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Hans, Colin Petrus

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Exploring the Influence of Organisational Structure on Employee Performance in the Mining Industry, South Africa



By Colin Hans

Student Number: 9901499M

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MBA Candidate

Wits Business School

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ABSTRACT

This research was conducted to explore how organizational structure influenced employee performance within the South African mining industry. The study was guided by the need to address the challenges posed by hierarchical and centralized structures commonly found in mining organizations. By adopting a qualitative research design, a comprehensive methodology was employed, grounded in an interpretivist approach. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with employees and leaders across specific mining operations in South Africa. The target population comprised individuals at various levels within mining organizations, including managerial and operational roles. A purposive sampling strategy was utilized to select 12 participants whose insights were deemed essential for understanding the relationship between organizational structure and employee performance. The sample size was determined based on the principle of data saturation, ensuring the depth and richness of the findings. Thematic analysis was applied to identify key patterns and themes from the collected data. The research revealed that hierarchical structures significantly slowed decision-making processes, leading to inefficiencies and delayed responses to safety and operational challenges. It was found that centralized decision-making limited the autonomy of local managers, resulting in frustrations and reduced adaptability to dynamic operational demands. Departmental silos were identified as a critical barrier to effective collaboration, hindering the alignment of departmental objectives and the implementation of cross-functional solutions. Participants' perceptions indicated that rigid structures negatively affected employee engagement and morale, as workers felt disconnected from decision-making processes and undervalued in their roles. Conversely, decentralized structures, which allowed for greater flexibility and local autonomy, were perceived to enhance operational efficiency and employee satisfaction. The findings contributed to a deeper understanding of how organizational structures influence employee performance and operational outcomes in high-risk, resource-dependent industries. Recommendations were provided to promote decentralized decision-making, improve cross-departmental collaboration, enhance communication channels, and implement continuous training programs. While the study's limitations were acknowledged, including its context-specific findings and small sample size, its contributions to organizational management practices within the mining industry were deemed significant. Future research was suggested to expand on these findings and explore broader comparative analyses across different regions and sectors.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

In the dynamic and complex landscape of the mining industry in South Africa, organisational structure plays a pivotal role in shaping employee performance (Jones & George, 2016). As mining companies strive to navigate challenges and optimise their operations, understanding the perceptions and experiences of organisational structure becomes crucial. This qualitative research aims to explore the influence of organisational structure on employee performance within the context of the South African mining industry.

Organisational structure defines the hierarchy, roles, and relationships that exist within the organisational framework (Burton, Obel & Håkonsson, 2020). This study seeks to delve into the perceptions and experiences of individuals within mining organisations to uncover how the structure influences their work environment, collaboration, and overall employee performance.

1.2 Research Context and Problem

The South African mining industry, renowned for its historical significance and economic contributions, operates in a highly dynamic and challenging environment. This sector is shaped by economic volatility, shifting market demands, and environmental constraints, which compel mining companies to continuously adapt their organisational structures (World Bank, 2020). Rapid technological advancements, stringent environmental regulations, and increasing environmental and social governance (ESG) requirements add to these pressures, necessitating a reassessment of organisational frameworks to maintain competitiveness and sustainability.

Organisational effectiveness in the mining industry is intricately tied to the way companies structure their workforce. Structural configurations must balance the need for operational efficiency with adaptability to external demands. Effective organisational structures are critical in enhancing efficiency, fostering innovation, and addressing sustainability and corporate social responsibility goals (Doe, Smith & Lee, 2020). However, aligning internal arrangements with these demands remains a significant challenge for mining organisations.

This study explores how organisational structures influence employee performance within the South African mining industry. By examining perceptions and experiences of employees and leaders, it aims to uncover how structure impacts key aspects such as communication, decision-

making, collaboration, and operational effectiveness. The research also considers the interplay between organisational culture and structure, drawing on frameworks such as the Competing Values Framework by Cameron and Quinn (2011), which offers insights into how cultural and structural adaptations can enhance performance outcomes, even if not specifically tailored to the South African mining context.

The underlying research problem lies in understanding the alignment (or misalignment) of organisational structures with industry demands and its effects on employee morale, collaboration, and performance. The study acknowledges that employee performance is influenced by various factors, with organisational structure being a critical determinant of overall effectiveness (Rousseau, 2019). By focusing on the motivations behind structural configurations and their implications for workforce dynamics, this research contributes to the broader understanding of organisational adaptability and success in a rapidly evolving mining industry.

1.3 Aim of the Study

The aim of the study is to explore the influence of organisational structure on employee performance in the South African mining industry.

1.4 Research Objectives

- Objective 1: To identify key factors influencing perceptions of organisational structure within the South African mining industry.
- Objective 2: To explore the challenges and opportunities associated with specific structural configurations in mining organisations.
- Objective 3: To examine how the alignment of organisational structure with industry demands influences employee performance in the mining sector.
- Objective 4: To provide recommendations for enhancing organisational structure to optimise employee performance in the mining sector.

1.5 Research Questions

- What are the key factors influencing perceptions of organisational structure within the South African mining industry?
- What challenges and opportunities are associated with specific structural configurations in mining organisations?

- How does the alignment of organisational structure with industry demands influence employee performance in the South African mining sector?
- What recommendations can enhance organisational structure to optimise employee performance in the mining sector?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study was significant within the South African mining industry's evolving landscape and the broader field of organisational management, benefiting multiple stakeholders, including mining organisations, employees, policymakers, and researchers. It provided mining companies with insights into how organisational structures influenced employee performance, offering evidence-based strategies to enhance collaboration, address inefficiencies, and foster innovation for improved adaptability and effectiveness. Employees gained an understanding of how organisational structures shaped their work environment, job satisfaction, and career development, while identifying areas for creating supportive and productive workplaces. Additionally, the research addressed a critical gap in the literature, as limited studies had explored the relationship between organisational structure and employee performance within the South African mining context (Fourie, 2018; Moyo & Moloi, 2019; Makhoba & Naidoo, 2020). By shedding light on this less-studied area, the study contributed valuable context-specific insights that advanced understanding and informed industry practices.

1.7 Delimitations of the Study

The delimitations of this study outlined the scope and boundaries established by the researcher to maintain a focused and feasible investigation aligned with the research objectives. Geographically, the study was confined to mining operations within South Africa, intentionally excluding insights from other countries with potentially distinct organizational structures and industry dynamics. The participant selection concentrated on employees and leaders within specific mining organizations, employing a purposive sampling strategy to gather rich, context-specific insights while excluding external stakeholders like policymakers or consultants, as the study aimed to examine internal organisational dynamics from the perspective of those embedded in daily operations. Policymakers and consultants were excluded due to their limited interaction with the lived organisational structure and performance dynamics within mine sites.

The scope of the study was further refined by examining specific structural configurations within the mining industry, such as hierarchical and decentralized models, without delving into

broader industry-wide governance or multinational operational comparisons. Methodologically, a qualitative research design was adopted, relying on semi-structured interviews to capture detailed perceptions and experiences, deliberately excluding quantitative or mixed-method approaches to ensure a deeper, context-specific understanding through rich qualitative narratives. While mixed-methods could also yield exploratory insights, the choice of a purely qualitative design was based on the desire to privilege subjective employee experiences without the constraint of structured numerical data. The temporal scope was limited to a defined data collection period, offering a snapshot of organizational structures and employee performance at a specific point in time rather than longitudinal trends. By clearly defining these boundaries, the study maintained a targeted exploration of the influence of organizational structure on employee performance in the South African mining industry. Future research could broaden these parameters to include comparative analyses across different regions or industries, utilize mixed-method approaches, and investigate long-term changes to provide deeper insights.

1.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, Chapter One has provided a comprehensive introduction to the research problem, emphasising the importance of organisational structure in influencing employee performance within the South African mining industry. As the next chapter focuses on the Literature Review, it will delve into existing knowledge, building upon the groundwork established in Chapter One.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a review of literature related to the influence of organisational structure on employee performance, with a focus on the South African mining industry. It examines key concepts, including organisational structure typologies, the unique dynamics of the mining sector, and the implications of these structures on employee perceptions, communication, and decision-making. The chapter further explores how mining organisations align their structures with external demands, such as technological advancements and sustainability imperatives, to enhance performance. Finally, it identifies gaps in existing research, highlighting the need for a deeper understanding of the interplay between organisational structure and employee performance, thereby establishing a solid foundation for the study.

2.2 Organisational Structure

Organisational structure is a fundamental aspect influencing how mining companies operate and perform. Scholars argue that the formal and informal arrangements within an organisation significantly impact its efficiency, flexibility, and adaptability (Jones & George, 2016; Mintzberg, 2017; Scott & Davis, 2015; Rousseau, 2019). Understanding these elements is crucial as they shape how work is coordinated, controlled, and divided among employees within a highly regulated and operationally complex environment. In mining, formal arrangements often include strict hierarchical structures with defined reporting lines to ensure compliance with safety standards, effective resource allocation, and operational continuity. Informal arrangements, such as on-site collaboration and interpersonal networks, play a critical role in addressing real-time challenges, fostering teamwork in hazardous environments, and ensuring adaptability during operational disruptions.

Mintzberg (2017) categorises organisational structures into five primary configurations: simple structure, machine bureaucracy, professional bureaucracy, divisional form, and adhocracy. These configurations reflect varying degrees of centralisation, formalisation, and specialisation, each with unique implications for employee behaviour and organisational outcomes. The South African mining industry has historically favoured hierarchical structures due to its capital-intensive nature and the need for strict compliance with safety and operational protocols (Fourie, 2018). These hierarchical arrangements, often characterised by rigid reporting lines and centralised decision-making, are designed to address the complexities of large-scale mining operations. However, critics argue that such structures can limit innovation

and responsiveness to dynamic market demands, necessitating a gradual shift toward more flexible and participative models (Makhoba & Naidoo, 2020).

Informal elements of organisational structure, including interpersonal relationships and social networks, play a significant role in shaping the culture and performance of mining organisations. Studies by Moyo and Moloi (2019) highlight the importance of informal structures in fostering collaboration and trust within South African mining teams, particularly in environments where formal structures may be perceived as rigid or impersonal. A balance between formal and informal structures is increasingly viewed as essential for enhancing adaptability, employee engagement, and organisational resilience in the South African context (Scott & Davis, 2015).

Furthermore, South African mining companies are under pressure to adopt more inclusive and decentralised structures to address challenges related to transformation and equity. The Mining Charter, which mandates higher levels of representation and participation by historically disadvantaged individuals, necessitates structural adjustments to promote diversity and empowerment at all organisational levels (Department of Mineral Resources and Energy, 2020). These structural changes are critical for aligning organisational objectives with national socio-economic imperatives, while simultaneously addressing the operational demands of the mining sector.

Emerging literature also underscores the role of technology in reshaping organisational structures within South African mining companies. Digitalisation and automation are driving a transition toward hybrid structures that combine traditional hierarchies with more agile, project-based approaches (Nkosi & Sabela, 2021). Such transformations enable organisations to respond more effectively to technological advancements and global market fluctuations while maintaining operational efficiency.

2.3 Mining Industry Dynamics

The South African mining sector is characterised by a volatile and challenging environment, shaped by economic, technological, and environmental factors (World Bank, 2020). Global commodity price fluctuations, increasing regulatory pressures, and the adoption of advanced technologies significantly influence organisational structures.

Economic pressures such as fluctuating exchange rates, rising operational costs, and shifting demand for minerals in global markets have created an urgent need for cost-effective and flexible structures. Research by Fourie (2018), supported by Nkosi and Sabela (2021) and Makhoba and Naidoo (2020), highlights that the South African mining industry must contend with a high-cost operating environment, exacerbated by electricity supply constraints and labour-intensive production models. This economic reality compels mining companies to reconsider traditional hierarchical structures in favour of leaner, more agile models that can respond quickly to market changes.

Technological advancements, particularly in digitalisation and automation, are driving significant structural changes within South African mining organisations. Nkosi and Sabela (2021) discuss how technologies such as autonomous drilling systems, remote operations centres, and artificial intelligence are redefining operational processes and job roles. These advancements necessitate reskilling and upskilling employees, integrating project-based teams, and adopting hybrid structures that balance traditional operational hierarchies with modern, innovation-driven approaches.

Environmental and social governance (ESG) requirements represent another critical driver of structural transformation in South African mining. The industry's commitment to sustainable development, as outlined in the Mining Charter and other policy frameworks, demands greater transparency, accountability, and community engagement (Department of Mineral Resources and Energy, 2020). This has prompted mining companies to decentralise decision-making processes and adopt participative structures to enhance collaboration with stakeholders, particularly local communities impacted by mining activities (Moyo & Moloi, 2019). Moreover, these structural adjustments aim to align organisational practices with global sustainability standards, thereby maintaining competitiveness in international markets.

