



Relationship between manager credibility, strategic alignment and employee motivation



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Orientation: In today's volatile and dynamic business environment, organisations need to continuously seek opportunities to increase their competitiveness through the human capital they employ. A sound understanding of factors that influence manager credibility, strategic alignment and employee motivation could enable organisations to proactively implement interventions that improve their competitive stance.

Research purpose: This study sought to examine the relationship between manager credibility, strategic alignment and motivation. The role of strategic alignment as a mediator between manager credibility and motivation was also explored.

Motivation for the study: Organisations need to have employees that are motivated and have a strategic fit. Managers play a significant role in fostering such. More so, it is essential to highlight the vital role that managers play in strategic alignment and employee motivation.

Research approach/design and method: A quantitative and cross-sectional research design was used. Non-probability sampling was employed, and data were collected by using established questionnaires from a sample of $N = 3112$. Participants of the study are employed within various industries based in South Africa, Southern Africa and the United States of America. The data were analysed by using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Main findings: A positive relationship between all the variables were established. The three variables (manager credibility, strategic alignment and motivation) were found to be significantly positively correlated. Manager credibility influences motivation and strategic alignment. Manager credibility and strategic alignment were both found to have a statistically significant influence on employee motivation. The mediation analysis shows that strategic alignment plays a positive mediating role between manager credibility and motivation.

Practical/managerial implications: Recommendations are schematically presented in the form of a model, which, when implemented, have the potential to enhance employee motivation.

Contribution/value-add: The study provided insight into the influence of manager credibility and strategic alignment on employee motivation.

Keywords: motivation; credibility; strategic fit; managers; mediation analysis.

Introduction

Managers play a significant role in influencing organisational performance (Anzengruber, Goetz, Nold, & Woelfle, 2017). The degree to which managers are proficient in creating relationships that inspire and psychologically align employees with organisational goals signifies their credibility (Ouakouak & Ouedraogo, 2013; Veldsman & Coetzee, 2014).

Manager credibility is related to employee strategic alignment and performance (Anitha, 2014; Esfahani, Ghasemi, & Tabrizi, 2014; Ouakouak & Ouedraogo, 2013; Veldsman & Coetzee, 2014). The alignment between a company's operating context and strategy has significant implications for its sustainability and performance (Acur, Kandemir, & Boer, 2012).

The concept of strategic alignment also refers to the degree to which employees understand and psychologically commit to executing the organisational strategy (Boswell, 2006; Ouakouak & Ouedraogo, 2013). Although a manager's credibility plays an important role in employee strategic alignment, employee motivation is viewed as equally important (Belle, 2013; Hitchcock & Stavros, 2017; Pokorny, 2013). Literature illustrates that motivated employees are efficient, creative, persist in challenging tasks and offer high levels of productivity (Victor & Hoole, 2017). Employee motivation is cited as a contributing factor towards organisational credibility

(Osmani, Rozan, Zaidi, & Nilashi, 2014). Building credibility in organisations has been identified as one of the growing challenges in human capital management (Ahteela & Vanhala, 2018; Clark & Brown, 2015). Reputational damage, as well as devastating job and shareholder losses suffered at multinational companies such as Steinhoff, McKinsey and KPMG, demonstrates the need for organisations to promote credibility within their management teams and among all employees (Fraser, 2018; Govenden, 2018; Lou & Yuan, 2019). This research highlights the effects of manager credibility and strategic alignment on employee motivation. In today's volatile organisational climate, characterised by uncertainty and ambiguity, there is much need to understand manager credibility and its links towards keeping employees motivated. The study expands on the relationships between manager credibility, strategic alignment and motivation and is empirical in nature. It is for this reason, the study seeks to make a contribution towards the literature. In addition, the collective effect of these variables has not been previously conducted.

Literature review

Manager credibility

Manager credibility refers to the degree to which managers are able to create employee experiences and relationships that inspire and psychologically align employees with organisational goals (Ouakouak & Ouedraogo, 2013; Shaikh, 2019; Veldsman & Coetzee, 2014). Manager credibility is also described as the ability to build relationships and team consensus that inspires employees to exert discretionary effort (Esfahani et al., 2014; Kubicek & Cockram, 2019; Veldsman & Coetzee, 2014; Yiing & Ahmad, 2009). Manager credibility is built over time, through trustworthiness, and is characterised by how reliable, competent and consistent the behaviour of an individual is (Jiang & Probst, 2015). Consistency, however, is unlikely to influence manager credibility if the manager constantly behaves in an uncaring, self-centred manner (Cunningham, 2000). Grasse (2014) equates manager credibility to a bank account that increases or decreases, respectively, through deposits of positive reinforcing words and actions or negative reinforcing words and actions.

