2020), this is the third phase of the model, and it is also called the process phase. The phase is where any agile organisation transformation processes receive a rapid decision-making process and a good learning cycle. According to Aghina et al. (2018) an agile organisation is designed for both stability and dynamism and has a

people-centred culture where a network of self-organizing teams are staffed with empowered employees to ensure rapid decision-making top-down and bottom-up. Emphasizing the relevance of the agile manifesto, Brosseau et al. (2019) maintained that it is characterised by continuous engagements and interactions, which ensure that decisions are made timeously and continuous improvements to client's solutions are made.

Organisational processes were also suggested as one of the major themes in this study as an enabler of agility in organisations. Some of the findings indicated the need for training and capacity building process; individual roles and responsibilities; and change management process. Due to the uniqueness of agile processes especially its usual involvement in the implementation of new ideas. Therefore, training and capacity building processes should as well be an integral part of the operational model so that employees can catch up with the new measures required to attain the agile dream. According to Evwierhurhoma & Oga (2020), of utmost importance is the need to give employees opportunities to build and develop new skills, attitudes, and knowledge, identify their training needs, which will enhance their efficiency in the agile journey. The next process-related factor that enables agility according to the findings of this study is the factor of individual roles and responsibilities. Aghina et al. (2018) stressed that ensuring clear, accountable roles is one of the five major steps in implementing agile transformation principles; therefore, individual roles and responsibilities must be clarified without ambiguity. This finding agrees with the suggestion made by Comella-Dorda et al. (2016) about four stage operating model for implementing agility in organisations. According to this suggestion, the third focus of any agile transforming organisation should be the roles and responsibilities of its employees. In this sense, organisations whose scrum teams formerly consisted of developers and testers must now include all jobs into self-organizing scrum teams to operate successfully.

The next process-related factor enabling agility in organisations, based on this study findings is the ability of the organisation to manage change. Although change is good in the agile world, it brings along with it several challenges that if not properly managed, create certain kinds of organisational breakdown. That is why every organisation aiming for the agile transformation process, should have and be able to manage change so that the benefits of change can be fully realized. Niever, Trinh, Kerres, & Hahn (2021) affirmed that all agility is introduced through proper management and organisations usually incorporate measures to deal with challenges that come with the introduction of agility transformation principles.

5.5 Employee Culture and Team Effectiveness Principles that Support Successful Agile Organisations

Based on the findings of this study, employee culture and team effectiveness principles were two other main themes suggested in this study as enhancing agility in organisations. Agile Business Consortium (2017) defined culture as the way things are done in an organisation, the glue that binds everyone in the organisation together to achieve the ultimate competitive advantage. Abraham (2019) maintained that organisational culture is defined as shared beliefs and assumptions that have been entrenched over a period through trial and error, solving problems, and just engaging. In this regard, the respondents suggested four-employee culture-related factors. These factors are staff accountability; shared purpose; growth mentality; and staff collaboration. Njoki (2020) also mentioned that agility is all about meeting the ever- changing needs of customers and showing them some levels of accountability. Accountability in this sense could be towards customers, management, and team members. In addition, Aghina et al. (2020) argued that for successful agile organisations to satisfy customers, their teams operate with high standards of accountability. In the five attributes suggested by Lencioni (2002) as regards team cohesion model, team accountability is paramount. In this sense, members of well- meaning teams that aim for agility are accountable to one another.

The second important employee culture-related factor suggested by this study is shared purpose. This factor is different from the goal/vision discussed under strategic direction. Shared purpose implies that employees or team members understand the vision of the organisation as well as that of their teams and work collectively. In another submission by Aghina et al. (2020), five operating-model dimensions of agility are the first phase. It is the phase where there is a shared purpose and vision embodied across the organisation. This factor is what Benstead (2019) regarded as ‘goal-driven in the eight key attributes that underpin agile organisations’ workforce. According to this view, organisations would demonstrate a sense of shared purpose that clearly articulates the strategy and the purpose of the agile adoption; and the strategy and purpose are shared and socialised across the organisation and meant to be adopted by all employees. This finding also supports Mahadevan, Paquette, Rashid, & Ustinov’s (2019) view that shared purpose is eventually created when all employees in the organisation use their understanding of the strategy to make decisions that will be consistent with the institution’s strategy on a day-to-day basis to do the right thing the right way, and at the right time to eventually create a shared purpose.

Moreover, the factor of growth mentality/mindset was also suggested as an employee culture-related factor enhancing agility in organisations. This factor speaks to certain individuals who are pessimistic rather than those who are optimistic, and to the conservative rather than the progressive and the innovative. People with such a mindset will always fight change, notwithstanding the potential benefits associated with it. However, one main character associated with agile organisations' workforce, and necessary for agile transformation is a progressive mindset. Benstead (2019) asserted that the agile mindset embraces and adapts easily to change; the agile culture encourages continuous transformation and therefore supports organisational change to remain competitive and responsive to the needs of the customers.