South Africa's unique socio-economic context also shapes the dynamics of the mining sector. High unemployment rates, labour union activities, and legislative mandates for transformation have created pressure on mining organisations to address equity, inclusion, and employee empowerment (Naidoo, 2020). This context necessitates structural adjustments to ensure compliance with labour laws and to foster a culture of diversity and inclusion, while maintaining operational efficiency.

In addition to these internal and external pressures, global economic trends such as the transition to green energy and the growing demand for battery minerals (e.g., lithium and cobalt) are reshaping the priorities of South African mining companies. These shifts require structural agility to diversify operations, adopt sustainable practices, and invest in emerging markets (Lopes & Scott, 2019).

2.4 Perceptions and Experiences of Organizational Structure

The perceptions and experiences of individuals within mining organisations play a crucial role in shaping the effectiveness of organisational structure (Rousseau, 2019). Employees' attitudes, beliefs, and experiences contribute to organisational culture, influencing communication, decision-making, and overall operational effectiveness (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). Understanding how these factors are influenced by organisational structure is vital for improving employee performance.

Research by Rousseau (2019) delves into the psychological contract between employees and organisations, highlighting the critical role of aligning employee perceptions with organisational structure choices. Within the South African mining context, this alignment is particularly significant due to the industry's historical legacy of hierarchical structures, often perceived as rigid and exclusionary. Addressing this misalignment is essential for fostering trust, collaboration, and engagement among employees. For example, Moyo and Moloi (2019) note that many South African mining organisations struggle with bridging the gap between formal structures and the informal expectations of employees, particularly regarding empowerment, communication, and participation. This study aims to explore how such misalignments impact employee performance and identify strategies to better align organisational structures with employee perceptions to enhance overall effectiveness. This aligns with the research problem, emphasizing the need to explore how the perceptions and experiences of employees and leaders within mining organisations are shaped by organisational structure. Research by Chen, Ployhart, Thomas, Anderson, and Bliese (2017) emphasises the role of inclusive and adaptive structures in fostering positive perceptions among employees, thereby enhancing job satisfaction and engagement.

Chen et al. (2017) underscore the role of inclusive and adaptive structures in enhancing job satisfaction and engagement. In the mining sector, adaptive structures that prioritise employee participation in decision-making processes can significantly impact their perception of fairness

and equity. For example, involving employees in safety protocol development and operational planning not only improves performance but also strengthens their sense of ownership and commitment to organisational goals. In the South African context, such participative approaches align with the principles of the Mining Charter, which emphasises employee empowerment and inclusion (Department of Mineral Resources and Energy, 2020).

A South African study by Moyo and Moloi (2019) highlights the critical role of leadership in shaping employee perceptions of organisational structure. Leaders who communicate effectively and demonstrate an understanding of employee concerns are more likely to foster positive perceptions of structural changes. This is particularly important in the mining industry, where operational demands often require frequent restructuring. Transparent and empathetic leadership helps mitigate resistance to change, enabling smoother transitions and enhanced employee cooperation.

Additionally, cultural and social dynamics in South African mining organisations influence how employees perceive and respond to organisational structures. Historical labour practices, characterised by rigid hierarchies and limited worker autonomy, continue to affect employee perceptions (Fourie, 2018). Addressing these deeply rooted perceptions requires a deliberate focus on fostering open communication channels, recognising employee contributions, and creating a supportive work environment. Informal networks and relationships within organisations also play a vital role in shaping these perceptions, often compensating for perceived deficiencies in formal structures.

2.5 Aligning Organisational Structure with Industry Demands

The alignment of organisational structure with industry demands is a critical factor influencing employee performance in the mining sector (Barney, 1991). South African mining organisations predominantly operate under hierarchical and centralised structures, characterised by strict reporting lines, specialised roles, and a focus on compliance and operational control (Fourie, 2018). These structures are designed to address the high-risk nature of mining operations, ensure adherence to safety standards, and manage the complexities of resource-intensive processes. However, their rigidity often limits adaptability and innovation, necessitating a shift toward hybrid or project-based structures to meet the evolving demands of the industry.

The sector is undergoing significant transformation due to global shifts such as the transition to green energy, increased environmental and social governance (ESG) requirements, and technological advancements (World Bank, 2020). Sustainable practices now demand decentralised decision-making and greater community engagement to comply with the Mining Charter and promote local development (Department of Mineral Resources and Energy, 2020). Additionally, advancements in automation, digitalisation, and artificial intelligence require mining organisations to adopt flexible work systems that encourage continuous learning, adaptation, and sustainability-focused operations.

As Barney's (2019) work underscores, aligning internal structures with industry demands is critical for sustained competitive advantage and improved employee performance. In the South African mining context, this involves reconfiguring organisational arrangements to enhance efficiency while addressing socio-economic and environmental imperatives. For instance, participative management structures that incorporate employee input and facilitate cross-functional collaboration can boost performance and resilience (Moyo & Moloi, 2019). Mining organisations that proactively adopt inclusive, innovative, and responsive structures will not only enhance their competitive edge but also contribute to broader socio-economic and environmental goals in South Africa.

2.6 Employee Performance

Employee performance is a multifaceted concept encompassing various dimensions such as productivity, job satisfaction, engagement, and adaptability (Chen, Ployhart, Thomas, Anderson, and Bliese, 2017). The evaluation of employee performance is particularly relevant to understanding the effectiveness of organisational structure. Research by Richard, Devinney, Yip, and Johnson (2015) explores the relationship between organisational structure and productivity, emphasising the importance of alignment for achieving superior outcomes. Productivity is often closely linked to operational efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and strategic decision-making, all of which are influenced by organisational structure (Fourie, 2018).

Job satisfaction and engagement are equally critical dimensions of employee performance, both of which are significantly influenced by organisational structure. Chen et al. (2017) argue that flexible and adaptive structures foster positive employee experiences, enhancing motivation and commitment. In South African mining organisations, which often operate in remote locations under physically demanding conditions, fostering job satisfaction requires intentional

efforts to create supportive and inclusive work environments. The Mining Charter and other national policies encourage companies to adopt participative management practices, which can enhance employee engagement by giving workers a voice in decision-making processes (Department of Mineral Resources and Energy, 2020).

In addition to fostering job satisfaction, organisational structures that prioritise adaptability play a crucial role in enabling employees to respond effectively to changing industry demands. Nkosi and Sabela (2021) observe that technological advancements, such as automation and digitalisation, require employees to develop new skills and adapt to evolving job roles. Organisations with agile structures that facilitate continuous learning and cross-functional collaboration are better positioned to support employees in this transition. In the South African mining industry, where skills development is a national priority, investing in such adaptive structures contributes not only to individual performance but also to broader socio-economic objectives. Employee well-being and safety are additional aspects of performance that are directly influenced by organisational structure. Moyo and Moloi (2019) highlight that mining companies with decentralised and team-based structures are often more successful in addressing workplace safety concerns, as these structures encourage proactive communication and collaborative problem-solving. In South Africa, where the mining sector has historically faced criticism for unsafe working conditions, implementing structures that prioritise employee well-being is essential for improving overall performance and maintaining industry credibility.

2.7 Research Gap

Although existing literature provides valuable insights into the relationship between organisational structure and employee performance, a significant research gap persists, particularly in the South African mining context. The majority of studies focus on general aspects of organisational structure, such as its impact on productivity or specific performance indicators, without addressing how these structures holistically influence the interconnected dimensions of employee performance, including engagement, adaptability, and well-being, in mining organisations (Chen et al., 2017; Richard et al., 2015). Furthermore, the unique socio-economic and regulatory landscape of South Africa, including the requirements of the Mining Charter and the impact of labour unions, is often overlooked in global research (Naidoo, 2020; ICMM, 2021). For example, studies by Richard et al. (2015) and Chen et al. (2017) primarily

focus on performance metrics in developed economies without engaging with the labour union dynamics prevalent in South Africa.

Another gap lies in the limited research addressing the ongoing transformation within the South African mining sector, particularly the shift toward inclusive structures and digital integration (Makhoba & Naidoo, 2020; Nkosi & Sabela, 2021). These structural transitions remain underexplored in empirical studies focusing on workforce dynamics and organisational change. Technological advancements, such as automation and digitalisation, are rapidly reshaping job roles and organisational structures (Nkosi & Sabela, 2021). However, limited studies have explored how these changes affect employee performance and how organisations can effectively align their structures to support these shifts. Additionally, the increasing emphasis on sustainability and environmental and social governance (ESG) has compelled mining companies to adopt more decentralised and participatory structures (World Bank, 2020). Despite the importance of these changes, research specifically investigating their implications for organisational effectiveness and employee outcomes in the South African context remains scarce.

Finally, the literature highlights a need for a deeper exploration of employee perceptions and experiences of organisational structure within the South African mining sector. Historical labour practices, characterised by rigid hierarchies and limited worker autonomy, continue to influence employee attitudes and engagement (Fourie, 2018). However, there is a lack of comprehensive studies examining how organisational structures can be reconfigured to address these historical legacies while meeting the demands of modern mining operations. Research that bridges this gap by integrating insights into employee perceptions, structural adaptability, and industry-specific challenges is critical for advancing both academic knowledge and practical applications.

This study aims to address these gaps by investigating how organisational structure influences employee performance in the South African mining industry. By incorporating perspectives on industry-specific dynamics, technological advancements, and employee experiences, the research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between structure and performance. This contribution will not only enhance the existing body of knowledge but also offer practical recommendations for improving organisational effectiveness in the unique context of the South African mining sector.

2.8 Conclusion

Chapter Two provides an extensive review of the literature relevant to the influence of organisational structure on employee performance within the South African mining industry. The exploration of key concepts, including organisational structure, industry dynamics, perceptions and experiences, alignment with industry demands, employee performance, practical recommendations, and the research gap, forms the foundation for the subsequent chapters. The integration of these insights with the research problem and objectives will contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. The next chapter focuses on Research Design and Methodology.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter elucidates the foundational elements of the research design and methodology employed. The chapter initiates with an exploration of the research design, incorporating an examination of the approach, philosophy, sampling strategy, and data collection methods.

3.2 Research Design

The selection of an exploratory research design for this study is rooted in the intricate and multifaceted nature of the research problem, encompassing the understanding of perceptions and experiences related to organisational structure and their consequential influence on employee performance within the dynamic South African mining industry (Hair Jr., Page, & Brunsveld, 2019). This design not only permits an open-ended exploration but also provides flexibility for adapting to emerging insights and generating hypotheses for subsequent research phases (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

3.3 Research Approach

The rationale for employing a qualitative approach in this study lies in its suitability for capturing the nuanced and context-specific nature of the perceptions and experiences related to organisational structure in the South African mining industry (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This approach aligns with the study's exploratory nature, aiming to uncover rich insights and provide practical recommendations for mining organisations (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2019). The rationale for employing an interview strategy in this study is rooted in its effectiveness for exploring the rich and context-specific insights sought regarding the perceptions and experiences of organisational structure in the South African mining industry.

3.4 Target Population

The target population for this study consists of individuals employed within mining organisations in South Africa, encompassing employees at various levels of the organisational hierarchy, including entry-level workers, supervisors, managers, and executives. To ensure relevance to the study’s objectives, specific inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied. Participants were selected based on their roles and involvement in the organisation’s structure.

This included individuals directly engaged in the design, implementation, or adaptation of organisational structures, such as managers and executives, whose insights were crucial for understanding structural influences on employee performance. Both small-scale and large-scale mining organisations were included to capture diverse operational contexts, while unionised and non-unionised employees participated to reflect differing experiences based on representation and collective bargaining dynamics. Although the study primarily focused on South African nationals to explore socio-economic and cultural dynamics specific to the local context, foreign nationals employed in the sector were also included to offer additional perspectives.

Temporary and contractual staff, as well as retired or former employees, were excluded to ensure the data collected reflects current practices and long-term experiences within the industry. By targeting a range of participants across various mining organisations and operational contexts, the study sought to provide a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between organisational structure and employee performance. However, the population is not nationally representative in a statistical sense due to the qualitative nature of the research. The findings are therefore contextually significant to the South African mining sector but may not fully generalise to every mining organisation in the country. Instead, the research offers insights that are relevant to the broader industry while remaining grounded in the specificities of the organisations studied.

3.5 Sampling strategy and Sampling Size

The sampling strategy for this study employed a purposive sampling approach (non-probability sampling), carefully selecting participants based on their ability to contribute nuanced perspectives and insights regarding organisational structure in the South African mining industry. This approach allowed for the inclusion of individuals with diverse roles, levels of experience, and backgrounds within mining organisations, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

For this qualitative study, a sample size of 12 participants was targeted. The specific sample size was contingent upon achieving data saturation, where no new information emerged, ensuring the depth and comprehensiveness of the study (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019)

3.6 Data Collection

The data collection process involved conducting semi-structured interviews with participants from the South African mining industry. Participants were contacted and scheduled for interviews at a time and place convenient to them, ensuring their comfort and willingness to share insights. The interviews were guided by a pre-designed interview guide that included open-ended questions to facilitate in-depth discussions about their perceptions and experiences related to organisational structure. The semi-structured format allowed for follow-up questions to clarify responses and explore emerging themes, providing a comprehensive understanding of the participants' views.