Managers who are cognisant of the context in which they operate are able to identify with their organisations; have a deep self-awareness; are confident, optimistic and resilient; and have high moral characteristics that are viewed as credible and transformational (De Braine & Dhanpat, 2019; Epitropaki, Kark, Mainemelis, & Lord, 2017; Paulo & Nunes, 2019).

Competence, sociability, consistency, empathy and vision are key aspects of leader-follower relationships (Seidel, Saurin, Tortorella, & Marodin, 2019). It is important for managers to have an understanding of the inevitable role that their credibility plays towards influencing the achievement of common goals. The observed key constructs of manager

credibility are trustworthiness, competence, empathy, self-awareness and consistency (Falcione, 1974; Falcione, McCroskey, & Daly, 1977; Fogg & Tseng, 1999; McCroskey & Richmond, 1975; McCroskey & Teven, 1999; McCroskey & Young, 1981).

Credibility

Credibility is regarded as the trustworthiness of a communicator or the source of information; it is based on how the receiver perceives the authenticity and competence of the communicator (Metzger & Flanagin, 2013; Williams, Raffo, & Clark, 2018). Credibility is characterised by how reliable, trustworthy and consistent the behaviour of an individual is perceived to be (Jiang & Probst, 2015; Von der Ohe, Martins, & Roode, 2004).

Strategic alignment

Strategic alignment refers to a linkage or fit; however, in both cases, it refers to the process of integrating and coordinating business strategy with internal strengths, external opportunities and threats (Schniederjans & Cao, 2009). Strategic alignment highlights the organisation's focus in terms of understanding and managing forces within its operating context (Gatignon & Xuereb, 1997). Previous management research credited organisations' competitive advantage on industry structure and internal structures (Chatzoglou, Diamantidis, Vraimaki, & Vranakis, 2011; McAdam, Miller, & McSorley, 2019; Mubarak & Wan Yusoff, 2019). The industry-based perspective uses Porter's (1985) five forces framework, which includes barriers to entry, rivalry, buyers, suppliers and substitutes. The five forces are used to analyse the intensity of competition within an industry and its attractiveness or lack thereof in terms of profitability (Porter, 1985). Barney (1991) introduced a resource-based view that emphasises internal resources as the determinants of competitive advantage. Recent research argues that organisations can improve their competitive advantage, ability to respond to market dynamics and performance when strategic alignment is achieved (Acur et al., 2012; Chatzoglou et al., 2011; Shao, 2019; Street, Gallupe, & Baker, 2018).

The principles of aligning strategy, financial outcomes, customers, internal processes and people aid comprehensive stakeholder involvement, which enables organisations to better link strategic decisions with operations. These principles allow managers to see the effect of selected strategies at operational level and improve the coordination of competencies, processes and performance (Sousa, De Melo, De Oliveira, & Lourenço, 2020; Sudnickas, 2019).

Motivation

Employee motivation is the degree to which employees are intrinsically inspired by their work and the level to which they derive joy from simply doing the job (Baciu, 2018; Veldsman & Coetzee, 2014). The manner in which employees take action, plan, coordinate and allocate resources

represents how they identify with the organisation and is indicative of their level of motivation (Ndekugri & Greene, 2020). Employee motivation is deemed to be an important aspect of organisational effectiveness and productivity (Kermally, 2005; Minhas & Nirupama, 2017; Ndekugri & Greene, 2020). It is argued that motivation is a management process that is aimed at encouraging employees to be more productive and effective for the advancement and sustainability of the organisation (Baciu, 2018; Nduka, 2016). Strategic awareness is a self-initiated activity; hence, managers need to understand the factors that determine and affect employee motivation (Strobel, Tumasjan, Spörrle, & Welpe, 2017). Strategic awareness enables employees to become more proactive in scanning for risks and opportunities that enhance and protect the organisation's competitive advantage (Acur et al., 2012). Having a sound understanding of how to contribute, rather than simply knowing what the strategy of an organisation is, results in higher levels of motivation (Boswell, 2006; Madan, 2017; Ndekugri & Greene, 2020).

Strategic alignment in relationship with employee motivation

To ensure growth and sustainability, management should develop and revise their strategies. However, to transform strategy into outcomes, they require their employees' follow-through and commitment (Gagné, 2018; Ouakouak & Ouedraogo, 2013; Street et al., 2018). It has been argued that employees are most likely to take action and adapt their behaviours towards the achievement of strategic objectives when they understand how their efforts contribute towards organisational outcomes (Boswell, 2006; Copeland, 2013; McAdam et al., 2019).

