The management of conflicting roles between the core and support clusters within Statistics South Africa

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"I am so lucky that both my hands are held high by women of wisdom; how could I possibly and honestly go wrong".

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ABSTRACT

Conflict within organisations is inevitable and a necessity for an organisation to continuously review its responsiveness to its clients' needs. However, conflict left unmanaged can have disastrous consequences for the organisation, its employees and its clients. This study is investigating the sources which contribute to conflicting management roles between the core and support branches within Statistics South Africa (Stats SA). Stats SA comprises eight branches divided into the core and support branches. The research methodology for this study is qualitative, with Stats SA as a single case study. Using two levels of purposive sampling, one core branch and one support branch were selected for the study. Within each branch a total of twenty respondents from the senior management level were interviewed. Empirical data collection was further supported by a comprehensive literature review focusing on identifying the causes of intergroup conflict and the different conflict management styles applicable to various conflict situations. Data was analysed using thematic analysis.

The results of the study indicate that Stats SA does not have a formal conflict management strategy and conflict is handled in a spasmodic manner. Respondents identified the urgent need for a review of the current organisational culture, particularly in areas of governance and administration. The respondents are unanimous on the role which communication between management structures plays in either escalating or managing conflicting roles between the branches. The key recommendations focus on the involvement of Stats SA's senior management leadership in creating a conducive working environment and adopting a conflict management strategy based on the Process Model for conflict management. The conclusion of the study indicates that the management of conflicting roles between the core and support branches can only be addressed through collective leadership and ensuring the implementation of the proposed Stats SA conflict management strategy.

Keywords: Stats SA, core branches, support branches, conflict, sources of conflict, types of conflict, management of conflict, conflict management styles, communication of conflict, legislative and regulatory frameworks and conflict management strategy.

CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Conflict is an intrinsic part of human nature and happens almost every time that people interact with one another. Meyer and Surujlal (2013:101) define conflict as an inevitable part of life, when the importance of understanding and managing is mutual between the parties involved. The lack of understanding of conflict can affect various areas within an organisation, creating unstable and sometimes very vulnerable situations. Given the fact that conflict is perceived to be an inevitable occurrence in any organisation, it is advisable to focus on the effective management thereof. Odetunde (2013:5323) maintains that conflict is an invertible organisational feature, with implications for both functional and dysfunctional effects on organisational life, depending on how it is managed.

The purpose of this study is aimed at investigating sources of conflicting roles between the core and support branches in Statistics South Africa (Stats SA). A branch within Stats SA refers to a second hierarchical layer led by Deputy Directors-General (DDGs), and it is a programme of related functions organised to deliver/perform a series of events or activities. The core branches are divisions within the organisation which deliver the main functions supporting Stats SA's mandate, which is the production, coordination and dissemination of official statistics. Support branches are divisions within the organisation which assist the core branches in delivering official statistics by providing advice on methodologies, monitoring and evaluation, information technology, support in administration and promotion of good governance (Stats SA, 2016a:38). Although the roles of both the core and support branches are clearly defined, with the former focusing on production and delivery of official statistics, while the latter is focused on support for various aspects, the study argues that there are some instances where their roles seem to be unclear and in conflict with one another, as will be further detailed in the problem statement discussion.

A point of interest in relation to the management of conflicting roles between the core and support branches within Stats SA revolves around the issues of how the organisational culture and values manifest during periods of change. One of the assumptions for the study is that the current organisational culture and values contribute significantly to the

manifestation of conflicting roles between the core and support branches, as they are not well understood and appreciated in the same manner. The study argues that when all areas of conflict have been investigated, clearly identified and defined, Stats SA will be in a better position to engage with relevant stakeholders, in order to address the issues at hand and, most importantly, find itself in a good space to develop the organisational conflict management strategy.

1.2 ORIENTATION

There have been numerous situations in Stats SA where conflicts have arisen and caused tensions within the organisation due to different factors which include poor communication and the lack of timeous conflict management (Statistics South Africa, 2012:17). The study investigates whether a lack of understanding regarding conflict and the management thereof within the organisation contributes to, or creates, an unstable and sometimes uncomfortable working environment. The failure to manage conflict may result in the creation and perpetuation of silos in the organisation, leading to diminished effectiveness and efficiency. According to Odetunde (2013:5324), traditional views on conflict describe the common dominant theme as manifesting due to differing needs, goals or interests and the perceived or real interference from one party in the other party's work, in order to achieve these needs, goals or interests. The contemporary point of view is that conflict is vital for modern organisations; and not only essential to the growth, change, and evolution of living systems, but also a system's primary defence against stagnation, detachment, entropy and eventual extinction (Aula & Siira, 2010:126).

De Dreu *et al.* (1999:370) ascribe that conflict issues include resources (power, money, time), information (ideas, opinions, values), task content, task processes, or relationships. In addition, Odetunde (2013:5324) states that causes of conflict include warring egos and personality clashes, poor and ineffective leadership, dissatisfaction caused by management style, inadequate line management, poor communication, weak performance management, heavy workload, bullying and harassment, the desire to obtain power and a lack of openness. Thus conflict can be seen as manifesting in incompatible behaviour which makes another person less effective.

The study argues that one of the important factors to consider is the manner in which organisational values influence the way people behave and conduct themselves in the workplace. According to Mayer and Louw (2009:1), organisational values are patterns of thoughts and actions and are important to members of a group. The consensus on values themselves is subject to change over time, and group members are principally able to adopt the values of others. Organisational conflict and the negotiation of values are often inter-related, particularly with regard to organisational processes and the organisational culture, which play a major role in managing organisational conflicts constructively.

An assumption in this study is that misunderstandings due to different organisational values may be another source of conflict between the core and support branches. According to De Dreu (2014:1), conflict exists amongst competitors within the same organisation, where roles are undefined, values are not considered and general organisational culture is not clear. Although there may be many factors which can result in conflict and the management thereof, in most cases the main problem usually revolves around roles and responsibilities of individuals which, to a large extent, work as centres of power to position themselves, as well as to protect their own territories. As these roles are implemented, there is bound to be conflict as the intention goes beyond the delivery of key products and services.

According to Stats SA (2015:30), their values are based on integrity, empowering partnerships and service excellence, in order to ensure an understanding of the agenda for change, to engender trust and to link the organisation and its people together. The study argues that the Stats SA culture is not as clearly defined as its organisational values, which leads to situations where the organisational values are not understood and perceived by all employees in the same way. As a result of this uneasiness around Stats SA's agenda for change (Stats SA, 2016b:4), in 2015 the Transformation and Change Team (TaCT) was formed, in order to facilitate the transformation in Stats SA.

In 2016 TaCT conducted an internal study where the results indicated change management is not well understood by most employees, and management is not playing its role accordingly. Some of the findings in the survey conducted by TaCT are that governance management structure roles such as the Executive Committee (Exco) and the Chief Directors Forum (CDF) are not clear about their agenda for change, and the

decisions taken at these structures are not well articulated and are not communicated to the whole organisation. There seems to be ambiguity on how the current strategy impacts the different branches and divisions, especially those that traditionally produce releases – products which are covered by the core branches and services in the organisation under support branches (Stats SA, 2016b:23). A further discussion of the problem identification follows in the next section.