Furthermore, staff collaboration was also suggested as a necessary employee culture-related factor supporting an agile organisation's success. In reference to the works of Bessant et al. (2001); Lin et al. (2006); & Meade & Sarkis (1999); Walter (2021) suggested that collaborative relationships within organisations are one of the four groups of agility enablers. This finding also corroborates Miller's (2016) ten-character traits found in the agile workforce. It was stated that agile organisations employ top talents and encourage collaboration to benefit from the collective intelligence of diverse thinking. Benstead (2019) for instance, submitted that agile transformational processes require trust as a critical factor because ultimately, the agile way of working depends on collaboration between team members and across teams.

The final main theme suggested as enhancing agility in organisations is team effectiveness principles. Team effectiveness and team performance though sometimes used interchangeably, has been distinguished by Maaranniitty (2020). Accordingly, team effectiveness is a compliment for team performance. Salas, Sims, & Burke (2005) provided a list of components affecting team performance and team effectiveness. According to the authors, these include team leadership; a model of mutual performance; behaviour backup; adaptability and the orientation of the team. Concerning this study, team effectiveness factors enabling or supporting agility are team cohesion and results driven. The cohesion of team members has been described in some studies as the main factor for the agile transformation process. Largely, agility principles are built around empowering organisational teams to be self-organizing and be able to make decisions on their own that enhance the speed of product deliveries. This finding seems to be in line with what Dingsoyr, Faegri, Dyba, Haugset, & Lindsjorn (2016) reported, about five factors that strongly affect the performance/effectiveness of teams, with team cohesion being of them. Similarly,

Shmuel & Meni (2006) posited that cohesion is one of the factors that influence performance in teams.

A further team effectiveness principles-related factor supporting agility in organisations as suggested in this study is that agile organisations are results-driven.

This however seems to be an obvious factor because the need to be more competitive, rapidly growing, and viable in a world of unpredictability is the key driver for agility. Using the banking sector as an example, Alasad (2020) maintained that banks were pushed to improve and occasionally discard parts of their old techniques, replacing them with more modern and flexible ones to remain competitive. Fowler & Highsmith (2001) also believed that one of the main reasons for the agile manifesto is to be able to respond rapidly to changes around you as an organisation instead of limiting yourself to plan. Notably, agile organisation transformation is all about capability to remain viable, despite changes (positive or negative) around you; and based on the eight key attributes of agile organisation suggested by Benstead (2019), this factor is called ‘performance-driven’. According to Benstead (2019), agile workers can largely choose when they work and where from; the priority is to achieve the best results for your business, and not to work a set of hours in a specific location.

5.6 Limitations of the Study

This work has accomplished its aims and objectives; however, some limitations were encountered.

The interviews were initially designed to be a face-to-face conversation, but due to COVID-19 lockdown rules initiated across South Africa at that time, it was difficult to interview many relevant organisations as they were also asked to obey safety rules against COVID-19. The researcher relied on Zoom and MS Teams platforms to conduct the interviews. In cases when there was a load shedding, the planned interviews were rescheduled, and the respondents were further pressurised for the time that was required in terms of availability for these interviews. The above-mentioned challenges negatively impacted the quality of the recording, transcription, and timelines of the work in some instances.

Another limitation was related to the research method used. Qualitative research method is limited in several ways.

1. The sample size:

This research employed qualitative research method and unlike in quantitative research, the sample size used in this research is insufficient to draw broad or generalized conclusions on agility implementation or practice within the financial institution.

2. Quality of the questions:

All the questions and interpretation of data are subjective. As a result, the researcher had to ask additional questions such as how and why the respondent/respondents feel a certain way.

3. Bias:

Respondents may feel compelled to give responses that please the interviewer rather than their genuine feelings. This may have a negative impact on the findings.

5.7 Recommendations

Based on the findings and in line with the conclusion drawn from the study, the following recommendations were made.

1. There should be routine capacity and leadership training for the executive or management team of organisations in South Africa. The training should aim at implementing the strategic drivers and leadership styles required for agility adoption.
2. There should be regular re-structuring of organisations, and their processes to enhance smooth communication across all levels of the workforce, improve the operational model as well as decision-making to enable the organisation to drive agility.
3. There is a need for periodic training and capacity building for all levels of staff aimed at exposing them to the demands of an agile organisation, as well as to prepare them to adapt to changes that will enable them to play active roles in ensuring an agile organisation.
4. Organising sensitisation campaigns aimed at entrenching the employee culture of accountability, growth mindset, as well as team cohesion to lead to an agile organisation are also required.
5. Organisations need to set well-defined targets for each staff and department through

periodic seminars, and memos to encourage a result-oriented workforce.

6. It is notable that although several studies have documented some factors evident in an agile organisation, there are not many studies that have investigated the factors that need to be considered to turn a functioning South African organisation into an agile organisation. While the present study is an effort towards filling this lacuna, there is still a need for further research.
7. There is need for further research not only to make up the dearth of studies on agility adoption in the South African context; but also, to keep track of changes relating to demands/factors that lead to an agile organisation in a highly dynamic society such as South Africa. It is equally pertinent to expand the range of respondents of the present study, as well as the organisations studied to identify more factors that can lead to agile organisation and contribute to knowledge in this regard.