Understanding organisational outcomes and how to contribute does not, however, guarantee that employees will be strategically aligned (Ouakouak & Ouedraogo, 2013). Hence, it is important to be aware of the factors that motivate employees towards the attainment of desired outcomes (Gagné, 2018; McAdam et al., 2019). Research has found that companies with highly motivated employees achieve high performance (McAdam et al., 2019; Nduka, 2016; Ouakouak & Ouedraogo, 2013; Street et al., 2018). As organisations are reliant on their employees' motivation to engage and contribute towards outcomes, it is important to identify factors that affect and enhance motivation (Hitchcock & Stavros, 2017).

Manager credibility in relationship with employee motivation

Manager credibility has a significant influence on employee motivation (Esfahani et al., 2014). When manager credibility is low, the work environment is obstructed by pessimism and distrust; stakeholders therefore expect high levels of credibility and morals from organisation members (Abunyewah, Gajendran, Maund, & Okyere, 2019; Esfahani et al., 2014; Kubicek & Cockram, 2019).

Manager credibility in relationship with strategic alignment and employee motivation

The credibility of management can have positive or negative implications on organisational outcomes (Abunyewah et al., 2019; Jamal & Abu Bakar, 2017; Kubicek & Cockram, 2019; Men, 2012). The more credible the source of communication within organisations is deemed to be, the more able he or she is to influence stakeholders (Abunyewah et al., 2019; Metzger & Flanagan, 2013). Employees who have positive perceptions of their manager's credibility are more likely to be strategically aware and proactive (Andrews, Boyne, Meier, O'Toole, & Walker, 2012; Strobel et al., 2017). Strategic awareness stems from discretionary work performance (Ahmetoglu, Harding, Akhtar, & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2015; Strobel et al., 2017). Discretionary effort is driven by motivation. Motivated employees engage in proactive behaviours that strive to improve the current and future position of the organisation (Copeland, 2013; De Vito, Brown, Bannister, Cianci, & Mujtaba, 2016).

Research questions

Organisational efforts to anticipate factors that provide competitive leverage are ever present. In view of the theoretical background provided above, this study sought to answer the following research questions:

- What is the relationship between manager credibility, strategic alignment and employee motivation?
- Does strategic alignment play a mediating role in the relationship between manager credibility and employee motivation as an outcome variable?

The study assumes that strategic alignment plays a mediating role between manager credibility and employee motivation. Management research highlights the important role that managers play in strategic alignment and employee motivation (Acur et al., 2012; Barney, 1991). The model seeks to explore the relationships between the variables of manager credibility, strategic alignment and employee motivation. All the variables included in the model have been subject to previous empirical research.

Method

The study followed a quantitative, exploratory and cross-sectional approach. A quantitative approach allows objective testing of hypotheses as the researchers are able to distance themselves from their respondents (Quick & Hall, 2015). A cross-sectional design was followed (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2007). The research sought to determine the extent to which manager credibility influences strategic alignment and employee motivation. The role of strategic alignment as a mediator, manager credibility as an independent variable and employee motivation as an outcome variable was also assessed.

Population, sampling procedure and sample size

The study used secondary data that were obtained from a consultancy firm operating in the field of organisational development. The data were collected by using an online, secure platform in 2016 and 2017 from 20 companies – 18 based in South Africa, 1 in Southern Africa and 1 in the United States of America. The companies operate within the education, financial, information technology, manufacturing, medical, non-profit, property, provincial government, regulatory, oil and gas sectors. A non-probability, purposive sampling technique was used. Non-probability sampling allows a researcher to select participants, based on convenience and representativeness of the characteristics being studied (Creswell, 2012, p. 145). Most of the respondents (38.3%) were in the age group of 26–35 years, followed by 36–50 years of age (29.3%) and 21–25 years old (22.2%). Individuals in the 50 years and older age group were at 7.7%, whereas those younger than 21 years made up 2.5% of the sample population. Men made up (52.6%) of the population in comparison with 40.2% women. The majority of the respondents held a Grade 12 matriculation certificate (39.8%), followed by a national diploma (22.6%), and postgraduate degree (14%).

Measuring instrument

The instruments that were selected for this study were manager credibility, strategic alignment and motivation (Veldsman & Coetzee, 2014).

Manager credibility

Manager credibility was measured by means of five items. An example of an item measuring credibility is 'Does your manager treat everyone with respect?' The items were measured on a four-point Likert scale from 1 (Never) to 4 (All the time). Manager credibility reported a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.83 (time 1) and 0.78 (time 2) (Veldsman, 2017; Veldsman & Coetzee, 2014). The current study reported a Cronbach's alpha of 0.92, which shows a high level of credibility as indicated by Creswell (2012).