Each interview was conducted in a one-on-one setting to maintain confidentiality and encourage candid discussions. The interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' consent to ensure accuracy in capturing their responses, and detailed notes were taken to complement the recordings. The duration of the interviews varied depending on the participants' availability and the depth of their responses, typically ranging between 45 minutes and one hour. After the interviews, the recordings were transcribed verbatim to prepare the data for analysis, ensuring that the participants' insights were accurately represented. This process enabled the collection of rich, qualitative data essential for addressing the study’s objectives.

3.7 Data Analysis

The data collected through semi-structured interviews was analysed using thematic analysis. The audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy and completeness of the data. Once transcriptions were completed, the data was organised and coded using NVivo software to facilitate the systematic identification and categorisation of themes. The coding process involved an initial phase of open coding, where segments of the data were assigned labels based on their relevance to the research objectives. This was followed by a focused coding process to identify recurring patterns and group related codes into overarching themes.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the analysis, a data verification process was conducted. Transcriptions were reviewed multiple times to confirm their accuracy, and themes were cross-checked to ensure consistency and alignment with the data. Additionally, peer debriefing was employed, where a colleague familiar with qualitative analysis reviewed the themes and

interpretations to reduce potential researcher bias. This iterative process ensured that the findings accurately represented the participants' perspectives and insights, providing a robust basis for addressing the research objectives.

3.8 Pilot Study

For this qualitative study, a pilot study was conducted by interviewing two participants. These participants provided valuable insights into the clarity, appropriateness, and effectiveness of the interview questions, which allowed for necessary refinements before the main data collection process. By piloting the interview schedule with a small number of participants, the overall quality of the data collection process and subsequent analysis was improved.

3.9 Elimination of Bias

The elimination of bias is a critical consideration in this study to enhance the reliability and validity of the findings. To minimise selection bias, a diverse and representative sample was selected, encompassing various roles, experience levels, and mining operations within the South African mining industry. Additionally, efforts were made to establish rapport and trust with participants during the interview process, encouraging open and honest responses while minimising social desirability bias. Acknowledgment was given to the potential for researcher bias, and steps were taken to ensure objectivity throughout the study. Reflexivity was maintained by critically reflecting on how personal perspectives and assumptions might influence the processes of data collection and analysis. A reflective journal was used to document any personal biases or preconceptions that emerged, and efforts were made to mitigate their impact.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Ensuring ethical conduct was paramount in this study to protect participants and maintain the credibility of the research. Ethical considerations included obtaining informed consent, safeguarding participants from harm, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, and securing necessary permissions. Informed consent was obtained through a detailed consent form provided to each participant before the interviews. The form explained the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks and benefits, and the voluntary nature of participation. Participants were given the opportunity to ask questions and withdraw from the study at any point without any repercussions. The well-being of participants was prioritised by employing non-invasive

and respectful questioning during the interviews. Participants were encouraged to share only the information they felt comfortable disclosing, ensuring they maintained control over the depth and scope of their contributions. Additionally, interviews were conducted in a manner that fostered a sense of trust and security, further enhancing their comfort during the process.

Confidentiality and anonymity were upheld through rigorous data management protocols. Audio recordings, transcripts, and notes were securely stored on password-protected devices, and only the researcher had access to the data. Pseudonyms were assigned to participants to ensure that their identities were not revealed in the research report or any subsequent publications. Permission to conduct the research was obtained from relevant organisational authorities, with all procedures aligned with the organisations' ethical policies and guidelines. Ethical approval was also secured from the university's ethics committee prior to the commencement of the study. This approval confirmed that the research adhered to established ethical standards and demonstrated a commitment to protecting participants' rights and integrity throughout the research process. These measures ensured that the research was conducted with the highest ethical integrity, respecting the rights and well-being of all participants involved.

3.11 Conclusion

In this chapter, an extensive overview of the research philosophy, research strategy, and methodology employed in this study was provided. The study embraced an interpretivist approach. The chapter delved into the target population and the selected sampling technique. Additionally, it covered details about the research instrument, focusing on the interview administration and the execution of the pilot study. The chapter concluded by addressing limitations and ethical considerations. The subsequent chapter focused on presenting, discussing, and interpreting the collected data.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS, DISCUSSIONS, AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of the data gathered from participants through interviews on their perceptions of organisational structure within the South African mining industry. The chapter discusses the demographic details of the participants, followed by an exploration of the findings grouped into key themes related to the influence of organisational structure on employee performance, the challenges of specific structural configurations, and practical recommendations. The analysis uses thematic methods, and participant responses are discussed in the context of the mining industry's dynamic environment.

4.2 Demographic Details

Understanding the demographic makeup of the participants is crucial in interpreting how different backgrounds, levels of experience, and roles within the mining sector shape their perceptions of organisational structure and performance. The demographic breakdown provides a foundation for assessing the diversity of viewpoints and how these perspectives influence the overall findings.

4.2.1 Participants' Gender

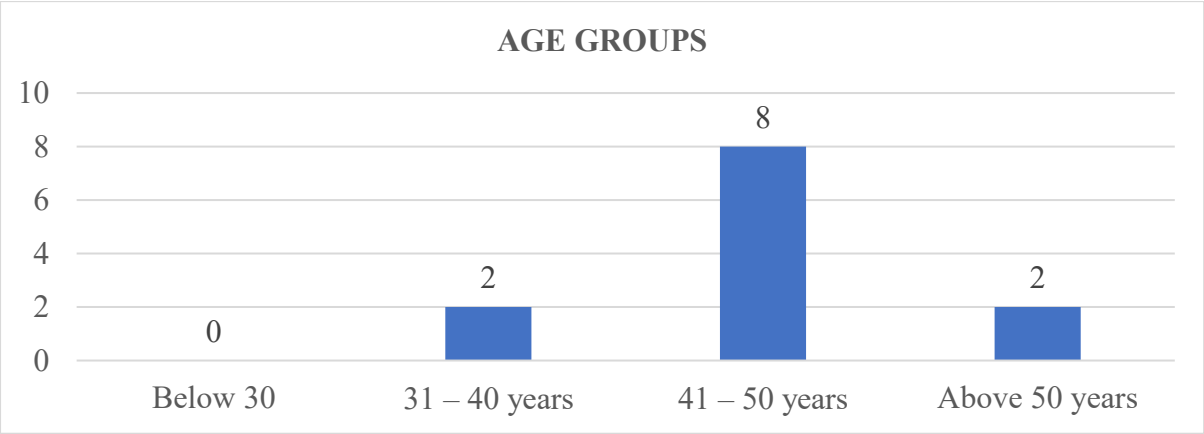
Figure 4.1 below illustrates the gender distribution of the participants.



The gender distribution of the participants shows that the majority of the interviewees (8 out of 12) were male, which is reflective of the traditionally male-dominated mining industry. However, the presence of four female participants provides valuable insights into how women in the mining sector perceive organisational structures. Gender plays an important role in understanding dynamics such as inclusivity, communication, and leadership within mining organisations. Female participants may have different experiences, especially regarding hierarchical structures and their role in decision-making processes (International Council on Mining and Metals [ICMM], 2021).

4.2.2 Participants' Age Groups

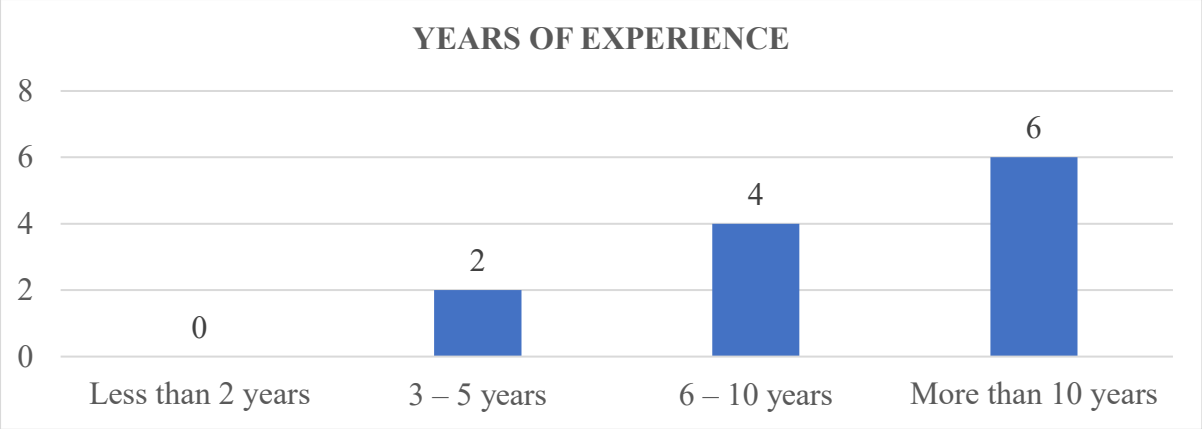
Figure 4.2 below illustrates the age distribution of the participants.



The majority of participants are aged between 41 and 50 years, representing eight out of the 12 participants. This age group typically reflects experienced professionals who have likely seen the mining industry evolve over time and have developed insights into organisational structures based on extensive professional experience. The participants in the 31–40 and above 50 age groups also bring valuable perspectives, contributing to a diverse range of insights across different stages of their careers.

4.2.3 Participants' Experience

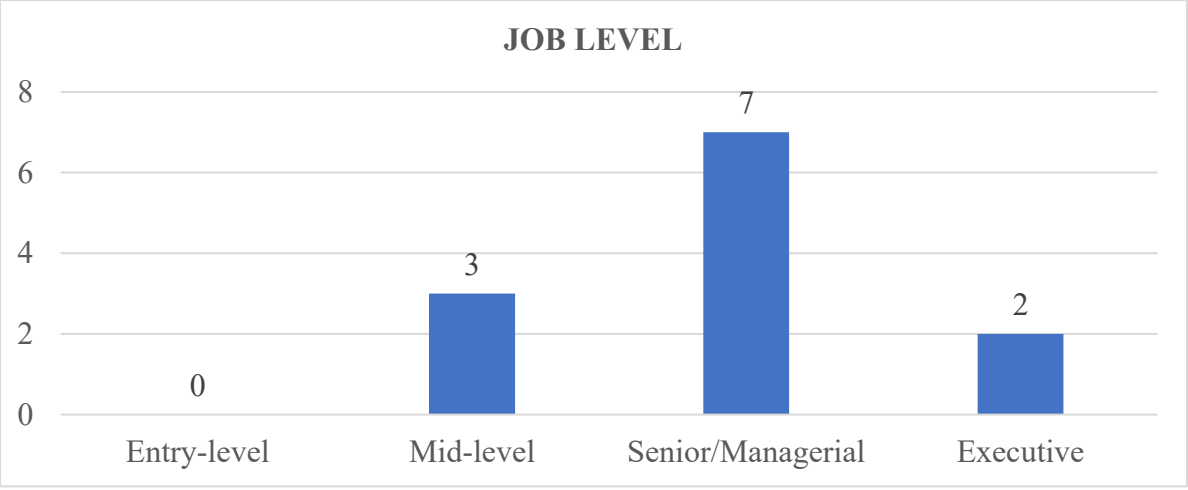
Figure 4.3 below illustrates the participants experience in the mining industry.



Most participants have significant experience in the mining industry, with six participants having more than 10 years of experience and four participants having between 6 and 10 years of experience. This extensive experience suggests that the majority of participants are well-versed in the operational and managerial challenges of the mining sector, making their perceptions of organisational structures particularly insightful. The two participants with 3–5 years of experience provide a perspective of individuals who may have relatively recent exposure to organisational practices but have had enough time to observe and assess their impacts.

4.2.4 Participants' Job Level

Figure 4.4 below illustrates the participants job-level.