5.8 Conclusion

This study has provided insights into the factors that lead to an agile organisation in a South African organisation. Drawing on thematic analysis of narratives from the respondents, several themes and subthemes unfolded. The identified themes include agility as a term; organisational strategic direction and type of leadership style that can lead to an agile organisation; the structures and processes that need to be in place to enable agility in the organisation; as well as the employee culture and team effectiveness principles that support and ensure a successful agile organisation.

The study explored the respondents' perspectives on the term known as agility in the organisation, and four sub-themes were identified. These include that agility is first a mindset or culture displayed by employees; agility is the pace of response to change; agility is a continuous learning process, and agility is teamwork. It is further identified that most of the respondents viewed that agility is rather a lifestyle or attitude by which organisations do their day-to-day business, and not just a transient phenomenon.

It was also revealed that organisational strategic direction and leadership style are factors that influence agility adoption. The identified organisational strategic drivers include innovativeness, formulating clear-cut customer-centred goals, and management of performance. In addition, agility adoption entails discovering new trends and ideas, and that is one of the ways of being on top of unanticipated changes. Also, agility adoption is driven

by goals. An organisation that must be agile has to formulate clear-cut goals and pursue them to successfully navigate changes in the polity. There must be a way that customer satisfaction takes the centre stage in every agile organisational operation. Notably, when an organisation has employee performance systems as part of its culture and rewards for it, it would become agile. Other influential factors for agility adoption are collective leadership and leadership by example, which entails that driving agility adoption must start with the leaders/executives, as well as being able to carry others along and ensure their input in the organisational processes is valued and respected.

The study also identified that other influential factors for an agile organisation in South African are organisational structures and processes. Organisational structures entail communication; operating model; and decision-making method of the organisation. While the importance of good communication in the agility process cannot be overemphasized, the type of model upon which it operates, and fast decision-making process is germane to an agile organisation. It was identified that training and capacity building, individual roles and responsibilities and change management processes are the organisational processes that influence agile adoption in South African organisations. Organisations must be able to brace up for the challenges that come with roles and responsibilities as they seek to be agile. They must devise ways of coping with changes through proper management of whatever fears and anxieties are associated with changes in an agility journey.

Another enabler of agility adoption is the employee culture and team effectiveness principles that support and ensure a successful agile organisation. The narratives by respondents revealed that an employee culture that supports successful agile organisations demands staff accountability; shared purpose; growth mindset; and staff collaboration. Once there is accountability in mind, agility objectives will be much easier. While shared purpose relates to the situation where everyone in the organisation understands the vision of the organisation and the laid-down processes to get there; growth mindset entails staff mentality towards adapting to change, and staff collaboration refers to being able to work with others either within (intra) or between (inter) organisations. The study identified team effectiveness principles as influencers of agility adoption, and include cohesion among team members result-driven, that is, focused on customer satisfaction. Cohesion, which means the degree to which employees of an organisation work together as a unit is one of the elements of team effectiveness principles that promotes agility in organisations.

This study concludes that factors that lead to or influence agile organisations may seem to

be holistic across organisations but vary in terms of organisational structures and peculiar organisational realities. Based on the investigation of selected organisations in South Africa, it has been revealed that some of those factors that influence agility adoption also highlight the economic realities and challenges of the organisations under study.

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11 November 2020

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Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences

Ethics Reference Number: HS20/8/28

Project Title: Exploring the factors influencing agility adoption in organisations in selected financial institutions in South Africa.

Approval Period: 10 November 2020 - 10 November 2023

I hereby certify that the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape approved the methodology and ethics of the above-mentioned research project.

Any amendments, extension or other modifications to the protocol must be submitted to the Ethics Committee for approval.

Please remember to submit a progress report by 30 November each year for the duration of the project.

The permission to conduct the study must be submitted to HSSREC for record keeping purposes.

The Committee must be informed of any serious adverse event and/or termination of the study.



Ms Patricia Josias
Research Ethics Committee Officer University of the Western Cape



FACULTY OF ECONOMIC AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Interview Questionnaire Guideline

1. What is the definition of an agile organisation?
2. What are the factors that you would need to consider when contemplating transforming into an agile organisation?
3. What are the benefits of agility in an organisation?
4. What success factors indicate that the organisation has truly become agile?
5. What challenges/pitfalls have you experienced while supporting your organisations to transform to agility?
6. What is the best implementation approach when transforming organisations to become agile?
7. What lessons learnt or recommendation you would give to an organisation that seeks to be agile?
8. How long does it take to mature into a fully agile organisation?
9. Do you think your organisation can be categorised as an agile one? Please substantiate your answer.
10. If all the companies in the financial services sector were to become agile, what would be the impact on the sector?