Strategic alignment items were measured on a four-point Likert scale, from 1 (Never) to 4 (All the time). 'How well do you know what is expected of you at work?' is an example of an item on this scale. Strategic alignment reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.73 (time 1) and 0.67 (time 2) (Veldsman, 2017; Veldsman & Coetzee, 2014). The Cronbach's alpha for this study is reported as 0.69, which is an acceptable level of reliability, according to Hair, Black, Babin and Anderson (2013).

Motivation items were similarly measured on a four-point Likert scale, from 1 (Never) to 4 (All the time). An item example is 'How often do you feel compelled to initiate activities to make things better in your work environment?' Motivation reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.81

(time 1) and 0.76 (time 2) (Veldsman, 2017; Veldsman & Coetzee, 2014). The Cronbach's alpha for this study is reported as 0.59, which is an acceptable level of reliability, as indicated by Creswell (2012) and Hair et al. (2013).

The consultancy firm that collected the data used predesigned questionnaires. The questionnaires were uploaded onto a secure, online platform, with a covering letter that stated the purpose of the research. The questionnaire, which consisted of biographical information, as well as items measuring credibility, strategic alignment and motivation, was designed by Veldsman and colleagues from Mindset Management and was validated by Veldsman and Coetzee (2014). Each questionnaire included a note that invited respondents to participate voluntarily, with the assurance that their participation would be anonymous and treated confidentially. Participants were assured that they could opt out at any time without any negative consequences.

Statistical analysis

Data from the questionnaires were statistically interpreted by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) computer software program, version 25. The descriptives of the measuring instruments are reported. Descriptive statistics were conducted. Internal consistency and reliability were determined through exploratory factor analysis. Inferential statistics were used to test the relationships between constructs in answering the research questions. Research Question 1 is answered through Spearman's correlation, which is utilised to determine the relationship between variables (Pallant, 2010). Simple multiple regression analysis has been used with a mediation model to test Research Question 2 (strategic alignment as a mediator and the prediction of motivation by means of manager credibility and strategic alignment).

Descriptive statistics

Manager credibility

Responses for the manager credibility scale indicated results ranging from $M = 2.67$ to $M = 3.19$. Item MC2 ('Does your manager treat everyone with respect?') scored a high mean value (3.19), suggesting the agreeability that managers do treat everyone with respect most of the time. On the contrary, item MC5 ('Does your manager inspire you by his or her example?') was perceived by employees that only some of the time they feel inspired by their manager.

To test normality, the data set was also tested for skewness and kurtosis. A negative skewness of -0.473 was reported, indicating that most of the responses were agreeable. Kurtosis of the data was recorded at -0.723 , indicating that the data were not normally distributed, resulting in a graph with lighter tails and a flat peak (Hair et al., 2013). The results may have been influenced by social desirability, where respondents tend to answer positively to questions they deem sensitive or when they do not fully trust that the survey is anonymous (Fisher, 1993).

Strategic alignment

The means for strategic alignment (SA) ranged from $M = 2.85$ to $M = 3.42$. Item SA1 ('How well do you know what is expected of you at work?') scored a high mean value (3.42), suggesting that employees perceived that most of the time they knew what was expected of them at work. However, on the item SA5 ('Does your manager set realistic and achievable goals for your business unit or team?'), most of the respondents did not believe that the manager was setting realistic goals most of the time, indicated by a mean of 2.85. In the test for normality on strategic alignment, the data showed a skewness of -0.663 , indicating that most responses were agreeable (Hair et al., 2013). The kurtosis of the data was 0.468, indicating that the data were not normally distributed.

Motivation

The results for motivation indicated that mean responses ranged from $M = 2.90$ to $M = 3.43$. Item W2 ('How often does your team put in extra effort to get the job done?') scored a high mean value (3.43), suggesting that employees perceived their team to put in extra effort occasionally. Item W5 ('Does your job motivate you to do more than what is required of you?') scored a low mean value of 2.90, suggesting that employees perceive that their job hardly ever motivates them to do more than what is required. The data obtained for motivation were also tested for skewness and kurtosis. Skewness was recorded at -0.515 , indicating that most responses were agreeable (Hair et al., 2013). The kurtosis of the data was 0.454, which indicates that the data were not normally distributed (Hair et al., 2013).

Construct validity

To review the construct validity of the instruments, exploratory factor analysis was conducted according to the guidelines proposed by Pallant (2010). The Pearson's correlation coefficient analysis was used to determine if the variables were related, and how strongly they are related (Pallant, 2010, p. 128). The size of the coefficient value indicates the strength of the relationship, with $r > 0.30$ being acceptable (Pallant, 2010, p. 128). Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity were performed on all three instruments. The KMO test is a measure of how suited a data set is for factor analysis; the test indicates the proportion of variance in the variables that may be caused by other underlying factors (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007, p. 620). Values close to 1.0 indicate that factor analysis is suited for the data set, values of 0.6 and above are considered sufficient and less than 0.5 is questionable (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007, p. 620). Bartlett's test measures the overall significance of all the correlations in a correlation matrix. Values of < 0.5 of the significance level show that factor analysis is suitable (Hair et al., 2013). In addition to the KMO and Bartlett's tests, communalities and item loadings were analysed. Communalities indicate the extent to which an item is correlated with all other items. Factor loadings above 0.3 are deemed acceptable

(Pallant, 2010). To determine the number of factors to retain, factor extraction was conducted through Kaiser's criterion and Cattell's scree test. The number of factors that are retained indicates the interrelationships within a set of variables.