The issues triggering the explosion of conflict often seem irrational and petty, but the aftermath is not trivial. Therefore the study acknowledges that one cannot conclusively view conflict management from only one side, whether good or bad, as it has its merits and disadvantages, depending on how it is tackled in a given environment. In many respects, conflict is an essential ingredient of development. Too much conflict is always problematic, but too little conflict may be equally troublesome, and can result in a stagnant society. Whether it proves destructive or constructive in the life of an organisation depends very much on the manner in which conflict is addressed and managed (Bradshaw, 2011:50). Odetunde (2013:5323) also asserts that effective management of organisational conflict depends on the quality of organisational leadership behaviour.

Thus, for the purpose of the study, the management of conflict will be viewed as a strategy for identifying, analysing and resolving differing stances on any organisational managerial roles, specifically between the core and support branches in Stats SA. This study will focus on clarifying perspectives regarding the different roles of the core and support branches regarding governance and administrative issues, particularly in the management of budgets, identifying sources of poor communication and poor implementation of organisational values through change management.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

As stated above, the study aims to investigate the sources of conflicting roles between the core and support branches in Stats SA. This does not necessarily indicate the absence of any conflicts within the branches themselves, which is a normal phenomenon at any workplace. The key organisational deliverables in Stats SA are to produce, coordinate and disseminate official statistics on time and within the specified budget (Stats SA, 2016c:2). The production and dissemination of official statistics is the main role of the core branch,

while the support branch is supposed to assist the former with general administration, but particularly with the management of budgets, assets and procurement support services (Stats SA, 2016a:38). However, instead of collaborating and supporting each other, conflicting roles on a number of issues seem to manifest. These issues result in inefficient governance and administration, particularly in the management of the budget, poor communication and inadequate change management, with particular focus on organisational culture and values (Stats SA, 2017b:7). Although the support branch is responsible for the organisational budget, the core branch has the allocated budget for which they are responsible, by virtue of being senior managers. However, the former seems to have too much power and latitude over the latter, which actually causes unnecessary conflicts (Stats SA, 2017b:6).

This is supported by some of the findings from the internal survey done by the TaCT (Stats SA, 2016b:11), which indicated that the core branches do not possess the authority/power to effect changes required by the organisational strategy, because they do not have control of their allocated budget. The TaCT (2016b:11) further stated that poor leadership across all branches with reduced budgets, as well as unclear guidelines regarding roles that are centralised and not centralised, are likely to negatively affect the step changes or game changers in the implementation of the organisational strategy. In addition, the TaCT (2016b:11) highlighted that strategies and policies around cost-cutting and cost-control measures have given too much power to Corporate Services, which is one of the main branches for support, as opposed to the core branches, who are actually key in implementing and delivering the organisational mandate. As a result of the above-mentioned and other measures deployed by the support branch, it becomes a challenge for the core branch to properly implement their annual performance targets (Stats SA, 2016b:11).

The other problem between the core and support branches is poor communication. During the monthly senior management meetings where major decisions have to be taken, there are usually misunderstandings or arguments between the core and support branches on who is supposed to perform certain roles, particularly on matters that affect data collection (Stats SA, 2012:16). There are some instances where Stats SA is requested to run some *ad hoc* surveys by other government departments, which are usually user paid, but the

flow of communication between the core and support branches is very poor. In these cases, the core branch usually complains about not being properly consulted, seeing that it would be the divisions of the core branch who would be carrying out the main functions of conducting the surveys, as opposed to support branches, who are mainly responsible for signing contracts (Stats SA, 2012:16). A good example is a survey conducted on the learner and educator census of ordinary public schools in the Limpopo Province, where a questionnaire was initially designed to be enumerated with hand-held devices, but when the devices could not be procured on time, it was converted to a paper-based questionnaire. Unfortunately, the conversion did not take cognisance of the needs of the scanners and data processing requirements (Stats SA, 2013:39).

Change management is another problematic area, particularly with senior management roles. The aforementioned example also highlights the problem of change management, where decisions are taken without necessarily taking into account their effect on organisational values. According to Stats SA (2016b:10), the values and corporate culture of the organisation are unclear, and there are divergent views by management and staff on organisational values and corporate culture, which results in unnecessary conflicts, as people are largely working in silos and are reluctant to share resources and information across the organisation. Thus the problem statement guiding the study is to determine the nature of and reasons for challenges associated with the management of conflict between the core and support branches within Stats SA.

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research objectives will be used to address the identified issues in the problem statement and in the development of the organisational conflict management strategy as a recommendation to the study. Research objectives provide a precise account of the specific actions which will be undertaken in order to reach the overall purpose of the study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014:121).

The research objectives for this study are to:

- describe the theoretical and statutory framework which enables the management of conflict within public organisations;

- explain the nature of conflict and challenges associated with the management of conflict between the core and support branches within Stats SA; and
- develop a conflict management strategy which will address the conflict between the core and support branches.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions will assist in the construction of the interview guide for the interviews which will be conducted in this study. The research questions in principle encapsulate the view of the research objectives. Leedy and Ormrod (2014:156) postulate that research questions should be related to the overall research problem.

The research questions for this study are:

- What are the theoretical and statutory frameworks which are used in organisations to manage conflict?
- What is the nature of conflict and the major challenges associated with the management of conflict between the core and support branches in Stats SA?
- What recommendations can be made towards the development of a conflict management strategy in order to improve the relations between the core and support branches within Stats SA?

1.6 CENTRAL THEORETICAL STATEMENTS

According to Odetunde (2013:5324), conflict handling behaviour has been treated as a choice between cooperation and competition and is viewed as a unidimensional model. However, concern over the limiting applications of a unidimensional model has resulted in the development of the two-dimensional model used to identify and analyse behavioural responses to conflict. On implementing the two-dimensional model, the pioneers of this model, namely Blake and Mouton, developed a managerial grid and argued that the managerial behaviour is a function of two variables, which are concern of people and concern for production (Odetunde, 2013:5324).

Five management styles are identified with the most desirable style being a maximum concern for both people and production (Odetunde, 2013:5324):

- competing: assertive and uncooperative;
- collaborating: assertive and cooperative;
- avoiding: unassertive and uncooperative;
- accommodating: unassertive and cooperative; and/or
- compromising: midrange on both assertiveness and cooperativeness.

The study argues that one needs to be able to use any of the five styles, depending on one's goals and the relationship amongst those working for the organisation. In one conflict situation, one may wish to use a particular strategy, while in another conflict situation, one may wish to use a different strategy. To be effective in resolving conflicts, one has to vary one's actions according to what will work best in a situation. One needs to be able to switch actions according to the circumstances of the moment (Osisioma, 2009:97). Detailed discussions on conflict management styles are outlined in Chapter 2.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology for this study is qualitative, in line with the case study design. Data, like ore, contains pieces of the truth, but these are in an unrefined state: to extract meaning from the data, research methodology is commonly employed and data and methodology are inextricably intertwined. For this reason, the methodology to be used for a particular research problem must always take into consideration the nature of the data which will be collected in the resolution of the problem (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014:96).

1.7.1 Research approach, paradigm and design

The research design refers to the overall strategy which the researcher chooses to integrate the different constituents of the study in a comprehensible and logical way, thereby ensuring that the research problem will be effectively addressed. Research design also constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measurement and analysis of data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014:156). This study is based on people's views and experiences of conflict and how the conflict is managed within Stats SA. Thus a case study research design is deemed to be the most appropriate.