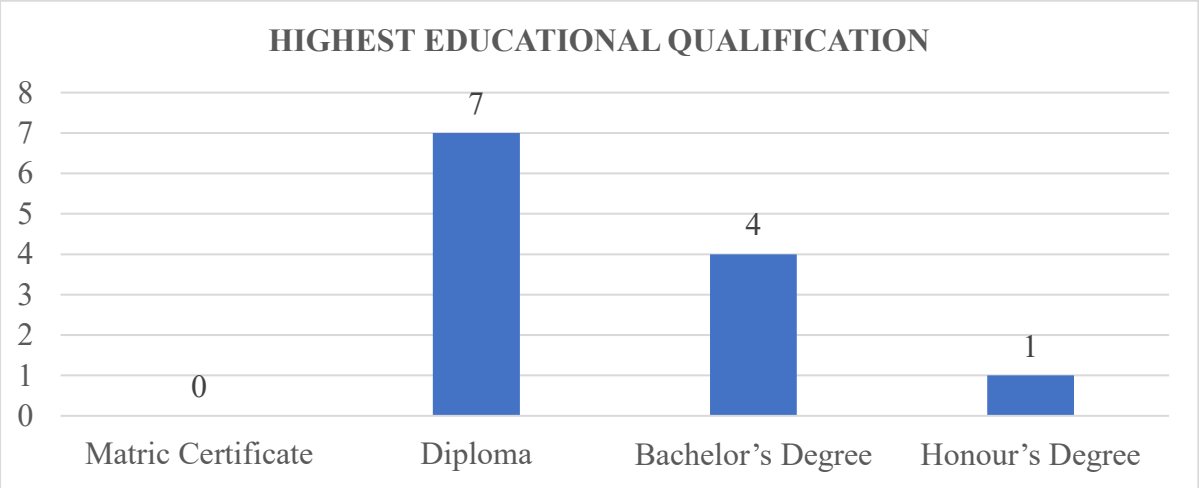


The majority of participants occupy senior or managerial roles (7 participants), while three participants are in mid-level positions, and two are executives. The dominance of senior and

managerial roles in the sample means that most participants have a comprehensive view of organisational structures from a leadership perspective. These individuals are likely involved in decision-making and can provide in-depth insights into the challenges and opportunities of different structural configurations within their organisations. The presence of two executives adds a strategic viewpoint to the discussion, focusing on how organisational structures impact overall company performance (Nguyen & Lee, 2021).

4.2.5 Participants' Highest Educational Qualification

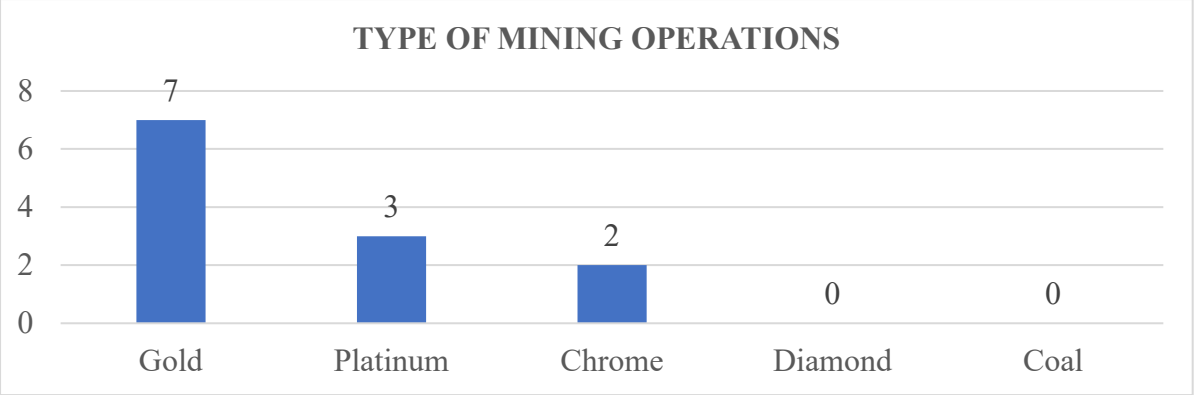
Figure 4.5 below illustrates the participants highest educational level.



The educational qualifications of the participants show that seven out of the 12 hold Diplomas, followed by four participants with Bachelor's Degrees and one participant with an Honour's Degree. This distribution indicates a practical, industry-focused educational background among the participants, particularly suited to the technical and operational demands of the mining industry. The higher number of diploma holders suggests that participants are likely hands-on professionals who may prioritize practical experience over academic achievements, which shapes their views on the effectiveness of organisational structures in daily operations.

4.2.6 Type of Mining Operations

Figure 4.6 illustrates the type of mining operations in which the participants are involved.



In terms of the type of mining operations, the majority of participants (7 out of 12) are involved in gold mining. This is reflective of South Africa's significant gold mining sector, which has historically been a cornerstone of the country's economy (Department of Mineral Resources and Energy, 2023). Additionally, three participants are engaged in platinum mining, and two are involved in chrome mining operations. No participants reported working in diamond or coal mining, which highlights the focus of this study on gold, platinum, and chrome industries.

The diversity of the mining operations represented ensures a range of perspectives regarding the operational challenges and organisational structures unique to each type of mining. Gold mining, with its extensive history and global market significance, is likely to have more established organisational structures, while the perspectives from platinum and chrome mining may bring insights into how newer or evolving sectors are handling the pressures of modernisation and regulatory demands.

4.3 Thematic Analysis

Table 4.1 below outlines the objectives and corresponding themes for the research:

Objective	**Themes**
Objective 1: Factors Influencing Perceptions of Organisational Structure within the South African Mining Industry	1. Communication Bottlenecks in Hierarchical Structures 2. Centralisation of Decision-Making 3. Departmental Silos 4. Employee Engagement and Motivation 5. Organisational Flexibility and Adaptability

Objective 2: Challenges and Opportunities Associated with Specific Structural Configurations in Mining Organisations	1. Complexity of Matrix Structures 2. Slow Decision-Making in Hierarchical Structures 3. Siloed Departments in Functional Structures 4. Autonomy in Decentralised Structures 5. Opportunities for Cross-Functional Collaboration
Objective 3: Alignment of Organisational Structure with Industry Demands Influences Employee Performance	1. Adapting to Technological Advancements 2. Responding to Safety and Regulatory Changes 3. Market Volatility and Organisational Flexibility 4. Labour Relations and Organisational Structure 5. Environmental and Social Responsibility
Objective 4: Practical Recommendations for Enhancing Organisational Structure to Enhance Employee Performance	1. Streamlining Decision-Making Processes 2. Enhancing Cross-Departmental Collaboration 3. Providing Continuous Training and Development 4. Improving Communication Channels 5. Empowering Employees through Decentralisation

This table summarizes the key themes discussed under each objective, providing an overview of the core issues and recommendations related to organisational structure in the mining industry.

4.4 Factors Influencing Perceptions of Organisational Structure within the South African Mining Industry

This section delves into the factors that influence how employees in the South African mining industry perceive organisational structures. The mining industry is known for its complex, high-stakes environment, where the structure of an organisation plays a critical role in operational efficiency and safety. Through a thematic analysis, key themes emerge from participants' perceptions, highlighting challenges and opportunities presented by different organisational configurations.

4.4.1 Theme 1: Communication Bottlenecks in Hierarchical Structures

Hierarchical structures, while designed to provide clarity and control, often lead to communication bottlenecks. This theme explores how the multiple levels of approval in such

structures cause slow decision-making and hinder information flow, negatively affecting operational responsiveness.

Participant 1:

"In our company, the main challenge is the time it takes for information to move through the different levels of management. We might send a request or update to our immediate supervisor, and it has to go through at least three more people before reaching the final decision-maker. By the time we get a response, the urgency has passed."

Participant 3:

"One of the biggest frustrations is that decisions that should be made quickly get bogged down in bureaucracy. If I raise a concern about equipment maintenance, it can take days to get a decision because it has to be approved by multiple layers of management. The delay not only affects productivity but also puts safety at risk."

Participant 7:

"*Communication in our organisation feels like a one-way street. We submit requests, reports, and recommendations, but rarely receive feedback in a timely manner. The problem is that information gets filtered or altered as it moves up the chain, so when it finally reaches upper management, it's either diluted or irrelevant."*

Participant 10:

"I've seen projects stall because of slow communication from the top. There's a significant disconnect between the workers in the field and the decision-makers in the office. When decisions do come through, they are often too late or not well-informed because the people making them aren't fully aware of what's happening on the ground."

Participants expressed frustration with how hierarchical structures slow down the flow of communication, leading to delays in critical decision-making processes. This inefficiency is particularly problematic in a high-risk industry like mining, where timely decisions are crucial for both safety and operational continuity. Information gets distorted as it passes through different levels of management, which diminishes the effectiveness of decisions when they are finally made. These findings highlight the need for more streamlined communication channels within hierarchical organisations to reduce delays and improve responsiveness.

These findings are consistent with Mintzberg's (2017) analysis of hierarchical structures, which he argues can lead to slow communication and decision-making. Cameron & Quinn (2011) also emphasise that in dynamic industries like mining, such delays can have severe consequences, including operational inefficiencies and safety risks. The participants' experiences confirm that the rigidity of hierarchical structures limits agility and responsiveness, which are essential in the mining industry.

4.4.2 Theme 2: Centralisation of Decision-Making

Centralisation of decision-making, where key decisions are made at the corporate level, limits the ability of local site managers to respond swiftly to operational challenges. This theme explores how centralisation affects efficiency and employee empowerment.

Participant 2:

"*Our decision-making is too centralised. When something goes wrong at the site, we have to send requests up the chain, and we're not allowed to make decisions ourselves. Even simple matters like authorising repairs for machinery have to go through corporate, and by the time they get back to us, we've already lost valuable time."*

Participant 5:

"We're the ones dealing with the day-to-day operations, yet we have very little control over decisions. Everything has to be approved by corporate, which is far removed from the reality on the ground. It feels like we're not trusted to make decisions, even though we're the ones who understand the immediate needs of the site."

Participant 8:

"I think there's a lack of trust in the ability of site managers to make decisions independently. It's frustrating when we know the right course of action but can't move forward without corporate approval. This delay causes inefficiencies and often forces us to work around the system just to keep things running."

Participant 11:

"Corporate doesn't seem to understand the urgency of certain issues on the ground. By the time they approve something, the situation has usually escalated. Decentralising some of the decision-making would not only improve response times but also allow us to feel more empowered in our roles."

The centralisation of decision-making processes, particularly at the corporate level, results in inefficiencies at the operational level. Participants expressed frustration over their inability to make decisions quickly, even for minor issues like machinery repairs. This lack of autonomy demoralises site managers who feel that their expertise is not trusted or valued. Centralisation also delays critical responses to operational challenges, impacting productivity and safety. The ability to decentralise decision-making could empower local managers to act more swiftly and improve overall efficiency.

Mintzberg (2017) and Lopes & Scott (2019) argue that centralisation, while offering control and consistency, can stifle responsiveness and local autonomy. In industries like mining, where rapid responses are often required, centralised decision-making can lead to inefficiencies and missed opportunities. This aligns with the participants' concerns, as decentralising certain decisions could empower those with firsthand knowledge of the site to act quickly and effectively.

4.4.3 Theme 3: Departmental Silos

The presence of departmental silos, where different departments operate independently with limited communication or collaboration, creates inefficiencies and hinders organisational performance. This theme explores how silos limit coordination and lead to operational challenges.

Participant 4:

"In our company, the departments work in isolation. The operations team doesn't communicate effectively with the maintenance or safety teams, and as a result, we're often blindsided by issues that could have been prevented if we had collaborated earlier. Everyone is focused on their own objectives, and there's no overarching coordination."

Participant 6:

"We operate like different companies under one roof. The lack of communication between departments is shocking, especially when it comes to projects that require input from multiple teams. You'll find that operations and safety have completely different understandings of what's happening on the ground, which leads to mistakes."

Participant 9:

"I think the biggest problem with the siloed structure is that it creates competition between departments rather than cooperation. Everyone is trying to meet their own targets, so there's very little incentive to share information or collaborate on common goals. It's counterproductive and results in duplicated efforts."

Participant 12:

"The silos are particularly problematic when we need to implement company-wide initiatives, like safety or environmental compliance measures. Each department interprets the instructions differently, and because there's no centralised coordination, the implementation is inconsistent across sites, which leads to confusion and inefficiencies."

Departmental silos create significant barriers to communication and collaboration, leading to inefficiencies in operations. Each department focuses on its own objectives, often at the expense of the broader organisational goals. This isolation results in duplicated efforts, inconsistencies in implementing company-wide initiatives, and missed opportunities for cross-functional innovation. The lack of communication and coordination across departments is particularly detrimental in an industry like mining, where collaboration is essential for safety, compliance, and operational efficiency.

The issues of departmental silos are well-documented in organisational theory. Scott & Davis (2015) discuss how functional and divisional structures can create silos that limit communication and hinder performance. Rousseau (2019) further highlights that breaking down these silos is crucial for fostering collaboration and innovation, especially in industries like mining where cross-functional coordination is essential.

4.4.4 Theme 4: Employee Engagement and Motivation

Rigid hierarchical structures and exclusion from decision-making processes can negatively impact employee engagement and motivation. This theme explores how the lack of involvement in decision-making demoralises employees and leads to lower performance and morale.

Participant 3:

"In our organisation, employees are expected to follow orders without much say in how things are run. It feels like we're just cogs in the machine. There's no real opportunity to contribute ideas or improve the way we do things, which makes it hard to stay motivated."

Participant 7:

"I don't feel particularly connected to the company's goals because there's no effort to involve us in decision-making. We're just given tasks and expected to complete them without understanding how they fit into the bigger picture. That lack of involvement is really demotivating."

Participant 10:

"There's no recognition for the work we do or the ideas we bring to the table. Even when we go above and beyond, it's never acknowledged. After a while, you stop trying because it feels like your efforts don't matter. The structure makes it clear that decisions are made at the top, and we're just here to execute them."