Ethical considerations

Ethical permission for this study was obtained from IPPM Research Ethics Committee, ethical clearance number: IPPM-2019-351 (M).

Results

Frequency analysis

Manager credibility

The results showed that most of the respondents perceived that their manager was credible. This was indicated by 39% of the respondents, believing that their manager acted in a way that was consistent with organisational values most of the time. However, when the respondents were asked if they were inspired by their manager, only 32% of them indicated that they were inspired most of the time. All items for manager credibility had a correlation greater than 0.30. The KMO of sampling adequacy for manager credibility was 0.885, which is above the recommended 0.60 and the Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant at $p = 0.000$. The communalities for manager credibility were above 0.30 and explain the variance in manager credibility adequately (Pallant, 2010). The Kaiser's criterion and total explained variance for manager credibility showed one initial eigenvalue above 1, signifying a single factor with a total explained variance of 75.15%, which is acceptable.

Strategic alignment

The results showed that most of the respondents indicated that most of the time they were strategically aligned. When the respondents were asked how well they knew what was expected of them at work, 53% responded that they did so all of the time. When the respondents were asked if they understood the vision of their organisation, 42% indicated that they did to a great extent. The correlation coefficients were all more than 0.30, the KMO measure of sampling adequacy was 0.755 and the Bartlett's test of sphericity was statistically significant as it was smaller than 0.05. The extracted communalities of each item selected were at an acceptable level of above 0.30 for each item. Kaiser's criterion and total explained variance showed one initial eigenvalue above 1, signifying that a single factor with a total explained variance of 44.97% for strategic alignment was satisfactory.

Motivation

The results for motivation indicated that most of the respondents were motivated. This was shown by 52% of the respondents, indicating that every now and then they felt compelled to initiate activities that made things better within their work environment. However, when the respondents were asked if their job motivated them, only 36% indicated

that it did every now and then. The correlation coefficients ranged from 0.18 to 0.27. All the variables had a positive result, indicating that an increase in one variable will lead to an increase in the other variable.

Sampling adequacy was 0.664, and the Bartlett’s test of sphericity was statistically significant, indicated by a $p = 0.000$ value. The communalities for motivation showed that the extracted communalities of each item were at an acceptable level of above 0.30. Kaiser’s criterion and total variance explained showed two initial eigenvalues above 1, namely 1.912 and 1.077, and these two factors explain a cumulative variance of 59.78%.

Analysis of relationships between manager credibility, strategic alignment and motivation

Spearman’s correlation coefficient (two-tailed; Pallant, 2010, p. 103) was used to address the Research Question 1 (‘What is the relationship between manager credibility, employee motivation and strategic alignment?’).

The results shown in Table 1 indicate that there was a significant positive correlation between the three variables (manager credibility, strategic alignment and motivation) at the 90% level of significance. Medium-to-large correlation effects were noted.

Linear regression

To answer Research Question 2, a simple multiple regression analysis was employed to test the prediction of motivation by means of manager credibility and strategic alignment.

The simple multiple regression reported in Table 2 indicates that manager credibility and strategic alignment explain 31.7% of the variance in motivation ($F = 724.127$; $2:3109$, $p = 0.000$). Both predictor variables (manager credibility and strategic alignment) entered the prediction at the 99% level of confidence. Manager credibility predicted motivation at 17.9% ($t = 0.9.997$; $p = 0.000$). For every unit that manager credibility increased, motivation increased by 0.179 points. Strategic alignment predicted

motivation at 44.3% ($t = 0.24.682$; $p = 0.000$). For every unit that strategic alignment increased, motivation increased by 0.443 points.

Regression model exploring the mediating role of strategic alignment

In answering the second research question ‘Does strategic alignment play a mediating role in the relationship between manager credibility and employee motivation as an outcome variable?’, standard multiple regression analysis was performed through SPSS by using PROCESS macro-bootstrapping with manager credibility as an independent variable, strategic alignment as the mediator and motivation as the dependent variable. Three regression paths were tested; the indirect effect of strategic alignment as a mediator is illustrated in Figure 1 (Hayes, 2009; Valeri & Vanderweele, 2013).