The adopted paradigm for this study is a constructivist paradigm while the approach is qualitative. The study's paradigm and approach assist in understanding various dynamics

which contribute to conflict between roles undertaken by the core and support branches. Paradigms are sets of beliefs, which are not open to proof in any conventional sense; thus there is no way to elevate one over another on the basis of ultimate nor fundamental criterial (Guba & Lincoln, 1994:108). A constructivist paradigm uses the inquirer's voice which becomes that of the passionate participant who is actively engaged in facilitating the multivoice reconstruction of his or her own construction as well as those of all other participants. Change is facilitated as reconstructions are formed and individuals are stimulated to act on them (Guba & Lincoln, 1994:115).

Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data. Those who engage in this form of inquiry support a way of looking at research which honours an inductive style, a focus on individual meaning and the importance of rendering the complexity of a situation (Creswell:2014:4).

According to Brynard *et al.* (2014:39), qualitative research entails discovering novel or unanticipated findings and the possibility of altering research plans in response to these accidental discoveries. Brynard *et al.* (2014:39) further state that qualitative research focuses upon the real-life experiences of people and allows the researcher to know people personally, to see them as they are, and to experience their daily struggles when confronted with real-life situations. This enables the researcher to interpret and describe the actions of people.

Terre Blanche *et al.* (2006:274) also assert that qualitative research focuses on developing explanations of qualities of social phenomena as they occur naturally, and is thus concerned with the opinions, experiences and feelings of individuals (what, how, when and where) and the descriptive manner in which these experiences are captured in words.

The advantage of qualitative research is that the instruments employed are flexible, because they are not structured, unlike quantitative research where the researcher begins with a well-defined subject and conducts research to describe it. However, as a

disadvantage, whilst the qualitative method can examine social processes at work in particular contexts and in considerable depth, the collection and especially the analysis of this material can be time-consuming and therefore expensive if carried out accurately (Neuman, 1994:19).

Stats SA is used as the case study in this research, focusing on conflicting management roles between the core and the support branches. The respondents in the respective branches, who are senior managers in the organisation, help to answer some of the key questions asked through personal interviews. A case study has as its aim to understand one person or situation (or perhaps a very small number of persons or situations) in greater detail. In a case study (sometimes called idiographic research), a particular individual, programme or event is studied in-depth for a defined period of time. Such a study focuses on a few cases in their natural setting (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014:143).

Yin (2013:10) argues that the case study can be classified as empirical research which investigates contemporary phenomena inside their real context when the limits between the phenomena and the context are not clearly evident. The most appropriate questions in the use of the case study method are the 'how' (associated with the description of the relationship between the phenomena and their context) and the 'why' (associated with the existence of the relationship between the phenomena and their context).

The case study method is a qualitative tool and as such, its main objective is to provide an underlying description of an event or of a small group of people or objects. Due to the research span of a case study being very narrow, the findings can rarely be generalised. However, a case study can offer ideas about events and behaviours, and as such, can generate significant hypotheses for testing (MacNealy, 1997:183). MacNealy (1997:183) further argues that the use of the case study method is best limited to understanding a particular case and providing details for drawing generalised conclusions specific to the case.

1.7.2 Sampling design

Since the study is based on perceptions regarding roles of the core and support branches, a qualitative semi-structured interview guide will be developed to assist in determining the

nature of the conflict, as well as the challenges in the management of conflict between the core and support branches in Stats SA. Stats SA is largely a research-based organisation, collecting and disseminating official statistics, and leading statistical coordination in the country (Stats SA, 2017a:6), and most employees understand the importance and impact of responding when research studies are conducted.

The sampling design which will be followed in this study is a purposive design, which will enable the study to select respondents which are likely to participate, as they will have been fully briefed on the purpose, importance and outcomes of the study. The goal of purposive sampling is to understand a specific phenomenon, not to represent a population, by selecting information-rich cases for research. Studying information-rich information cases yields in-depth understanding of the phenomenon which gives insights into the questions under study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014:277).

Purposive sampling is a tool for participant selection, also called judgemental sampling, indicating the deliberate choice of respondents due to the qualities or expert knowledge which the respondent possesses (Palys, 2008:697). Purposive sampling is synonymous with qualitative research: there are many objectives which qualitative researchers might have, the list of purposive strategies which may be followed is virtually endless, and any given list will reflect only the range of situations which the author of that list has considered (Palys, 2008:697).

In purposive sampling, people or other units are chosen, as the name implies, for a particular purpose. Purposive sampling may be very appropriate for a certain research problem and the researcher should always provide a rationale explaining the reasons behind the selection of a particular sample of participants (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014:221).

The advantages of purposive sampling are that the method is less time-consuming due to the suitability of the candidates, the results of purposive sampling are usually more representative of an identified target population compared to other sampling methods and the method may be the only way in which to recruit rare respondents or suitable groups. Notwithstanding the aforesaid advantages, the disadvantages of purposive sampling are that the method has a high level of subjectivity by the researcher and limited representation of wider and more diverse populations (Kish, 1995:25).

Statistics South Africa is a national government department accountable to the Minister in the Presidency: Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation. Stats SA is the official statistics agency in South Africa, and the producer of key national economic, social and population indicators. Official statistics are vital for planning, good governance, policy formulation, monitoring and evaluation and for decision-making (Stats SA, 2015:17). Stats SA is made up of eight branches, which are divided into the core and the support branches. The core branches consist of Economic Statistics, Population and Social Statistics, Survey Operations and the South African National Statistics System (SANSS), while the support branches comprise the Office of the Statistician-General, Corporate Services, Methodology and Standards, Statistical Support and Informatics and Statistical Collection and Outreach. Reference can be made to Annexure A on the above-mentioned information (Stats SA structure). The management structure constitutes the Statistician-General, Deputy Directors-Generals (DDGs), Chief Directors and Directors (Stats SA, 2015:17).

The management structure forms part of the population frame from which the sample is selected. It is important to note that in this study the purposive sample design has two stages: the first stage involves the selection of two branches out of the eight, and the second stage involves the selection of 20 respondents out of the population of 57 senior managers. The two selected branches, namely Population and Social Statistics and Corporate Services, are two strata within which the two branches are selected, thus making the sample design a stratified purposive sample. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2014:221), one strategy of purposeful sampling which captures variations between cases studied is stratified purposive sampling. Stratified purposive sampling illustrates characteristics of specific subgroups in order to facilitate comparisons by selecting participants based on key dimensions. Potential cases are then divided into "strata" containing variations of the phenomenon. The Social and Population Statistics Branch would represent the core branch, while Corporate Services would represent the support branch of the population of the study. The detailed methodology of the study will be covered in Chapter 3.

The advantage of 'open' questions is that the information gathered by way of the responses is more likely to reflect the full richness and complexity of the views held by the

respondent. Respondents are allowed space to express themselves in their own words. Weighed against this, however, there are two disadvantages which are built into the use of open questions. Firstly, they demand more effort on the part of the respondents (which might well reduce their willingness to take part in the research). Secondly, they leave the researcher with data that is quite 'raw' and requires a lot of time-consuming analysis before it can be used (Denscombe, 2010:165-166).

1.7.3 Instruments of data collection

The method for data collection will comprise the literature review (which will be used in all chapters in this study) and personal interviews of all selected senior managers in both the support and the core branches.