Participant 11:

"The disconnect between upper management and the employees on the ground is a big issue. They don't see the day-to-day challenges we face, and as a result, they make decisions that don't always work in practice. When we're not included in these discussions, it's hard to feel motivated or invested in the outcome."

Participants consistently reported that rigid hierarchical structures limit their involvement in decision-making processes, leading to disengagement and demotivation. Employees feel undervalued, disconnected from the company's broader goals, and unable to contribute to meaningful changes. The lack of recognition for their efforts exacerbates this, further reducing

morale and performance. This disengagement is particularly harmful in industries like mining, where motivated and engaged employees are critical to maintaining safety and operational efficiency.

Rousseau's (2019) theory of the psychological contract supports these findings, suggesting that when employees feel excluded from decision-making processes, they become less motivated and engaged. The literature further emphasises that employee engagement is crucial for performance, and hierarchical structures that limit participation tend to lower morale (Chen et al., 2017).

4.4.5 Theme 5: Organisational Flexibility and Adaptability

Organisational structures that allow for flexibility and local autonomy positively impact employee performance and operational efficiency. This theme explores how decentralised structures empower employees and improve responsiveness to operational challenges.

Participant 5:

"Our decentralised structure gives us the flexibility to make decisions at the local level, which is incredibly valuable in the mining industry where conditions change rapidly. We don't have to wait for approval from corporate every time something needs to be addressed. This autonomy allows us to adapt quickly to new challenges."

Participant 8:

"The flexibility we have at the site level makes a big difference in how we handle day-to-day operations. We can implement changes based on the specific needs of the mine without going through layers of approval. This has helped us improve efficiency and respond to problems as they arise."

Participant 9:

"One of the benefits of our structure is that it gives us the freedom to make decisions that are best suited to the local context. For example, when we had to make changes to our safety protocols, we were able to implement them immediately, which helped us avoid accidents and keep the site running smoothly."

Participant 12:

"I appreciate that we're trusted to make decisions that directly impact our operations. It's not just about being efficient; it's also about feeling empowered to take ownership of our work. This level of autonomy keeps me engaged and makes me more invested in the success of the site."

Participants working in decentralised and flexible structures reported higher levels of job satisfaction and engagement. The autonomy to make decisions at the local level allows employees to respond quickly to operational challenges, improving efficiency and performance. Moreover, this flexibility fosters a sense of ownership and empowerment, enhancing motivation and commitment to the organisation's success. In the fast-paced mining industry, where conditions can change rapidly, the ability to adapt is crucial for maintaining operational efficiency and safety.

Mintzberg (2017) argues that decentralised structures allow organisations to be more adaptable and responsive to local conditions, a critical advantage in dynamic industries like mining. Barney (2019) also notes that organisations that can quickly adapt to external changes are more likely to achieve sustained competitive advantage. The findings from this study confirm that flexibility and autonomy in organisational structures contribute to improved operational efficiency and employee engagement.

4.5 Challenges and Opportunities Associated with Specific Structural Configurations in Mining Organisations

This section explores the key challenges and opportunities faced by mining organisations regarding their structural configurations. The mining industry, with its unique operational requirements, requires a careful balance of control, flexibility, and efficiency. Various structural configurations such as hierarchical systems, siloed departments, and matrix structures have both positive and negative impacts on decision-making, collaboration, and innovation. The themes discussed in this section highlight these dynamics and provide insight into how these structures either inhibit or enhance organisational performance.

4.5.1 Theme 1: Hierarchical Structures and Decision-Making Delays

Hierarchical structures are commonly used in mining organisations to maintain clear lines of authority and ensure accountability. However, this top-down approach often results in slow decision-making, particularly in situations requiring urgent attention. The theme discusses how the multiple layers of management can create delays, which ultimately affect productivity and operational safety.

Participant 1:

"In our organisation, everything has to be approved by multiple layers of management, even small decisions. This often leads to delays in executing essential tasks, especially when we need to react to equipment failures or safety concerns quickly."

Participant 3:

"The hierarchical structure we operate in has its benefits, but when it comes to fast decision-making, it's inefficient. We often miss opportunities because we're waiting for approvals from higher up. This can be frustrating, particularly when the ground-level teams already know the best course of action."

Participant 5:

"Decisions related to budget approvals and resource allocation take a long time, which affects our ability to adapt to changing conditions on the ground. There's a lot of waiting around, which impacts productivity."

Participant 9:

"I feel like our hands are tied because we have to get approval from corporate offices located far from the operational sites. By the time we get a response, the situation has often changed, and we have to adjust all over again."

Hierarchical structures, while designed to provide control and clear accountability, often slow down decision-making processes, especially in urgent operational contexts. This issue is particularly problematic in the mining industry, where swift responses to equipment failures or safety concerns can be critical. Participants expressed frustration with the delays caused by

needing approval from multiple layers of management, which not only hinder productivity but also compromise safety.

This aligns with Mintzberg's (2017) argument that rigid hierarchical structures can stifle organisational flexibility, particularly in industries requiring rapid responses like mining. Scott and Davis (2015) suggest that decentralisation could be a potential solution, allowing lower-level managers to make faster, more informed decisions on-site without waiting for corporate approval.

4.5.2 Theme 2: Siloed Departments and Lack of Collaboration

Mining organisations often operate with a functional structure, where departments such as operations, safety, maintenance, and human resources work independently. This structure can lead to siloed thinking, where collaboration across departments is limited, resulting in communication breakdowns and inefficiencies. This theme explores the challenges of interdepartmental coordination and its impact on overall performance.

Participant 2:

"The biggest issue we face is that departments don't communicate effectively. For example, the maintenance department might not be aware of operational deadlines, and this lack of coordination creates delays that could be avoided."

Participant 4:

"Our department works well internally, but when it comes to collaborating with other teams, it feels like we're working in isolation. There's very little sharing of information, and that can lead to mistakes or missed opportunities to streamline processes."

Participant 6:

"We often find that operations and safety teams don't align their efforts. Safety will push for one set of priorities, and operations another. This creates conflicts, especially when we're dealing with urgent deadlines or regulatory changes."

Participant 11:

"Collaboration is limited, and that's a problem. When each department works independently, it leads to duplicated efforts or, worse, conflicting approaches to the same issue. It makes the whole organisation less efficient."

The siloed nature of mining organisations creates significant barriers to communication and collaboration between departments. Each department tends to focus on its own goals, often to the detriment of the broader organisational objectives. This isolation leads to delays, duplicated efforts, and inefficiencies, as different teams are not aligned in their priorities or aware of the challenges faced by other departments.

Mintzberg (2017) points out that functional structures can create silos that reduce organisational flexibility and hinder communication. In industries like mining, where collaboration across departments is crucial for efficiency and safety, these silos can severely impact overall performance. Rousseau (2019) also argues that fostering interdepartmental cooperation is essential for improving organisational performance and innovation.

4.5.3 Theme 3: Centralisation vs. Decentralisation of Authority

In many mining organisations, decision-making is centralised at the corporate level, far from the operational sites. This theme explores the tension between centralisation and decentralisation of authority, focusing on how decentralising some decision-making power could improve operational responsiveness and efficiency.

Participant 3:

"In our company, all major decisions are centralised at the head office, which is far removed from the daily realities of the mine. This disconnect leads to decisions that aren't always practical for the challenges we face on-site."

Participant 7:

"Decentralising certain decisions, like equipment maintenance or staffing, would improve our response times and allow us to solve problems more efficiently. We're the ones on the ground, so we understand what needs to be done better than someone sitting in an office far away."

Participant 10:

"The centralised structure slows down our ability to adapt. If we had more decision-making power at the site level, we could react more quickly to changes in the market or operational needs."

Participant 12:

"While centralisation ensures consistency across the company, it also limits our flexibility. There are times when we need to make decisions fast, but we have to wait for corporate approval, which causes delays and impacts our performance."

The centralisation of decision-making in mining organisations leads to inefficiencies, as those on the ground are often more aware of the operational needs than distant corporate offices. Participants consistently expressed that decentralising certain decisions, particularly those related to operations and maintenance, would allow for quicker responses and more effective problem-solving. The current system often results in delays that negatively impact productivity and operational success.

Mintzberg (2017) and Barney (2019) both highlight the importance of decentralisation in improving organisational responsiveness. In industries like mining, where local managers are more familiar with on-the-ground challenges, decentralisation can significantly enhance agility and decision-making efficiency.

4.5.4 Theme 4: Matrix Structures and Role Confusion

Matrix structures, which involve employees reporting to multiple supervisors across different functional areas, are designed to increase flexibility. However, this structure often leads to confusion over roles and responsibilities, particularly in high-pressure environments like mining. This theme discusses the challenges of managing conflicting priorities within matrix structures.

Participant 5:

"I often find myself reporting to two different managers, both with competing priorities. It's hard to know which one to prioritise, and that can create a lot of stress, especially when deadlines are tight."

Participant 8:

"The matrix structure is supposed to make us more adaptable, but in reality, it creates confusion. We end up spending more time managing our reporting lines than actually doing the work."

Participant 9:

"There are days when I'm pulled in different directions because one manager wants one thing, and another manager wants something else. It's frustrating because it feels like there's no clear direction on what's most important."

Participant 14: Fetext here

"The matrix structure could work better if there was more coordination between managers. As it stands, we often receive conflicting instructions, which slows down our ability to get things done efficiently."

Matrix structures, while designed to improve flexibility, often result in confusion and conflicting priorities for employees. Participants reported that the demands from multiple supervisors often led to stress and inefficiencies, as they struggled to manage competing priorities. This lack of clarity over roles and responsibilities can slow down operations and reduce overall productivity.

Mintzberg (2017) acknowledges that matrix structures can offer flexibility but also notes that they often lead to confusion over roles and responsibilities. In the mining sector, where clear lines of authority are critical, this structure can be particularly problematic, as conflicting instructions can slow down decision-making and create operational inefficiencies (Barney, 2019).

4.5.5 Theme 5: Opportunities for Cross-Functional Innovation

Despite the challenges posed by siloed structures and matrix reporting lines, there are significant opportunities for cross-functional collaboration and innovation in mining organisations. This theme explores how breaking down silos and encouraging cross-departmental collaboration can drive innovation and operational improvements.

Participant 2:

"If we could break down the barriers between departments, there's so much potential for innovation. For example, the operations and safety teams could work together more closely to develop better safety protocols that also improve efficiency."

Participant 4:

"We've seen a few projects where different teams came together, and the results were impressive. When the maintenance, operations, and environmental teams collaborated, we were able to find solutions that benefitted everyone."

Participant 6: text here

"There's a lot of knowledge in different departments that isn't being shared. If we had more opportunities for cross-departmental projects, we could come up with innovative ways to solve our biggest challenges."

Participant 10:

"The more we collaborate across functions, the more innovative we become. I've seen that when teams are allowed to share ideas freely, we find solutions that no single department could have come up with on its own."

Participants highlighted the potential for cross-functional collaboration to drive innovation within mining organisations. By breaking down departmental silos and encouraging more collaboration across functions, companies can develop more comprehensive solutions to complex problems. This is particularly relevant in areas like safety and environmental compliance, where input from multiple departments can lead to more effective and innovative approaches.

Scott and Davis (2015) discuss the importance of cross-functional collaboration in fostering innovation and improving organisational performance. Rousseau (2019) adds that in industries like mining, where complex challenges require integrated solutions, breaking down silos and encouraging collaboration across departments can lead to significant improvements in both safety and efficiency.

4.6 The Alignment of Organisational Structure with Industry Demands Influences Employee Performance in the Mining Sector

The following section examines how well organisational structures align with the unique and dynamic demands of the South African mining industry. Themes such as technological adaptation, safety compliance, market volatility, and labour relations emerged as critical areas where alignment—or misalignment—directly affects employee performance and organisational success.

4.6.1 Theme 1: Adapting to Technological Advancements

This theme explores how mining organisations' ability—or inability—to adapt to new technologies affects operational efficiency and employee productivity. Technological advancements in automation, data analytics, and safety monitoring have transformed the mining sector, but organisational structures often struggle to keep pace with these changes.

Participant 1:

"We're moving towards more automated systems, but the organisational structure hasn't adapted. Decisions about implementing new technology are still made by executives who aren't on the ground. By the time they approve the necessary investments, we've already lost time, and the technology has become outdated."

Participant 3:

"At our mine, we've integrated new drilling technologies, but the structure is so rigid that it's difficult to train employees quickly enough. We're stuck waiting for approvals to get training programs in place, and by then, we've already missed opportunities to increase productivity."

Participant 7:

"The industry is advancing rapidly, but our structure isn't flexible enough to keep up. We're still using old methods to manage new technologies, and it creates a lot of inefficiency. We need a structure that can pivot quickly and make decisions based on real-time data from the operations."