Figure 1 illustrates path c as the predictor to the outcome variable (Manager Credibility – Motivation). Path a represents the predictor variable to the mediator variable (Manager Credibility – Strategic Alignment) and path b represents the mediator variable to the outcome variable (Strategic Alignment – Motivation).

Figure 1 indicates a significant positive direct effect of manager credibility on motivation ($R^2 = 0.3179$; $F = 724.127$ ($2:3109$); $p < 0.000$). With the bootstrapping confidence levels above zero, between lower level confidence interval (LLCI) of 0.2257 and 0.2618, the model is significant at the 0.05 level of significance. The size of the mediation is calculated by dividing the indirect effect (0.1420) by the total effect (0.2437). The partial mediation of strategic alignment accounts for 58.3% of the variance in motivation

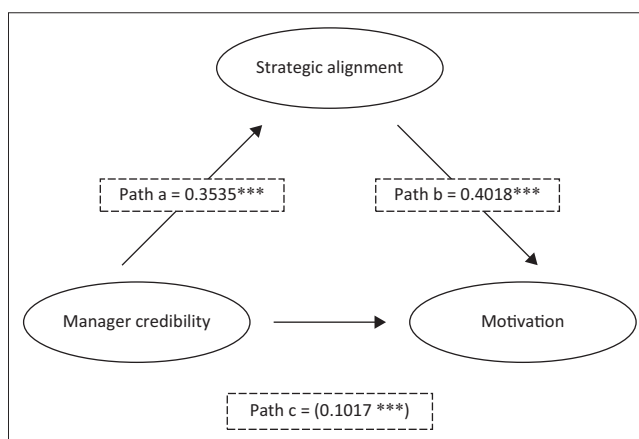
TABLE 1: Spearman’s correlation coefficient on motivation, strategic alignment and manager credibility ($N = 3112$).

Variable	Motivation	Manager credibility	Strategic alignment
Motivation	1.000	0.432†	0.531†
	-	0.000	0.000
Manager credibility	0.432†	1.000	0.559†
	0.000	-	0.000
Strategic alignment	0.531†	0.559†	1.000
	0.000	0.000	-

†, Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

TABLE 2: Standard multiple regression: Manager credibility and strategic alignment as the independent variables and motivation as the dependent variable.

Dependent variable:	R	R ²	Adjust R ²	F (df)	p	B unstandardised	B standardised	T	p
Motivation	0.564	0.318	0.317	724.127 (2:3109)	0.000	-	-	-	-
Manager credibility	-	-	-	-	-	0.102	0.179	9.977	0.000
Strategic alignment	-	-	-	-	-	0.402	0.443	24.682	0.000



* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

FIGURE 1: Mediation model – predictor variable (manager credibility), outcome variable (motivation) and mediator variable (strategic alignment).

as an outcome variable. The direct effect of manager credibility on motivation is 41.7%.

Path c results show that manager credibility is a statistically significant predictor of motivation at 35.35% ($B = 0.3535$; $p = 0.000$). A unit of increase in manager credibility will increase motivation by 0.3535 points. Path a indicates a statistically significant, positive direct relationship between manager credibility and strategic alignment at 10.17% ($B = 0.1017$; $p = 0.000$). A unit of increase in manager credibility will increase strategic alignment by 0.1017 points. Path b results also indicate that strategic alignment has a statistically significant positive prediction of motivation at 40.18% ($B = 0.4018$; $p = 0.000$). A unit of increase in strategic alignment will increase motivation by 0.4018 points.

The results support the mediational research question that asked whether motivation is partially mediated by strategic alignment. The effect of manager credibility on motivation increased from 35.35% to 40.18% when strategic alignment was included.

Discussion

Descriptive statistics – Manager credibility, strategic alignment and motivation

An average mean value of 2.91 (maximum = 4) for manager credibility was obtained. This indicated that most of the respondents perceived their managers to be credible most of the time.

Employees who perceive their managers as credible remain committed to the organisation, which enhances their loyalty (Esfahani et al., 2014). With regard to strategic alignment, an average mean value of 3.20 (maximum = 4) was obtained. This suggests that the majority of the respondents perceived that most of the time they were cognisant of the organisation's strategic pursuits. Employees who remain aligned with the priorities of the organisation are likely to maintain high levels of engagement (Biggs, Brough, & Babour, 2014). In terms of motivation, the average mean value achieved was 2.89 (maximum = 4), suggesting that employees perceived themselves to be occasionally motivated. These results support the arguments by Copeland (2013) and Ndekugri and Greene (2020), who cite that discretionary effort is driven by employee motivation. Motivated employees are more likely to engage in proactive strategic scanning behaviours that enhance organisational sustainability and performance.