1.7.3.1 Literature review

According to Seuring and Muller (2008:2), a literature review is a systematic, explicit and reproducible design for identifying, evaluating and interpreting the existing body of recorded documents. The analysis of documents pursues the aim of opening up material that does not have to be created on the basis of a data collection by the researcher. Seuring and Muller (2008:2) further argue that literature reviews usually have two objectives: firstly, they summarise existing research by identifying patterns, themes and issues, and secondly, this helps to identify the conceptual content of the field and can contribute to theory development. One problem derived from the challenge is that it is impractical to read everything. Only for emerging or narrowly defined issues might it be possible to provide complete reviews.

The documents to be used in this study include textbooks, journals, e-books and research reports in both public and private organisations, Stats SA survey reports and other organisational documents (published and not published), and other official acts such as the Labour Relations Act (Act 14 of 2014), the Promotion of Access to Information Act (Act 2 of 2000), the Statistics Act (Act 6 of 1996), legislation, regulations, guidelines, policies and frameworks.

1.7.3.2 Personal interviews

Personal interviews, sometimes referred to as 'face-to-face' interviews, are conducted by the interviewer with the respondent. Interviewers are required to make a good effort to guide respondents to the point where they know what they are being asked to do and why. If the interviewer is willing to arrange an interview at the respondent's convenience, pressures of time should not be extraordinary for most respondents. In actual fact, people like to have an opportunity to talk about themselves to a good listener (Fowler, 2002:47).

Personal interviews have the distinct advantage of enabling the researcher to establish rapport with potential participants and therefore gain their cooperation. In personal interviews the researcher is more likely to gain participants' cooperation and encourage them to respond honestly:

- Advantages of interviewer administration such as answering respondent questions, probing for adequate answers, and accurately following complex instructions or sequences are realised;
- Multimethod data collection including observations, visual cues and self-administered sections, on paper forms or into a computer, are feasible;
- Rapport and confidence building are possible (including any written reassurances that may be needed for reporting very sensitive material); and
- Longer survey instruments are more possible in person than by any other mode.

Disadvantages of personal interviews include:
- They are likely to be more costly than the alternatives;
- A trained staff of interviewers which are geographically near the sample are needed;
- The total data collection period is likely to be longer than telephone procedures; and
- Some samples (those in a high-rise building or high-crime areas, elites, employees, students) may be more accessible by some other mode.

For the purpose of the study a semi-structured interview guide (Annexure B) will be used in order to facilitate the conversation with disadvantages mitigated due to the geographical proximity of the researcher to the respondents.

1.7.4 Data analysis

There are many possible techniques to use in the analysis of qualitative data. This study employs content or thematic analysis due to the nature of the sample. Themes which emerge from the literature and interviews have been grouped together and analysed by putting together evidence about views on each theme. Although the focus in this study is on qualitative research, it is important to note that it is not completely detached from quantitative research; thus, in reality, the quantitative research is not exclusively deductive, nor is the qualitative research exclusively inductive. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2014:99), qualitative researchers often formulate a theory by inductive reasoning (e.g. by observing a few situations), engage in the theory building process and then try to support their theory by drawing and testing the conclusions which follow logically from it. Similarly, after the qualitative researchers have identified a theme in their data using an inductive process, they typically move into a more deductive mode to verify or modify it with additional data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014:99). This study comprised the analyses of both qualitative and quantitative data collected through the semi-structured interview.

The importance of using an interview in qualitative research is that participants can provide historical information, it allows the researcher control over the line of questioning and respondents have time to think about the answers to the questions in the interview. The disadvantages are that there is a level of researcher imposition, meaning that when developing the interview guide, the researcher makes decisions and assumptions as to what is important, and may lose some critical information in the process, with more time spent on answering the qualitative components (Brynard *et al.*, 2014:48).

Leedy and Ormrod (2014:144) further assert that a case study researcher often begins the data analysis process during data collection, and preliminary conclusions are likely to influence the kinds of data he or she seeks out and collects in later parts of the study. Ultimately the researcher must look for convergence (triangulation) of the data. Many separate pieces of information must all point to the same conclusion. Leedy and Ormrod (2014:143) outline the following steps when undertaking data analysis in a case study:

- organisation of details about the case: the special facts about the case are arranged in a logical or chronological order;

- categorisation of data: categories are identified to help cluster the data into meaningful groups;

- interpretation of single instances: specific documents, occurrences and other bits of data are examined for the specific meaning which they might have in relation to the case;

- identification of patterns: the data and their interpretations are scrutinised for underlying themes and other patterns which characterise the case more broadly than a single piece of information can reveal; and

- synthesis and generalisations: an overall portrait of the case is constructed. Conclusions are drawn which may have implications beyond the specific case which has been studied.

Thematic analysis is a data reduction and analysis strategy by which data is segmented, categorised, summarised and reconstructed, in a manner which captures the important concepts within a dataset. Thematic analysis is normally used in qualitative research in order to identify, report and analyse data pertaining to a specific situation or matter surrounding research. According to Longhorn *et al.* (cited by Jantjies, 2015:14), an advantage of thematic analysis is that it is flexible, and for that reason, it is applied in social research in order to provide a significant understanding of a specific phenomenon.

1.8 LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Despite the advantages, case studies have received scathing criticism. Yin (2013) delineates three types of arguments against case study research. Firstly, case studies are often accused of a lack of rigour. Often the case study researcher has been sloppy, and has allowed ambiguous evidence or biased views to influence the direction of the findings and conclusions. Secondly, case studies provide a minuscule basis for scientific generalisation, since they use a small number of subjects, some conducted with only one subject. The question commonly asked is, "How can one generalise from a single case?" Thirdly, case studies are often labelled as being cumbersome, difficult to conduct and producing a massive amount of documentation. The danger occurs when the data is not managed and organised systematically (Yin, 1984:21).

Stats SA is a big organisation, and being used as a case study, some (particularly management) may consider a sample of 20 respondents too small to generalise the findings across the whole organisation. Zainal (2007:1) explains that the case study method enables a researcher to closely examine the data within a specific context. In most cases, the case study method selects a small geographical area or very limited number of individuals as the subjects of the study. Case studies, in their true essence, explore and investigate contemporary real-life phenomena through detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their relationships. Another limitation in this study may revolve around issues and sources of power where various sections of the participants may regard the study to be challenging their powers and may result in their being reluctant to participate in the study.

In addition to the limitations this study also outlines the related delimitations. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2014:43) the statement of research describes precisely what the researcher intends to do. It is it important to know precisely what the researcher does not intend to do which is described as delimitations. The limits of the problem should be as carefully bounded for a research purposes. Leedy and Ormrod (2014:326) further maintain that any delimitation should be clearly set forth so that all who read the research report should know precisely how far the research effort extended and where limits are set.

The respondents may also not be as expressive, as compared to if the same study were to be conducted by someone outside the organisation. The issue of trust may be a huge barrier, regardless of the commitment and pledge made by the Stats SA authority for the research to be conducted within the organisation. The issues of subjectivity and biasness for case studies can also be highlighted. Although Stats SA runs a number of surveys across the country very effectively, the experience with regard to research studies which are run internally is not good, and the response rate is usually very poor, unless there is some intervention at executive level, which also, when it happens, may compromise the results of this study.