Participant 11:

"We have the technology, but it's not being utilised effectively because our organisational structure doesn't support it. There's a disconnect between the tech teams and the operational teams. We need to bridge that gap if we want to get the most out of these advancements."

Participants highlighted a disconnect between the technological advancements being introduced in the mining sector and the organisational structures tasked with implementing them. Rigid hierarchies and slow decision-making processes hindered the timely adoption and integration of new technologies, limiting their potential to improve productivity and safety. The lack of alignment between technology teams and operational teams further exacerbated these issues, creating inefficiencies in how new technologies were utilised on the ground.

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This aligns with Barney's (2019) concept of organisational resources and sustained competitive advantage, which emphasises the need for organisational structures to evolve in response to technological advancements. As discussed in Chapter 2, the mining industry is heavily dependent on technological innovation, and organisations that fail to adapt their structures risk falling behind in terms of operational efficiency and productivity (Chen et al., 2017). The findings also support the idea that flexible structures are necessary for industries undergoing rapid technological change (Mintzberg, 2017).

4.6.2 Theme 2: Responding to Safety and Regulatory Changes

This theme focuses on how organisational structures influence the ability of mining companies to comply with safety regulations and implement necessary changes quickly, ensuring employee safety and operational compliance.

Participant 2:

"When new safety regulations are introduced, it takes too long for the changes to be implemented. The structure is so centralised that we can't respond quickly enough. Safety is critical in this industry, and delays in implementing new protocols can put lives at risk."

Participant 5:

"Safety is our top priority, but the structure doesn't always support that. We have to go through several layers of management just to get approval for basic safety measures. By the time we get approval, the risk might have already escalated."

Participant 8:

"Regulatory compliance should be a smooth process, but the way we're structured makes it difficult. There's a disconnect between the corporate office, which makes the decisions, and the site managers who actually have to implement them. This delay in response time is dangerous."

Participant 12:

"Because we're so far removed from the decision-makers, safety issues are often escalated unnecessarily. If the site managers had more authority to make immediate changes, we could prevent a lot of accidents. The current structure slows everything down."

Participants identified significant delays in responding to new safety regulations and protocols, with centralised decision-making structures being a primary obstacle. Site managers and operational teams felt that their ability to implement necessary safety measures was hampered by the need for approval from upper management, which could lead to serious risks in the high-stakes mining environment. This misalignment between safety priorities and organisational structure creates a hazardous working environment and undermines regulatory compliance.

These findings reflect the insights from Cameron & Quinn (2011), who argue that organisational structures that are too rigid or centralised can struggle to respond to external regulatory pressures. The delays in implementing safety protocols align with the literature's emphasis on the importance of decentralised decision-making in industries where rapid responses are crucial (Scott & Davis, 2015). In Chapter 2, safety and regulatory compliance were highlighted as critical areas where mining companies must align their structures to industry demands to avoid accidents and maintain operational efficiency.

4.6.3 Theme 3: Market Volatility and Organisational Flexibility

This theme examines how well mining organisations' structures are suited to adapting to market fluctuations, particularly regarding commodity prices, labour availability, and global demand.

Participant 3:

"Mining is a volatile industry, and the market can shift quickly. Our structure isn't designed to respond to those changes fast enough. We often miss opportunities to adjust production levels when prices drop or spike, and by the time we do react, we've already lost profit potential."

Participant 6:

"When commodity prices change, we need to be able to scale up or down quickly, but our structure doesn't allow for that flexibility. There's too much bureaucracy, and it takes too long to get approval to adjust staffing or shift resources."

Participant 94

"Our structure is too rigid to handle market fluctuations effectively. We need a more flexible system that allows us to adapt operations based on real-time market data. Right now, we're reactive rather than proactive, which costs us in the long run."

Participant 10:

"The mining market is unpredictable, but our organisational structure doesn't reflect that reality. We need more autonomy at the site level to make adjustments when market conditions change. If we had more flexibility, we could take advantage of market shifts more effectively."

Participants emphasised that the mining industry's inherent volatility requires organisational structures that are agile and responsive to market changes. However, current structures, characterised by centralised control and slow decision-making processes, limit the ability of organisations to adjust quickly to fluctuations in commodity prices, demand, or labour availability. This rigidity results in missed opportunities and financial losses, as organisations are unable to scale operations effectively in response to market conditions.

The findings correspond with the literature on organisational adaptability in volatile industries. As highlighted by Barney (2019), organisations that can respond quickly to market changes are more likely to achieve sustained competitive advantage. Mintzberg (2017) also stresses the importance of decentralised structures in industries that face frequent external changes. The mining industry's reliance on global commodity markets underscores the need for flexible organisational structures that can adapt quickly, as discussed in Chapter 2.

4.6.4 Theme 4: Labour Relations and Organisational Structure

This theme explores how organisational structures impact labour relations in the mining industry, particularly in relation to union interactions, employee engagement, and the handling of disputes.

Participant 4:

"Labour relations are tricky in mining, and the structure of our organisation doesn't make it any easier. There's a lot of red tape when it comes to negotiating with unions, and it feels like corporate is too removed from the reality of what workers need. The structure makes it difficult to build trust."

Participant 7:

"When disputes arise, it takes too long to address them because the decision-making process is so slow. By the time corporate gets involved, the situation has often escalated. We need more flexibility in how we handle labour issues at the site level, rather than waiting for directives from headquarters."

Participant 11:

"Unions play a big role in our industry, and the organisational structure often complicates negotiations. Workers feel like they're not being heard because decisions are made far away from the site. This disconnect between corporate and the workers leads to tension, which could be avoided if we had a more decentralised approach."

Participant 12:

"Employee engagement is low because the structure doesn't allow for much communication between workers and management. If we had more open lines of communication and quicker decision-making processes, we could avoid a lot of the disputes that arise. The current structure feels very top-down, which isn't effective in building positive labour relations."

Participants noted that organisational structures often complicate labour relations in the mining industry. Centralised decision-making and the physical distance between corporate offices and mining sites create a disconnect between management and workers, which hinders effective

negotiation and dispute resolution. Employees and unions feel that their concerns are not addressed in a timely manner, leading to escalated disputes and low employee engagement.

This theme aligns with Rousseau's (2019) theory of the psychological contract, which argues that when employees feel disconnected from management, trust erodes, leading to increased tension and conflict. The findings also echo the literature's emphasis on the importance of decentralising decision-making to improve employee relations (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). As discussed in Chapter 2, effective labour relations are critical in the mining industry, where worker safety and satisfaction are closely linked to operational success.

4.6.5 Theme 5: Environmental and Social Responsibility

This theme examines how organisational structures impact mining companies' ability to align with environmental and social governance (ESG) requirements, which are becoming increasingly important in the industry.

Participant 2:

"Environmental regulations are getting stricter, but our structure doesn't allow us to respond quickly enough. We have to go through corporate to make any changes to our processes, and by the time we get approval, we're already behind in meeting the new standards."

Participant 6:

"We're expected to meet both environmental and social responsibility goals, but the structure doesn't provide the flexibility to implement changes at the site level. It feels like a lot of the decisions are made without input from the people who are actually managing these issues on the ground."

Participant 9:

"Our structure needs to be more proactive when it comes to environmental regulations. Right now, we're always playing catch-up. If site managers had more authority to make changes without waiting for corporate approval, we could improve our environmental compliance and avoid fines."

Participant 10:

"Social responsibility is a big part of our mandate, but it's hard to meet those goals when decisions are so centralised. We need to engage with local communities directly, but everything has to go through corporate first, which slows down the process and makes it harder to build trust with the community."

Participants expressed frustration with the slow response times in meeting environmental and social responsibility requirements due to the centralisation of decision-making. Site managers felt that they lacked the authority to implement necessary changes quickly, which affected the company's ability to meet regulatory standards and build positive relationships with local communities. This misalignment between organisational structure and ESG goals is increasingly problematic as the industry faces stricter regulations and growing public scrutiny.

These findings are consistent with the literature's discussion of the need for flexible and decentralised structures to address the growing importance of environmental and social governance (Doe et al., 2020). Chapter 2 highlights that mining companies are under increasing pressure to demonstrate their commitment to sustainability, and organisations that fail to adapt their structures accordingly will struggle to meet these demands. The participants' experiences underscore the importance of aligning organisational structures with ESG priorities to ensure long-term viability and social responsibility.

4.7 Practical Recommendations for Enhancing Organisational Structure to Enhance Employee Performance in the Mining Industry

This section outlines the practical recommendations provided by participants for improving organisational structures within South African mining organisations to enhance employee performance. The mining industry faces unique challenges due to its complex operational environment, and changes in organisational structure could lead to improved efficiency, safety, and productivity. The following themes present participants' insights and recommendations for streamlining decision-making, improving communication, fostering collaboration, and empowering employees through decentralisation.

4.7.1 Theme 1: Streamlining Decision-Making Processes

Mining operations often face delays due to hierarchical and centralised decision-making processes. This theme explores how streamlining decision-making at the operational level could improve efficiency and allow employees to respond more quickly to challenges, particularly in safety and maintenance areas.

Participant 3:

"We need to simplify the decision-making process to reduce delays. If we can make decisions at the site level without waiting for corporate approval, we'll be able to respond to operational issues much more quickly and improve productivity."

Participant 6:

"Decision-making needs to be decentralised. Empowering site managers to make real-time decisions would significantly reduce downtime and allow us to take immediate action when necessary. It would also boost morale, as employees would feel like they have more control over their work."

Participant 8:

"Right now, there's too much bureaucracy. We need a structure that allows for faster decision-making, especially when it comes to safety and maintenance issues. By the time corporate gets involved, the problem has often worsened."

Participant 12:

"Streamlining decision-making would also improve communication. If we can eliminate some of the unnecessary layers of approval, we'll be able to address problems more effectively and ensure that everyone is on the same page."

Participants consistently highlighted the need to streamline decision-making processes to reduce delays. By decentralising decision-making authority, particularly at the operational level, employees and site managers would be empowered to act quickly and efficiently. In the context of the mining industry, where safety issues and equipment failures require immediate responses, the current bureaucratic processes often slow down necessary actions, leading to

operational inefficiencies. Streamlining these processes would also enhance communication, ensuring that solutions are implemented more effectively.

Given the unpredictable and often hazardous conditions in the South African mining industry, quick decision-making is crucial for ensuring safety and maintaining productivity. Streamlining decision-making at the operational level would allow mines to adapt to changing conditions on the ground, thereby reducing downtime and enhancing operational performance (Scott & Davis, 2015). Decentralisation would also lead to improved employee engagement, as workers would feel more empowered to take ownership of their roles.

4.7.2 Theme 2: Enhancing Cross-Departmental Collaboration

Mining organisations often suffer from a lack of coordination between departments, leading to inefficiencies and missed opportunities for innovation. This theme explores the benefits of improving cross-departmental collaboration to enhance organisational performance and drive innovation.

Participant 2:

"We need more opportunities to collaborate across departments. There's so much knowledge within the company, but it's trapped in silos. By creating cross-functional teams, we can bring together people with different skills to solve problems more efficiently."

Participant 5:

"Bridging the gap between departments would make a huge difference. For example, if the operations team worked more closely with the environmental team, we could anticipate regulatory changes better and be more proactive, instead of always reacting at the last minute."

Participant 7:

"Regular cross-department meetings could really help break down some of the barriers we have right now. It's not just about improving communication but also about making sure everyone is aligned with the same goals."

Participant 10:

"Collaboration between departments is crucial, especially when we're dealing with big projects that require input from multiple teams. By working together more closely, we can make sure that decisions are made based on a fuller understanding of all aspects of the problem."

Participants emphasised the need for improved collaboration between departments to break down silos and enhance overall organisational efficiency. Cross-functional collaboration would allow for better sharing of information, which in turn would lead to more informed decision-making. In the mining industry, where complex projects often require input from multiple teams (e.g., operations, safety, and environmental compliance), fostering collaboration could lead to more effective problem-solving and operational improvements.

South African mining operations, which are often large and geographically dispersed, require enhanced collaboration to ensure that different departments work in harmony towards common goals. By facilitating cross-departmental collaboration through regular meetings and cross-functional teams, mining companies could address regulatory challenges more proactively and innovate more effectively. This approach would improve not only operational efficiency but also the safety and environmental impact of mining operations (Mintzberg, 2017).

4.7.3 Theme 3: Providing Continuous Training and Development

Continuous training and development are critical for ensuring that employees can adapt to the rapidly changing technological and regulatory landscape of the mining industry. This theme explores how ongoing training programs can enhance employee performance and engagement.

Participant 4:

"We're adopting new technologies all the time, but there's a gap in training. Employees aren't always given the tools they need to adapt quickly to these changes, which affects performance. Continuous training would help us stay ahead of the curve."

Participant 6:

"It's not just about formal training—there needs to be ongoing development opportunities. The industry is changing, and we need to make sure that employees have the skills to keep up with technological advancements and new safety protocols."