To determine the reliability of the results, the Cronbach's alpha test was used as a measurement.

The Cronbach's alphas reported for the variables were 0.90 for manager credibility, 0.60 for motivation and 0.70 for strategic alignment. According to Hair et al. (2013), these alphas are regarded as acceptable. Motivation achieved a value below 0.70. Measures that have a small number of items (under 10, such as motivation in this case) will

yield lower reliability scores. Therefore, it is essential to assess the mean inter-item correlations to confirm internal consistency. Upon inspection of the mean inter-item correlation, the value achieved was 0.24, which is within the cut-off point of 0.40 (Pallant, 2010).

Exploratory factor analysis was carried out on the three variables. Exploratory factor analysis is used to simplify data by reducing the number of variables in regression models (Creswell, 2012, p. 15). Explanatory factor analysis is also used to verify the construction research scales (Creswell, 2012, p. 15). Manager credibility showed a factor of one total explained variable of 75.15%. This shows that the one factor could be used to explain all other variables. Strategic alignment showed a factor of one total explained variance of 44.97%. A proportion of explained variance less than 50% is acceptable in social sciences (Hair et al., 2013). Motivation showed a factor of two total explained variables with a cumulative variance of 59.78%. This indicated that two factors for motivation can be used to explain the variance in all other variables.

Spearman's correlation coefficient

Because of the non-normal distribution of data, Spearman's correlation coefficient (two-tailed) was used to address Research Question 1 ('What is the relationship between manager credibility, strategic alignment and employee motivation?'). The analysis showed that there was a positive relationship between all the variables. Manager credibility, strategic alignment and motivation were shown to be significantly positively correlated. Manager credibility had a medium effect on motivation. This suggests that as manager's credibility increases, employees are more likely to remain motivated. In terms of strategic alignment, a large effect was not found. It is likely that as employees feel congruent towards the organisation's goals and pursuits, they will remain motivated. This result supports those of Lyubovnikova et al. (2017) and Coetzee and Veldsman (2013), who argue that a leader who is regarded as credible will have a positive influence on an employee's strategic alignment to organisational goals.

Esfahani et al. (2014) outline that a manager's credibility has an influence on the motivation of employees. The findings indicate that a lack of manager credibility will adversely affect employee motivation. Employees will not willingly exert discretionary effort, such as volunteering to perform tasks, without being asked, or be compelled to initiate activities that improve or optimise organisational efficiencies and effectiveness.

To further explore the relationship between all the variables, standard multiple regression was conducted. The results indicated that manager credibility influences motivation. This was shown by a significant regression $F = (1, 3110) = 701\ 805$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.184$. The coefficient results indicated that motivation increases by 0.009 points when manager credibility increases by a unit. Manager credibility was also

shown to influence strategic alignment $F = (1, 3110) = 1454.46$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.319$. The coefficient regression results show that strategic alignment increases by 0.009 points when manager credibility increases by a unit. Regression analysis with manager credibility and strategic alignment as predictors of employee motivation was also carried out. The results indicate that manager credibility and strategic alignment have a significant influence on employee motivation at $F = (2, 3109) = 724.127$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.318$.

Motivation increases by 0.010 points when manager credibility increases by a unit. Strategic alignment contributed 16% towards motivation as an outcome variable ($t = 24.68$; $p = 0.000$), with a significance value of < 0.5 . By every unit that strategic alignment increases, motivation increases by 0.016 points. The beta results indicate that strategic alignment has the largest unique contribution to motivation ($\beta = 0.443$). This finding supports research conducted by Andrews et al. (2012) and Strobel et al. (2017), who argue that manager credibility influences the motivation of employees and strategic alignment.

Regression model exploring the mediating role of strategic alignment

A regression analysis was performed to address Research Question 2 ('Does strategic alignment play a mediating role in the relationship between manager credibility and employee motivation as an outcome variable?'). Standard multiple regression analysis was performed through SPSS by using bootstrapping with manager credibility as an independent variable, strategic alignment as the mediator and motivation as the dependent variable (Hayes, 2009; Valeri & Vanderweele, 2013). Three regression paths were tested, and the results showed that strategic alignment partially mediated the role between manager credibility and motivation. The effect of manager credibility on motivation decreased from 24.37% to 10.17% when strategic alignment was included (Valeri & Vanderweele, 2013). The results also showed that strategic alignment was positively related to manager credibility and motivation. This indicates that the model used can reliably explain the relationship between manager credibility, strategic alignment and motivation.

Limitations of the study

The study used a self-measurement tool, which is prone to positive rating bias (Van de Mortel, 2008). This may have contributed towards the non-normal distribution of data. Many respondents (66%) did not indicate their ethnicity, and 19% were from the same ethnic group. The study was also conducted in the financial industry, and thus the findings of the study need to be interpreted with caution.