1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In all studies which affect and interact with human beings, a good researcher needs to be attentive to the ethical manner in which the research is carried out. According to Fowler

(2002:147), a basic guideline is that the researcher should make sure that no individual suffers any adverse consequences as a result of the research. Moreover, to the extent that it is feasible, a good researcher will also be attentive to maximising positive outcomes of the research process. Generally, the following ethical principles apply when conducting research, namely voluntarism, protecting respondents in terms of information collected and victimisation, benefits to respondents, thanking respondents for their participation and presenting the results of the study when everything is completed (Fowler, 2002:147).

Ethical considerations are vital in any form of research, as all participants need to be assured that all the information discussed will be held in confidence, and the researcher needs to maintain the highest level of professionalism at all times. Qualitative researchers concentrate on "exploring, examining, and describing people and their natural environments". They therefore necessitate a cognisance of the ethical issues which may arise from those interactions (Orb *et al.*, 2001:93). Since Stats SA is used as a case study, a letter of permission was requested from the relevant authority to conduct the study within the organisation. The participants who are senior management staff within the selected branches, namely Corporate Services and Population and Social Statistics, were asked to indicate their voluntary participation by providing their consent at the start of the interview. Although the names of the people and positions of respondents were used for selection prior to holding the interview, during the analysis, the information remained anonymous and confidential from everyone, including management structures.

The results of this study are also going to be made available to all staff members for knowledge-sharing purposes, but particularly to Stats SA management, in order to enable them to use some of the information to address the related concerns. All relevant policies and acts in relation to the protection of personal information were applied, such as the Promotion of Access to Information Act (Act 2 of 2002), as it is applicable to all citizens of South Africa, and the Statistics Act (Act 6 of 1996), as the study was undertaken within the Stats SA office. The letter of permission from the organisational authority regarding internal research studies usually implies the application of the Statistics Act (Act 6 of 1996).

1.10 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Stats SA relies heavily on various professionals to undertake its work in order to fulfil its mandate (Stats SA, 2017b:8). The organisation mainly comprises the core and support branches, where the former delivers main deliverables on official economic, social and population statistics, while the latter plays the supportive role by managing governance and administrative duties. The undesirable *status quo* (as highlighted in the problem statement) is that the core and support branches are not working together as a team, particularly on governance and administrative issues, which are vital to delivering key products and services of the organisation.

The study will enable all employees within Stats SA and other organisations to interact professionally with one another, especially at management level. The study will also helps Stats SA, particularly the Human Resource Management Cluster under Corporate Services, to consider development of other documents in addition to the current policies which can be used to minimise conflict and to advise what exactly needs to be done when conflict happens. The study will also assists other researchers in the field of conflict management. This study contributes significantly in matters regarding organisational culture, values and change management, as the researcher works together on some research related activities with the Transformation and Change Team (TaCT), which mainly drives issues of culture and values within the organisation.

The study will also assists when the organisational communication strategy is reviewed. The problem of "us and them" has to be addressed by Stats SA management by taking all the contributing factors very seriously, improving on organisational communication channels and by ensuring the implementation of the recommendations which will be made from this study. Stats SA must also create a conducive working environment for all employees, regardless of rank, status, political influences or interventions. When these problems are tackled, all employees will participate freely and professionally in delivering the organisational mandate, which is to deliver quality official statistics and other services as outlined in the organisational strategy.

The main contribution of this study is that it will assists Stats SA to develop a conflict management strategy. The strategy will generally help the organisation with management

of conflict, particularly at senior level, as it will be specific, as opposed to other official documents which largely generalise when addressing issues. The study will also helps management to dissolve the two centres of power currently within the organisation, as suggestions put forward would have to be based on a well-researched environment, Stats SA being a case study. Moreover, the same strategy may even be adopted by independent organisations and other government departments, in the event that they experience the same problems.

The study adds to the conflict management body of knowledge by identifying sources of conflict in the South African public sector and how they will be managed. Moreover, it will assist other researchers in various sectors, but particularly the public sector, to further replicate the study or use it as a baseline for similar strategies in their departments. Lastly, the study contributes to the academic institutions by expanding the sources of literature on conflict management, which various scholars can make reference to when writing research papers, presenting papers and compiling publications.

1.11 CHAPTER LAYOUT

Chapter 1: Orientation and problem statement

This chapter covers the general overview of Stats SA as a case study and the rationale of the study. It specifies the problem to be investigated and the justification behind conducting this kind of study within the organisation. It covers the research objectives and questions, the research methodology, the limitations of the study, the ethical considerations and the significance of the study.

Chapter 2: Theoretical overview on conflict management and regulatory frameworks

The literature review conducted in this chapter on conflict management encompasses undefined roles and responsibilities at managerial level. Reference to policies and legislative and regulatory frameworks are also included. The literature is used to support the argument that conflicts are not always detrimental and endemic within an organisation, but can also facilitate change and contribute positively.

Chapter 3: Analysis of conflict management in Stats SA

This chapter incorporates the analysis of results on management of conflict between the core and support branches in Stats SA. The current problem is argued from a scientific point of view, using descriptive and inferential analysis versus general perceptions or observations outside this study. The instruments used enable the analysis of data and empirical evidence on the results of the study. The focus is also on the culture, organisational values and change management of Stats SA. These are soft issues which, in most cases, organisations are reluctant to address, as they are very sensitive and complex in nature.

Chapter 4: Proposed Stats SA conflict management strategy

Chapter 4 proposes the strategy to be considered in order to address conflicting roles at management level between the core and support branches of Stats SA. This strategy must identify the current gaps and ways in which to address them in the long term. The strategy must have a clear road map aligned to the organisational strategy, which is based on a conduit of trust, and adjudication of its mandate and relations amongst all employees, particularly at managerial level.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and recommendations

The conclusions and recommendations set forth in this chapter may assist Stats SA on the issues of the organisational culture, as well as the implementation of values as captured in most official documents and change management guidelines. A healthy and productive organisation needs to be knowledgeable on issues relating to people and should strive to create a conducive environment for all, regardless of their rank or status.

1.12 CONCLUSION

This chapter covered the general overview of Stats SA as a case study and the rationale of the study. The statement of the problem was given to highlight the issues of the management of conflict between the core and support branches within Stats SA, which are going to be addressed through the research objectives and questions. The research methodology explains the research approach and design adopted in this study, the instruments of data collection, the literature review and the data analysis. The limitations, ethical considerations and significance of the study were also detailed.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL OVERVIEW ON CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a comprehensive definition of conflict as a concept, sources of conflict, types of conflict and the management thereof. There is reference to legislative and regulatory frameworks, particularly as they pertain to senior management roles and responsibilities in the core and support branches in Stats SA. Kirti (2016:92) asserts that conflicts are an everyday phenomena, not only in organisations, but also in every sphere of individuals' lives, and are therefore not all detrimental in an organisation, but can facilitate change and contribute positively where there is absence of ill-intended motive.

Kirti (2016:92) further argues that people, particularly in the working environment, need to be relentless in understanding what conflict is, identifying its sources, pinpointing different strategies which can be employed to manage it, and should not necessarily discourage it. Ojo and Abolade (2014:125) contend that an important management task is to create an environment in which individuals and groups of people can cooperate with one another, in order to achieve both organisational and individual goals. Yet one never-changing reality in organisations is that individuals and work groups compete for limited resources, power and status, to the extent that their competition leads to disruption (or even enhancement) of cooperative endeavours. These competitions (bad or good) are generally referred to as conflicts.