Participant 9:

"Investing in training shows employees that the company is committed to their growth. Right now, we get trained when something new is introduced, but there's no follow-up. Continuous development would make a big difference in how quickly we can adapt to changes."

Participant 11:

"Training is key, especially when it comes to safety and new technologies. If we had more regular development opportunities, we could improve performance across the board. It's not enough to train once and forget about it. It needs to be an ongoing process."

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Continuous training and development are essential for ensuring that employees can keep up with new technologies, safety protocols, and regulatory changes in the mining industry. Participants pointed out that while initial training is provided when new technologies are introduced, there is often a lack of follow-up or ongoing development. Implementing continuous training programs would improve employee performance and adaptability, while also demonstrating a commitment to employee growth.

The South African mining industry is rapidly evolving, with technological advancements such as automation and AI playing an increasingly important role in operations. Continuous training is essential to ensure that workers can effectively operate new equipment and adhere to updated safety protocols. By investing in ongoing development programs, mining companies can enhance both employee performance and overall safety (Chen et al., 2017).

4.7.4 Theme 4: Improving Communication Channels

Effective communication is crucial for ensuring that information flows smoothly throughout an organisation, from the ground level up to management. This theme explores the need for clearer, more open communication channels within mining organisations to improve decision-making and employee engagement.

Participant 1:

"One of the biggest issues we face is poor communication. Information doesn't flow well between different levels of the organisation, and that creates misunderstandings. We need clearer communication channels, both vertically and horizontally."

Participant 8:

"Right now, communication is very top-down, and it feels like important feedback from employees doesn't get taken seriously. We need more open communication where everyone, from the ground level up, has a chance to contribute ideas."

Participant 9:

"We need communication that's faster and more direct. Too often, information gets lost in translation as it moves up the chain. If we could improve the way we communicate across all levels, it would make the whole organisation more efficient."

Participant 12:

"Better communication would lead to better decision-making. If employees had clearer lines of communication with management, we'd be able to address issues before they escalate. Right now, it feels like information is filtered too much by the time it reaches the top."

Participants highlighted the need for clearer communication channels within their organisations. In mining operations, poor communication often leads to misunderstandings and delayed responses to operational issues. Improving communication channels, both vertically and horizontally, would not only enhance decision-making but also increase employee engagement by ensuring that feedback from workers is taken seriously. Open communication would enable the organisation to act more cohesively and efficiently.

Given the complexity and high-risk nature of mining in South Africa, effective communication is critical for ensuring safety and operational success. By improving communication channels, mining companies can ensure that important information flows freely between departments and management, leading to faster decision-making and more cohesive operations (Mintzberg, 2017). Open communication also fosters a culture of trust and inclusion, which is crucial for employee engagement.

4.7.5 Theme 5: Empowering Employees through Decentralisation

Decentralising decision-making and giving employees more autonomy is essential for improving operational responsiveness and employee engagement. This theme discusses how empowering employees at the site level can enhance performance and streamline operations.

Participant 2:

"Giving employees more autonomy to make decisions, especially at the site level, would improve efficiency. We're the ones who are closest to the operational issues, so we should be empowered to make decisions without always waiting for approval from higher-ups."

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Participant 5:

"Decentralisation would make a huge difference. If we could make decisions on things like safety measures or equipment maintenance without waiting for corporate approval, we'd be able to respond to issues faster and prevent bigger problems down the line."

Participant 7:

"By empowering employees to take ownership of their roles, the company would see better results. Right now, it feels like we have to ask for permission for everything, which slows down progress. Giving us more responsibility would motivate people to perform better."

Participant 10:

"Decentralisation is key, especially in a fast-moving industry like mining. We need to be able to adapt quickly to changing conditions on the ground, and that means giving employees the authority to act without always needing approval from upper management."

Participants strongly advocated for decentralisation, which would allow site managers and employees to make decisions without waiting for corporate approval. Empowering employees at the operational level would lead to faster responses to challenges, improving both safety and productivity. Decentralisation would also increase employee engagement and motivation, as workers would feel more responsible for their roles and outcomes.

Decentralisation is particularly important in the South African mining industry, where on-the-ground conditions can change rapidly. By giving more autonomy to site managers and workers, mining companies can improve operational agility and reduce delays caused by bureaucratic

decision-making. Empowering employees would also boost morale and enhance performance (Barney, 2019), contributing to the overall success of the organisation.

4.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, five key themes emerged from the interviews with participants on practical recommendations for enhancing organisational structure in the South African mining industry. These recommendations include streamlining decision-making processes, enhancing cross-departmental collaboration, providing continuous training, improving communication channels, and empowering employees through decentralisation. Each theme reflects participants' desire for a more responsive, efficient, and engaging organisational environment that better aligns with the dynamic demands of the mining industry. These recommendations are consistent with the literature, which highlights the importance of flexibility, communication, and employee empowerment in improving organisational performance in industries facing constant change.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a conclusion to the research by summarizing the key findings from the study and literature on the organizational structure within the South African mining industry. The study aimed to understand how organizational structure influences employee performance, the challenges of current structural configurations, and how they align with the dynamic demands of the mining industry. The chapter concludes by offering practical recommendations for improving organizational structures and suggests areas for future research that could further optimize employee performance in the mining sector.

5.2 Findings from the Study

This section presents a detailed summary of the findings from both the literature review and the primary research conducted with participants from the South African mining industry. These findings form the basis for the conclusions and recommendations presented later in this chapter.

5.2.1 Findings from the Literature Review

The literature reviewed for this study provided crucial insights into how organizational structures impact performance, efficiency, and adaptability in the mining industry. One of the key themes that emerged was the relationship between decision-making and organizational responsiveness. According to Mintzberg (2017), hierarchical structures, which are prevalent in the mining industry, often slow down decision-making processes due to the need for approval from multiple management layers. This rigidity becomes particularly problematic in operational environments that require swift responses to maintain safety and ensure operational continuity. For mining companies, where delays in decision-making can lead to serious safety risks and operational inefficiencies, the ability to respond quickly to equipment failures, safety hazards, and other urgent matters is critical. The slow pace of decision-making in hierarchical structures can create bottlenecks that impede overall performance and safety compliance.

Cross-departmental collaboration was another significant theme highlighted in the literature, particularly in the work of Scott and Davis (2015). In mining organizations, functional structures often lead to departmental silos, where different teams, such as operations, safety,

and maintenance, work in isolation with limited communication and coordination. This siloed approach can reduce the overall efficiency of the organization, as each department focuses on its own goals without considering the broader needs of the organization. For instance, safety teams may prioritize compliance over operational speed, while maintenance teams may focus on minimizing downtime without fully integrating safety concerns. The lack of collaboration between these critical departments can lead to duplicated efforts, missed opportunities for innovation, and a failure to align on shared organizational goals. In the mining industry, where interdepartmental coordination is essential for maintaining safety standards and operational effectiveness, breaking down these silos is imperative.

The centralization versus decentralization debate is another crucial factor affecting organizational performance in the mining industry. Centralized decision-making structures, while beneficial for maintaining consistency and control, often leave local site managers without the autonomy to address urgent issues on-site. Lopes and Scott (2019) noted that decentralized structures, where decision-making power is delegated to on-site managers, are more effective in industries that face dynamic and rapidly changing conditions. In the mining sector, where site managers are often best positioned to make immediate decisions based on real-time information, decentralization can improve operational agility and responsiveness. By empowering local managers to make decisions related to safety, maintenance, and production without waiting for corporate approval, mining companies can avoid delays and improve overall efficiency.

Technological adaptation was another critical finding from the literature, particularly in relation to the mining industry's increasing reliance on automation, digital tools, and advanced safety technologies. Barney (2019) emphasized the importance of organizational flexibility in adapting to technological innovations. Mining organizations that fail to evolve their structures to integrate new technologies risk falling behind in terms of operational efficiency and competitiveness. As automation becomes more prevalent in mining operations, companies must ensure their organizational structures are flexible enough to quickly adopt and integrate these innovations. This includes creating roles dedicated to managing new technologies, providing continuous training for employees, and ensuring that decision-making processes are streamlined to support rapid technological integration.

Finally, the literature highlighted the strong connection between employee engagement and organizational performance, particularly through the lens of Rousseau's (2019) theory of psychological contracts. Rousseau argued that when employees feel valued and engaged, their motivation and performance improve significantly. In contrast, hierarchical structures that limit employee input in decision-making can lead to reduced motivation, disengagement, and lower job satisfaction. In the mining industry, where employee morale and engagement are crucial for maintaining high levels of safety and operational efficiency, organizations must strive to create environments that foster inclusivity and employee empowerment. Ensuring that employees feel they have a voice in decision-making processes, particularly those related to their roles and responsibilities, can enhance overall performance and reduce the risks associated with disengagement, such as safety incidents and decreased productivity.

5.2.2 Findings from Primary Research

The primary research, conducted through interviews with participants in the South African mining industry, provided valuable insights into how organizational structures impact employee performance and operational efficiency. Several key themes emerged, highlighting both the challenges and opportunities associated with current structural configurations within the industry. One of the most prominent themes identified was communication bottlenecks. Participants consistently reported that hierarchical structures within their organizations led to significant delays in communication and decision-making processes. In the mining industry, where rapid responses to operational challenges are often critical, these delays were seen as a major hindrance to productivity. Participants noted that information typically had to pass through multiple layers of management before reaching the appropriate decision-makers, causing slow responses to urgent issues, particularly those related to safety and maintenance. This inefficiency often resulted in operational disruptions and created frustration among employees who were directly responsible for addressing on-the-ground challenges. These findings underscore the need for streamlined communication channels that enable quicker decision-making, particularly in industries like mining where operational risks and time-sensitive issues are common.

The presence of departmental silos was another key challenge highlighted by participants. They emphasized that different departments, such as operations, safety, and maintenance, often worked in isolation with little collaboration or information sharing. This lack of cross-

departmental cooperation not only led to duplicated efforts but also prevented teams from developing integrated solutions to common challenges. For instance, safety teams might prioritize compliance with regulations, while operations teams focus on productivity, without aligning these objectives to optimize overall performance. Participants expressed frustration with this siloed approach, noting that it resulted in missed opportunities for innovation and contributed to inefficiencies across the organization. The findings suggest that mining companies would benefit from fostering greater interdepartmental collaboration to ensure that all teams are working towards common goals and contributing to a more cohesive operational strategy.

The centralization of decision-making emerged as another critical issue affecting employee performance and organizational responsiveness. Participants expressed frustration over the highly centralized decision-making processes within their organizations, which often required corporate approval for even minor operational decisions. This centralization limited the ability of local site managers to respond to urgent issues in a timely manner, particularly those related to equipment repairs, staffing, and safety measures. The delays caused by waiting for corporate approval not only hindered operational efficiency but also put employees and equipment at risk when decisions regarding maintenance or safety protocols were delayed. Participants suggested that decentralizing certain decision-making responsibilities to local managers would improve the responsiveness of the organization and allow for quicker, more effective problem-solving on the ground.

Employee engagement was another significant theme that emerged from the primary research. Participants reported feeling disconnected from the broader goals of the organization, primarily due to their limited input in decision-making processes. Many employees felt that they were treated as executors of decisions made at higher management levels, rather than being actively involved in shaping the direction of the organization. This lack of involvement led to decreased motivation and lower levels of engagement, with participants expressing that they felt undervalued and unappreciated in their roles. In an industry like mining, where employee engagement is closely linked to operational safety and efficiency, this disengagement poses a risk not only to performance but also to employee morale and retention. Participants suggested that by involving employees more in decision-making, particularly those who are responsible for addressing day-to-day operational challenges, organizations could boost engagement, improve morale, and ultimately enhance overall performance.

Finally, the theme of organizational flexibility was identified as a key factor in improving both employee engagement and operational performance. Participants noted that decentralized structures, which allowed for more local decision-making, were far more effective in responding to the dynamic and often unpredictable challenges faced by the mining industry. These decentralized structures empowered site managers to make decisions quickly based on real-time conditions, rather than waiting for corporate approval, which improved both the speed and effectiveness of their responses. Employees working within these more flexible structures also reported higher levels of job satisfaction and motivation, as they felt more ownership over their roles and the outcomes of their decisions. This increased autonomy allowed employees to adapt more readily to changes in operational needs and market conditions, leading to improved efficiency and overall performance.

5.3 Conclusions

Based on the findings from the study, it can be concluded that the organizational structure of South African mining companies plays a significant role in shaping employee performance and operational efficiency. Hierarchical and centralized structures, while providing control, often lead to delays in decision-making and limit employee engagement. Decentralized structures that promote flexibility and local autonomy were found to be more effective in responding to the fast-paced and high-risk nature of the mining industry. The findings align with existing literature, reinforcing the need for mining companies to adapt their organizational structures to the dynamic demands of the industry. By promoting more collaborative and decentralized structures, companies can improve both operational efficiency and employee performance.