Recommendations and managerial implications

The study provided insights into the relationships between manager credibility, strategic alignment and motivation in the work environment. Good corporate reputation is built and maintained by the behaviour of organisational stakeholders. Consistency, trustworthiness, respect, empathy and competence are essential for persons who are in management or leadership roles. The findings in this study support the notion that there is a significant relationship between manager credibility, strategic alignment and motivation. The findings also showed that an increase in any one of these variables would result in an increase in the other. Strategic alignment was shown to play a relatively significant mediatory role on manager credibility in influencing employee motivation.

Based on the results of manager credibility and strategic alignment, recommendations are schematically presented in the form of a model (see Figure 2), which, when implemented, has the potential to enhance employee motivation. It is pertinent that management and human resource (HR) practitioners are cognisant of the challenges presented and recommendations put forward. Collectively, the results indicate that employees remaining motivated hinge upon the credibility of managers and employees' strategic fit to the organisation. These factors are likely to ensure proactive behaviours and that employees take greater initiative, lending themselves to enhanced motivation.

Human resource practitioners can influence manager credibility, strategic alignment and motivation through the development and implementation of manager competency training and development programmes that are effectively

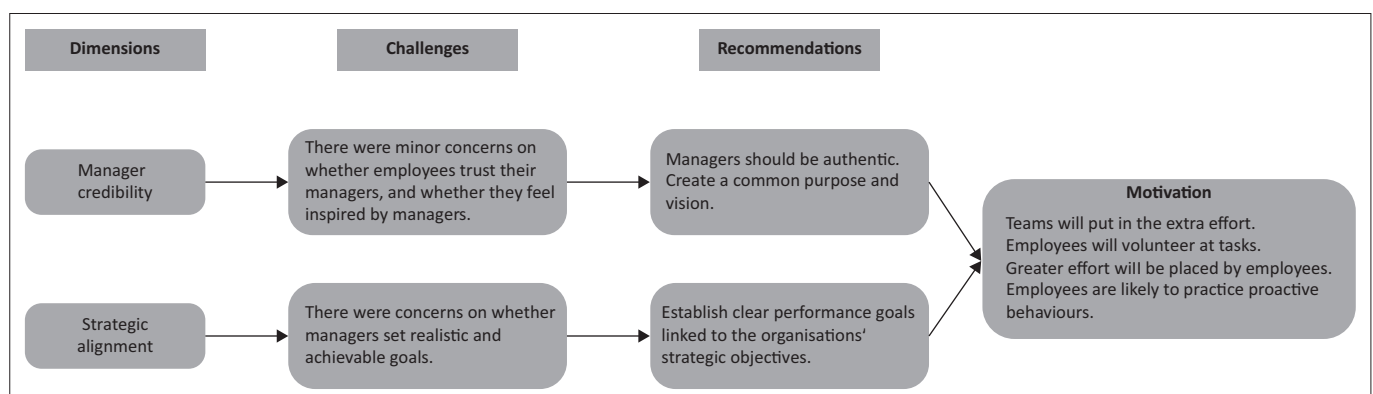


FIGURE 2: Recommendations based on manager credibility and strategic alignment on motivation.

designed to model credible actions and behaviours. The researcher hopes to encourage organisations to move beyond best practice and mechanistic approaches to management towards more organic structures that enable proactive behaviours, creativity and empowered decision-making. Extant theory indicates that organic structures are instrumental in enhancing organisational sustainability and strategic alignment. Human resource practitioners must equally be prepared to implement HR change management initiatives that can be aligned to increasingly dynamic and complex environments.

The study has contributed to management research by showing the effects of the relationships between manager credibility, strategic alignment and motivation. In quantitative research, the self-measurement tool can be prone to positive self-rating bias and respondents are limited to questions posed by the researcher (Van de Mortel, 2008). Future research could consider a qualitative approach into the different factors that relate to the variables discussed in this study.

Recommendations for future research

To minimise aspects of social desirability, a qualitative case-based approach into the variables discussed in this study could be considered. It is also recommended that additional research be conducted to confirm the initial findings on the mediatory effect of strategic management on employee motivation. To validate the measuring instruments within a South African context, further research can be conducted, as the instruments did not present the same structures as the initial research carried out by Veldsman (2017).

Conclusion

The study revealed valuable insights on the relationship of manager credibility and intra-team effectiveness as predictors of motivation in the workplace. Treating employees in a trusting, consistent and respectable manner can establish a manager's credibility, an essential attribute in leading inspired and effective teams that contribute positively towards accomplishing organisational objectives. The interplay with intra-team effectiveness revealed that team motivation levels can be enhanced owing to both manager credibility and team effectiveness.

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Authors' contributions

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