2.2 CONTEXTUALISING CONFLICT MANAGEMENT WITHIN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

According to Radivojevic and Klincov (2015:108), public administration is a mix of organs, organisations, bodies and an interdependent set of competencies and tasks, specifically connected and managed with a view to implement the legal norms, organisational tools and methods of management processes and procedures, in order to fully comply with the mandate of the elected government. Chappell (2007:33) asserts that public administration must expand its capacity to identify, assess and control conflict and its impact on the resources of governments. Conflict and disputes erupt between the executive branch and the legislature over organisational arrangements due to their implications for oversight and

accountability, as well as control over public policy and government agencies. Chappell (2007:33) further argues that conflict exists anytime a decision is made or not made, conflict exists in all public organisations, and public administrators are engaged in dealing with it on a daily basis. How the public administrator manages conflict determines the effectiveness of the public organisation.

Kettl (2005:14) maintains that one of the critical areas in public administration is the definition of boundaries because they clarify what organisations do and what they do not do. Thus boundaries define what each individual's job is and, just as important, what it is not. The matter of clarifying the roles between the core and support branches in Stats SA is critical in order to address the problem of conflicting roles within the organisation. Intra-organisational boundaries define each individual's responsibility for contributing to the mission, and if these boundaries are not adhered to accordingly, they serve as breeding grounds for conflict. Therefore organisations need to coordinate the work of their members so that not everyone tries to do the same thing and so that necessary work actually gets done (Kettl, 2005:14).

Radivojevic and Klincov (2015:108) explain that conflict is constant in modern life and within the organisational units in public administration it can have short and long-term consequences for the whole administration. Dissatisfaction and emotional exhaustion of employees, increased stress, poor working environment, reduced creativity and service efficiency are just some of the symptoms which occur when the conflict is not managed properly.

Chappell (2007:33) argues that there is a general belief that all conflict must be resolved or terminated. This perspective would have us believe that all conflict is bad, which in actual fact is contrary to the democratic process which demonstrates a lack of understanding regarding the importance of conflict. Therefore instead of viewing conflict as good or bad, public administrators must view conflict as an opportunity. This opportunity could be the improvement of an existing process, an expanded service or programme, the creation of a new service or programme, the resolution of a problem, or any other public action. Stats SA must therefore take the problem of conflicting management roles between the core and support branches as an opportunity, bring both branches together and devise solutions for the benefit of the organisation.

Radivojevic and Klincov (2015:112) also contend that one of the most important activities of managerial capacity in public administration is the art of maintaining regular and uniform relations between the administration and users of its services, and sometimes the administration is not even aware of conflicts between employees, which ultimately becomes a threat to human relations and effective service delivery. Ignoring conflicts can interfere with service processes, interpersonal relationships within public administration or with the users of its services. Therefore, those who make decisions always have to think about the positive and negative consequences of the conflict (Radivojevic & Klincov, 2015:112), which will also be discussed in this chapter.

The next section defines conflict, and it is important to note that conflict as a concept cannot be viewed as only one sided, thus a holistic approach has to be considered through acknowledging that conflict can either be positive or negative.

2.3 CONFLICT DEFINED

The depth and breadth of conflict is so vast that to restrict conflict to a single definition would not do it justice (Chappell, 2007:33). Conflict has been defined extensively by various scholars such as Nischal and Bhalla (2014), using different paradigms aligned to either traditional or contemporary schools of thought. Verma (1998:354) argues that the traditional view assumes that conflict is bad, always has a negative impact and leads to declines in performance as the level of conflict increases and must always be avoided. According to the traditional view, conflict is closely associated with such terms as violence, destruction and irrationality, and the response to these problems is to reduce, suppress, or eliminate it. This traditional view of conflict is still widely held because industrial and business institutions which have a strong influence on our society concur with it (Verma, 1998:354). Ekanola (2005:49) also explains conflict as a struggle in which the aim is to gain objectives and simultaneously neutralise, injure or eliminate rivals. In actual fact it embodies notions of strife, collision, struggle, difference and disagreement.

According to Lipsky and Avgar (2010:38), traditionally dealing with conflicts has been the responsibility of managers and administrators who took an authoritarian view of conflict and believed that conflict was an aberration that needed to be suppressed, and, if possible, eliminated. In other words, conflict should be managed by means of managerial

authority. This generally means that some form of discipline is imposed, in order to suppress conflict. Lipsky and Avgar (2010:41) further maintain that traditional managers often view the resolution of conflict as a zero sum game: they believe that the resolution of conflict usually produces a winner and a loser. They differ from variable sum managers who are able to see in most conflicts a possibility of both parties' winning and maintain that conflicts should be prevented if possible, but if conflicts occur, managing them means prevailing. Zero sum managers attach great value to "victory" and dislike compromise, and also tend to disapprove of newer conflict management techniques, which is why they are considered "traditional" in outlook.

The contemporary point of view is that conflict is vital for modern organisations, and not only essential to the growth, change and evolution of living systems, but also a system's primary defence against stagnation, detachment, entropy and eventual extinction. Conflict is therefore an important force in bringing out the differences amongst agents' opinions, logics and worldviews, which, in turn, leads to more creative and novel outcomes. Individual level conflict interaction is crucial because it ultimately changes the whole social environment (Aula & Siira, 2010:126). According to Langer and Lietz (2014:102), contemporary conflict has its roots in classical Marxism and is based on four principles: firstly, conflict is inevitable, secondly, there is an unequal distribution of power in relationships, thirdly, there is an ongoing struggle for scarce resources and lastly, whoever has the most power controls the distribution of resources.

Lindsey (2011:8) states that contemporary conflict is based on the dominance of some groups over others, and that groups in society share common interests, whether its members are aware of it or not. Lindsey (2011:8) further argues that conflict is not simply based on class struggles and the tensions between owner and worker or employer and employee. It occurs on a much wider level and amongst almost all other groups, and these include females and males, and any other groups which can be differentiated as a minority or a majority, according to the level of resources they possess. The list is infinite.

Verma (1998:354) claims that the behavioural or contemporary view regards conflict as natural and inevitable in all organisations, and it may have either a positive or a negative effect, depending on how it is handled. Performance may increase with conflict, but only up to a certain level, and then decline if conflict is allowed to increase further or is left

unresolved. This approach advocates acceptance of conflict and rationalises its existence. Due to the potential benefits from conflict, public managers should focus on managing it effectively, rather than suppressing or eliminating it. The table below provides for a comparison between the traditional and contemporary views on conflict (Verma,1998:354):

Table 2.1: Traditional view versus contemporary view

	Traditional view	**Contemporary view**
Main points	• Caused by troublemakers • It is always bad • Should be avoided • Should be suppressed	• Inevitable between humans • Not always bad • Natural result of change • Can be managed
Effect on performance	• Performance declines as the level of conflict increases • Performance is relative to compliance	• Performance mainly depends on how effectively the conflict is handled • Generally, performance increases to a certain level as conflict levels increase, then declines if conflict is allowed to increase further or is left unresolved

Source: (Verma,1998:354)

When considering Table 2.1, it may be argued that any conflict management view may be considered, depending on the prevailing environment. During the development of a conflict management strategy for Stats SA, an appropriate conflict management strategy would therefore be considered.