5.4 Recommendations

Several practical recommendations are made to enhance the organizational structures of South African mining companies to improve employee performance and operational efficiency.

5.4.1 Streamline Decision-Making Processes

Mining companies should decentralize decision-making authority, particularly at the site level, to allow for quicker responses to operational issues. This can be achieved by empowering local managers to make decisions related to safety, maintenance, and resource allocation without

waiting for corporate approval. This recommendation is particularly relevant in high-risk environments where delays can lead to significant operational inefficiencies and safety risks.

5.4.2 Improve Cross-Departmental Collaboration

Mining companies should implement strategies to break down departmental silos and promote cross-departmental collaboration. Regular interdepartmental meetings and the creation of cross-functional teams would foster better communication, aligning departmental objectives and improving overall efficiency. Collaboration is particularly important for addressing safety and compliance challenges, where input from multiple departments is often required.

5.4.3 Provide Continuous Training and Development

Continuous training and professional development programs should be implemented to ensure that employees are equipped to handle new technologies and evolving industry standards. This would improve both employee performance and engagement, as workers would feel that the company is invested in their growth and development. Regular training programs focused on new technologies, safety protocols, and leadership skills would also help employees adapt to changes more effectively.

5.4.4 Improve Communication Channels

Mining companies should establish clearer and more direct communication channels between employees and management. Open lines of communication would enable faster decision-making and allow employees to voice concerns and suggestions more effectively. This would not only improve operational efficiency but also foster a more inclusive and engaged workforce.

5.4.5 Empower Employees through Decentralization

Decentralizing decision-making processes would empower employees at the operational level, allowing them to take ownership of their roles and improve responsiveness to local challenges. This would also enhance employee motivation and engagement, as workers would feel more connected to the company's broader goals. Empowering employees through decentralization is particularly important in the fast-moving and dynamic environment of the mining industry.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

This study faced practical and methodological challenges that may have impacted the depth and scope of its findings. The small sample size of 12 participants, while sufficient for qualitative research, limits the generalizability of results and excludes perspectives from unrepresented regions and operations. Geographic constraints and the demanding schedules of mining industry employees further restricted participant diversity and availability, while time and resource limitations constrained follow-up interviews and broader data collection. Response bias also posed a risk, as participants may have provided socially desirable answers due to the hierarchical nature of the industry. Additionally, the reliance on semi-structured interviews, including some conducted remotely, may have affected the richness of the data collected. The findings are context-specific to the South African mining industry, which limits their applicability to other sectors or regions. Despite these challenges, the study provides valuable insights into organizational structures and employee performance within the South African mining industry. Future research could address these limitations by expanding sample sizes, incorporating diverse mining operations, and employing supplementary methods such as surveys or focus groups to enhance data triangulation and generalizability.

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5.6 Areas for Future Research

Future research could examine the impact of decentralized decision-making on safety performance in the high-risk mining industry, providing insights into improving organizational structures and safety outcomes. Additionally, the role of technology in restructuring mining organizations warrants investigation, particularly the influence of advancements such as automation and AI on organizational hierarchies, operational efficiency, and employee performance. These areas of study could offer valuable guidance for adapting mining operations to evolving industry demands.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter has summarized the key findings from the study and provided practical recommendations for improving organizational structures in South African mining companies. The recommendations emphasize the need for decentralization, improved communication, cross-departmental collaboration, and continuous training to enhance employee performance and operational efficiency. Future research in this area could further explore the relationship

between organizational structure and performance in the mining industry, providing additional insights for optimizing organizational practices.

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APPENDIX A: RESEARCH INSTRUMENT (INTERVIEW GUIDE)

Section A: Demographics

The purpose of the questions below is to understand the demographic and basic background situation of the participant to use when analysing the different data groupings.

1. What is your gender? Please tick the appropriate box (√)

Item	**Tick √**
Male	
Female	
Prefer not to say	

2. What is your age group? Please tick the appropriate box (√)

Item	**Tick √**
Below 30	
31 – 40 years	
41 – 50 years	
Above 50 years	

3. How many years have you been in the mining industry? Please tick the appropriate box (√)

Item	**Tick √**
Less than 2 years	
3 – 5 years	
6 – 10 years	
More than 10 years	

4. What role/position in the mining organisation are you in? Please tick the appropriate box (√)

Item	**Tick √**

Entry-level	
Mid-level	
Senior/Managerial	
Executive	

6. What is your educational background? Please tick the appropriate box (√)

Item	**Tick √**
Matric Certificate	
Diploma 14	
Bachelor's Degree	
Master's Degree	
Doctorate/Ph.D.	

7. What type of mining operations are you involved in? Please tick the appropriate box (√)

Item	**Tick √**
Gold	
Diamond	
Coal	
Other (Please specify)	

Section B: Objective 1 - Factors Influencing Perceptions of Organisational Structure

8. How would you describe the current structure of your organisation?
9. Which aspects of the organisational structure positively impact your work environment?
10. What aspects of the organisational structure do you find challenging or negative?
11. How does the organisational structure affect your daily tasks and responsibilities?
12. In what ways does the organisational structure influence communication within your team?

Section C: Objective 2 - Challenges and Opportunities Associated with Specific Structural Configurations

13. What are the main challenges you face with the current organisational structure?
14. How does the current structure affect teamwork and collaboration?
15. Are there specific structural elements that you believe hinder efficiency?
16. What opportunities for improvement do you see in the current organisational structure?
17. How could changes in the organisational structure enhance innovation within the company?

Section D: Objective 3 - Alignment of Organisational Structure with Industry Demands

18. What are the current demands and challenges faced by the mining industry in South Africa?
19. Can you provide examples of where the organisational structure has successfully met industry challenges?
20. In what ways does the organisational structure need to adapt to better align with industry changes?

Section E: Objective 4 - Practical Recommendations for Enhancing Organisational Structure to enhance Employee Performance

21. What specific changes would you suggest to improve the current organisational structure to enhance employee performance?
22. How could modifications to the organisational structure improve overall employee performance?
23. What strategies could encourage employees to contribute ideas for improving the organisational structure?

APPENDIX B: PERMISSION LETTER (S)

BARBERTON MINES

Mine office – Barberton
PO Box 121, Barberton, 1300, Mpumalanga, South Africa
Tel +27 13 712 8500
Fax +27 13 712 9516
tarryne@bmines.co.za

Corporate office – Johannesburg
The Firs Building, Office 204, 2nd Floor
Corner Cradock and Biermann Avenues, Rosebank, 2196
Tel +27 11 243 2900
info@paf.co.za

14 June 2024

Dear Sir,

Re: Permission to conduct research at Barberton Mines Limited (Pan African Resources PTY Ltd).

My name is Colin Petrus Hans, referred to herewith as the researcher.

I am studying for a Master Degree in Business Administration at the University of the Witwatersrand. I am seeking permission to do research at Barberton Mines Limited.

I am conducting research on Exploring the Influence of Organisational Structure on Employee Performance in the Mining Industry, South Africa.

The research will entail collecting data from employees from all Barberton Mines Operations, from Senior Management to C-band level, across all operational disciplines.

I will purposefully select and invite individuals from Barberton Mines to participate in this study. If they agree, they will be interviewed, whereby they will be asked to answer questionnaires. For this research, I envisage to interview 24 participants and I estimate that participants should put aside 20 minutes for the interview. Data collection will take place on the premises and/or during work hours. Participant's responses will be audio recorded.

Participants will be asked to give their written consent before the research begins. Their responses will be treated confidentially, and identities (their names and the name of the organization) will be anonymous unless otherwise expressly indicated. Individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

The results will be communicated in the researcher's dissertation on completion of the research study.

The research participants will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way. They will be reassured that they can withdraw their permission at any time during this project without any

penalty. There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study. The participants will not be paid for this study.

All research data will be preserved for a period of 2 years and thereafter destroyed.

I therefore request permission in writing to conduct my research at your organization.

Please let me know if you require any further information. I look forward to your response as soon as is convenient.

Yours sincerely,

Colin Hans
Contact number: 0716212110
Email: 9901499M@students.wits.ac.za

Supervisor:
Dr. Erasmus Kofi Appiah
Office number: 011 717 8166
Email: Erasmus.appiah@wits.ac.za

14 February 2024

I hereby grant Colin Petrus Hans, the researcher, permission to conduct research on *Exploring the Influence of Organisational Structure on Employee Performance in the Mining Industry, South Africa*, at Barberton Mines Limited.

At an agreed and suitable time, without interfering with any operational tasks, I also grant permission for the researcher to collect data from employees from all Barberton Mines Operations, from Senior Management to C-band level, across all operational disciplines.

Greg Moss
General Manager
14-06-2024
Barberton Mines

GREGORY MOSS
BARBERTON MINES LIMITED - GENERAL MANAGER

ERF 657 Silver Valley Estate,
Falls Street, Featherbrooke,
Gauteng, 1746

www.laonemining.co.za
+27 10 210 7305
info@laonemining.co.za

31 January 2025

To whom it may concern,

RE: Permission to interview

I hereby grant Colin Petrus Hans, the researcher, permission to conduct research on ***Exploring the Influence of Organisational Structure on Employee Performance in the Mining Industry, South Africa,*** at Laone Mining and Engineering.

At an agreed and suitable time, without interfering with any operational tasks, I also grant permission for the researcher to interview the Laone Mining and Engineering Operations, from Senior Management to C-band level.

Mr Thapelo Mothibinyane Pr.Eng

Managing Director

To: Colin Hans

From: S.A.M Kader

Founder, CEO, Buraaq Mining Services

Date: 31 January 2025

Subject: Permission to interview

Dear

I hereby grant Colin Petrus Hans, the researcher, permission to conduct research on ***Exploring the Influence of Organisational Structure on Employee Performance in the Mining Industry, South Africa***, at Buraaq Mining Services.

At an agreed and suitable time, without interfering with any operational tasks, I also grant permission for the researcher to interview the Buraaq Mining Operations, from Senior Management to C-band level.



S.A.M Kader

Buraaq Mining Services – Founder, CEO

Buraaq Mining Services South Africa (Pty) Ltd
Reg. No. 2017/138340/07
VAT. No. 4020278430
B-BBEE –Level 1

Street Address
64 Apex Road, Apex
Benoni,1500 Gauteng
South Africa

Postal Address
110 Kimberley Road
Robertsham, 2091
South Africa

Telephone
+27 (0)11 392 1004 / +27 (0)10 236 0192
Telefax
+27 (0)86 660 3144

Director: S.A.M Kader

APPENDIX C: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

Graduate School of Business Administration
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

Wits Business School Ethics Committee
Constituted under the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical)

Ethics Clearance Certificate

Ethics protocol number: WBS/BA9901499M/501
This certificate is only valid with a legitimate ethics protocol number and signed by the Researcher (below).

Project title	The influence of organisational design and structure on performance in the South African mining industry
Investigator / Researcher	Mr Colin Petrus Hans
Nature of Project	MBA (Research Article)
Decision of the Committee	Approved, provided stakeholders and participants are guaranteed confidentialty.
Issue Date of Certificate	10/07/2024
Expiry date	Date of submission of the project / research report
Chairperson	Dr Ayanda Magida ☎ +27 11 717 3953 ✉ ayanda.magida@wits.ac.za

Declaration by Researcher

One copy must be signed by the Researcher and returned to the Chairperson of the Wits Business School Ethics Committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.

CP Hans — Signature

10/07/2024 — Date:

APPENDIX D: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To all the people who helped me finish this research successfully, I would like to express my sincere gratitude.

First and foremost, I would like to thank Dr. Erasmus Kofi Appiah, my supervisor, for all of his help and advice during this process.

I am also appreciative of my coworkers for helping me refine my thoughts and for their helpful talks. Their perspectives, derived from actual mining operations, have enhanced the breadth and relevance of this study.

A particular thank you to the hardworking mining industry personnel whose dedication to safety, productivity and sustainability continues to motivate this field of research.

Throughout this journey, I have been continuously inspired by my family and friends' encouragement, patience, and support.

I appreciate everyone's contributions to this research.

APPENDIX E: DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to the hardworking men and women in the mining industry who contribute to the extraction of important resources. Your perseverance, hard work and dedication to safety and productivity keep the industry moving forward.

To the leaders, mentors, and coworkers in the mining industry whose knowledge and wisdom have influenced how I perceive this industry. I appreciate your advice and motivation.

Last but not least, thanks to my family and loved ones, whose encouragement and support have served as the cornerstone of both my academic and professional endeavours. Without your confidence in me, this effort would not have been possible.

APPENDIX F: DECLARATION

I, Colin Petrus Hans, hereby declare that this research titled '***Exploring the Influence of Organisational Structure on Employee Performance in the Mining Industry, South Africa'*** is my original work and has been conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines and academic standards of Wits Business School.

This study is the result of my independent investigation, except where otherwise stated. All sources of information, data, and references have been duly acknowledged. This research has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for any degree or qualification at any other institution.

Signed by: CP Hans
Date: 14 February 2025