According to Marques (2015:2) and Tjosvold (2006:89), conflict can be defined as a disagreement that is perceived as creating tension, at least by one of the parties involved in an interaction, or a state of disagreement over issues of substance or emotional antagonism which may arise due to anger, mistrust or personality clashes. Conflict can also be viewed as a dynamic process that occurs between interdependent parties as they experience negative emotional reactions to perceived disagreements and interference with attainment of their goals. Marques (2015:2) and Tjosvold (2006:88) argue that conflict has often been proposed to occur in mixed-motive relationships where persons have both competitive and cooperative interets. The competitive elements produce conflict while cooperative elements create bargain to reach an agreement. Tjosvold (2006:88) and Marques (2015:2) further maintain that the definition presented includes three essential characteristics of a conflict situation, which are interaction, disagreement and perception of

tension. Conflict is therefore linked to the inner processes of individuals and their relationship with the environment and is an integral part of organisational life. Conflict is thus not only an external reality.

According to Ojo and Abolade (2014:125), conflict is defined as a disagreement between two or more parties who perceive that they have incompatible concerns. It is a state of disagreement or conflict about something perceived to be important by at least one of the parties involved. Ojo and Abolade (2014:125), further contend that conflict is based on the incompatibility of goals and arises from opposing behaviours. Ojo and Abolade (2014:126) also explain that conflict exists whenever an action by one party is perceived as preventing or interfering with the goals, needs or actions of another party. Conflict can be regarded as a reality of management and organisational behaviour and can be related to use of power and politics, but can also be viewed at the individual, group or organisational level.

In order to understand conflict, sources contributing to it have to be explained, particularly in the working environment – as this study purports. The next section deals with sources of conflict and how these relate to the management of conflicting roles between the core and support branches in Stats SA.

2.4 SOURCES OF CONFLICT

In addition to the sources discussed hereunder, reference was also made in Chapter 1 to specific sources of conflict, which will now be discussed in more detail. In order for conflict to occur, certain conditions must exist, and it is imperative to understand the nature of those underlying conditions. Conflict can arise over multiple organisational experiences, such as incompatible goals, differences in the interpretation of facts, negative feelings, differences of values and philosophies, or disputes over shared resources (Ojo & Abolade, 2014:127). Stress at the workplace is another source of conflict and relates to poor interpersonal relationships, unclear roles, differing expectations and an imbalance of power (Klinkhamer, 2015:338).

According to Madera *et al.* (2013:28), role ambiguity and role conflict are two sources of conflict and stressors that managers might experience working in a multicultural environment. Perceiving a negative diversity climate or a climate that is hostile or

indifferent toward a multicultural workforce further deteriorates fragile relationships amongst managers. Role ambiguity refers to vague and unclear expectations and involves unclear expectations which are associated with negative work experiences because the confusion on what to do can be experienced as stressful. Role conflict refers to simultaneous contradictory and multiple conflicting expectations from co-workers, which is stressful to employees.

During one of the senior management sessions where all branches within Stats SA were represented, there was a concern as to how senior management should hold each other accountable, which largely focused on areas of responsibility, clarification of roles, code of conduct and how to manage communication and avoid unnecessary conflicts (Stats SA, 2017b:05). This study is about conflicting management roles between the core and support branches in Stats SA, and role ambiguity and role conflict are central to the current problem.

Mayer and Boness (2009:39) assert that sources of conflict include organisational factors such as service cultures, lack of teamwork and poor communication. Miscommunication is often the source of conflict in the workplace, as it is not only what someone has said, but also how this is heard and interpreted by the listener. Clarity is therefore key when it comes to communication. Mayer and Boness (2009:39) further explain that workload and position can also lead to conflict and should not be undermined in any given environment, and that employee cultural diversity is also often overlooked as a source of conflict when considering differing values and beliefs and the meaning of 'work' itself. This is significant, given the cultural diversity and different personalities of employees within the organisation. Organisations which are riddled with conflict, often rooted in identity, experience intrapersonal and interpersonal distress, distraction from work and difficulties in decision-making and interpersonal contact, which have a negative effect on effectiveness, productivity and creativity.

Ibietan (2013:220) argues that the extent to which the public service is characterised, organised and governed by rigid bureaucratic structures and mechanistic management philosophies of the classical theorists could promote conflict at the workplace. One of the major sources of conflict is the existence of dual interest groups (in organisations) with different goals, interests and motivations, and it is in instances like these where the other

group, by virtue of what they do professionally, think they are more powerful than others. Attitudinal tendencies such as these exacerbate the potency of irrationality amongst peers – particularly amongst the senior management echelon in the core and support branches as illustrated in this study. The power structures in the public service are also a good breeding ground for the management of conflicting roles, especially in situations where the machinery and processes are not clear and not given a firm footing in terms of decision-making (Ibietan, 2013:220).

Ojo and Abolade (2014:127) regard change as another source of conflict. According to him, change is always present in society but it is not always welcome. Resistance to change is natural and it arises because habits, once established, are not easily relinquished. There is also the fear of the unknown, conformity to customary expected ways of behaviour, misunderstanding of implications of change and individual differences – all of which contribute to resistance to change. Unless change is well managed, it could lead to conflict or even crises. Other sources of organisational conflict are competition for status incongruence, win-lose situations, the need for change, ambiguous rules and communication problems (Ojo & Abolade, 2014:127).

The sources of conflict within the context of the study were determined through the semi-structured interview guide, basing specific questions on the sources as suggested through the literature. The next section deals with types of conflict in the workplace.

2.5 TYPES OF CONFLICT

Rahim (as cited by Khalid & Fatima, 2016:122) suggests two broad types of conflict with reference to their sources, namely affective conflict and substantive conflict. Substantive conflict arises from discrepancies over group goals, while affective conflict is likely to occur when members are focused on their individual satisfaction or goals. Rahim further adds two other types of conflicts, namely transforming conflict and masquerading conflict. Transforming conflict occurs when substantive conflict degenerates to affective conflict. Masquerading conflict, however, refers to disagreements when members have emotional conflicts but disguise them as substantive conflicts.

According to Aula and Siira (2010:126), several researchers such as Jehn (1997), Jehn and Mannix (2001) and Rahim (2002) have suggested that there are two dimensions which are relevant for managing conflict: disagreements relating to substantive issues and disagreements relating to affective issues. The substantive dimension refers to disagreements relating to tasks, policies and other organisational issues, while the affective dimension refers to issues that "are generally caused by the negative reactions of organisational members (e.g. personal attacks of group members, racial disharmony and sexual harassment)". There is a widespread unanimity that a moderate amount of substantive conflict is valuable and even essential for organisational development, whereas affective conflict impedes organisational performance at various levels (Rahim, 2002:216).

Rahim (2002:216) argues that organisational conflict, either substantive or affective in nature, may be classified as intra-organisational (i.e. conflict within an organisation) or inter-organisational (i.e. conflict between two or more organisations). Intra-organisational conflict may also be classified on the basis of the levels (individual or group) at which it occurs. On this basis, intra-organisational conflict may be classified as interpersonal, intragroup and intergroup. Interpersonal conflict, also known as dyadic conflict, refers to disagreement or incompatibility between two or more organisational members of the same or different hierarchical levels or units.

Intragroup conflict, also known as intradepartmental conflict, refers to conflict amongst members of a group, or between two or more subgroups within a group in connection with its goals, tasks or procedures. Intergroup conflict, also known as interdepartmental conflict, refers to conflict between two or more units or groups within an organisation (Rahim, 2002:216). In support of the above-mentioned Osisioma (2009:90) also asserts that, there are three different types of conflict in organisations. Firstly, there is intra-individual conflict arising in the form of frustrations which can result in distraction from work. Secondly, inter-personal conflict is often attributed to personality problems or is perceived as such by the other party, which can result in a negative effect on effectiveness, productivity and creativity. The major sources of inter-personal conflict include personal differences, information deficiency, role incompatibility and environmental stress.

Thirdly, there is inter-group conflict, which occurs whenever individuals belonging to one interest group, collectively or individually, disagree with another group or its members. In this study, the focus is on inter-group conflict, because its characteristics or sources seem to cover a number of areas that are a concern in the management of conflicting roles between the core and support branches, and which negatively affect delivery of key services, particularly in respect of governance and administrative issues within Stats SA (Osisioma, 2009:90).

There have been many instances where the core and support branches literally take clear stands regarding what should be done. A good example concerns the administration of budgets in terms of who is responsible. All senior managers, by virtue of their positions, are annually allocated budgets, but the core branches cannot use them without the approval of the finance unit which is part of the support branch. The argument raised by the core branches is that the support branch must manage and coordinate the organisational budget and not control the core branch plans and operations (Stats SA, 2017b:06).

According to Mayer and Boness (2009:41), intrapersonal and interpersonal conflict processes are created through the human mind and consist of "different parts which include the psyche, the value system and the behaviour". Rahim (2002:207) postulates that an interactive process does not preclude the possibilities of intra-individual conflict, for it is known that a person often interacts with himself or herself. Rahim (2002:207) further argues that conflict in organisations often relates to issues of identity and may start when an individual or a group perceives differences to, and opposition between, the self and the other, about interests, beliefs, needs and values.

As posited by scholars such as Rahim (2002), conflict is not a problem as such, but management thereof may be an issue. As a result, conflict management styles have become a major subfield of organisational behaviour (Khalid & Fatima, 2016:122). For the purpose of this study, the type of conflict between the core and support branches is identified and analysed as part of Chapter 3. The ensuing section deals with conflict management with particular reference to methods of diagnosing conflict and ways in which conflict can be handled.

2.6 MANAGEMENT OF CONFLICT

Ojo and Abolade (2014:125) point out that the need for effective conflict management to ameliorate the problems emanating from conflict and to assist organisations in their struggle for the attainment of corporate objectives cannot be over-emphasised. Effective conflict management enhances employees' performance in an organisation and the organisation's conflict management system influences employee performance in the organisation. Organisations should embark on training and retraining of their employees in the area of conflict management, so as to create a conducive working environment for the employees, and establish efficient and effective communication channels between and amongst all categories of employees in the organisation. This reduces conflicting situations in the organisation.

Mayer and Louw (2009:1) argue that conflict management is the art of identifying the appropriate intervention to achieve conflict settlement and does not necessarily imply the avoidance, reduction or termination of conflict. Rather, it helps in the design of effective strategies to both minimise dysfunctions and enhance the constructive functions of conflict, thereby improving learning and the effectiveness of the working environment. Conflict management is the positive and constructive management of differences. Mayer and Louw (2009:1) further contend that rather than advocating for methods of removing conflict, conflict management addresses the more realistic questions of managing conflict, namely:

- how to deal with it in a constructive way;
- how to bring opposing sides together in a cooperative process; and
- how to design a practical, achievable and cooperative system for the constructive management of differences.

Duze (2012:164) explains conflict management as all actions and mechanisms used by executives (or parties in conflict or independent third parties) to keep conflict from interfering with the achievement of the organisation's objectives. The first step therefore in developing an effective strategy for conflict resolution, in any context, lies in recognising the underlying goals that the parties are seeking to achieve in the process, and accepting the legitimacy of their efforts to pursue their goals. De Dreu (2014:1) also maintains that to effectively curb role conflict, there is a need to understand how it works within

organisations. Thus in principle, conflict management is the way in which parties manage their conflict experiences, and is usually aimed at either mitigating or fuelling the conflict. Conflict management is what people in conflict intend to do, as well as what they actually do. Meyer and Surujlal (2013:3) state that the mismanagement of conflict can result in larger and more uncontrollable situations, if not managed or resolved timeously.

The next section will focus on conflict management styles and possibly assess the one which could be used to address the problem of conflicting roles between the core and support branches in Stats SA.

2.7 CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES

Kirti (2016:94) differentiated styles of handling conflict on two basic dimensions: firstly, concern for self – the degree (high or low) to which a person attempts to satisfy his or her own concern and secondly, concern for others – the degree (high or low) to which a person attempts to satisfy the concern for others. According to Osisioma (2009:93-95) these two dimensions were later reviewed and expatiated into five styles of managing conflict, namely competing, avoidance, collaborating, accommodating and compromising styles, which are illustrated below:

- Competing style occurs when one person seeks to satisfy his/her own interest, regardless of the impact on the other parties to the conflict. This style attempts to overwhelm an opponent with formal authority, threats or use of power. In this case, one person wins while the other loses. Competing style is appropriate in the following cases: when quick, decisive action is vital, for example in emergencies, on important issues where unpopular actions need implementation, for example in cost-cutting measures, discipline and implanting unpopular rules, and against people who take advantage of non-competitive behaviour (Osisioma, 2009:93).
- Avoidant conflict management style manifests in a tendency to avoid confrontations, downplay contentious issues, suppress thinking about the conflict, pretend that conflict is non-existent or ignore the conflict altogether. Conflict avoidance is a desire to maintain the peace or to avoid causing conflict at all costs, which can have undesirable long-term consequences (Zikmann, 1992:54). Using an avoidant conflict management strategy does not mean that conflict itself does not exist, but rather that people use

avoidance to manage or deal with the conflict. By so doing, disputants may get a chance to cool down and let go of the conflict a bit, thereby preventing escalation (Bear *et al.,* 2014:214).

- Collaborating style is based on a win-win resolution in which there is no assumption that someone must lose something. Rather, it assumes that the solution to the conflict can leave both parties in a better position. Collaborating style is appropriate in the following cases: when an integrative solution is needed, thus when both sets of concerns are too important to be compromised, when the objective is to learn, to merge insights from people with different perspectives, and to gain commitment by incorporating concerns into a consensus, and in order to work through feelings which have interfered with a relationship (Osisioma, 2009:93).

- Accommodating style of conflict management has a low concern for self and a high concern for others. With this type of conflict management, one party essentially cooperates and gives in to the other, in order to resolve the conflict (Odetunde, 2013:5325).

- In a compromising style of conflict management there is an intervention of a third party or unilateral involvement, usually practiced or applied by executive authorities, or joint decisions where parties involved find the solutions by not putting their self-interest forward, but rather that of the organisation, which would benefit a number of people in the end (De Dreu, 2014:2).

A number of conflict management styles converge on the idea that individuals in conflict can (De Dreu, 2014:2):

- ask for a third-party intervention (ask a judge, an arbitrator, their manager, or fate to make decisions);

- engage in unilateral decision-making by trying to impose one's will on the other side (forcing), by accepting and incorporating the other's will (yielding), or by remaining inactive; or

- engage in joint decision-making (seeking a compromise, problem solving, negotiation or asking a mediator for help).

Zikmann (1992:54) also supports the above-mentioned conflict management styles and further classifies them as passive and active. The passive style includes the avoidance

style, whereas the active style comprises the other styles, namely dominance (competing), integration (collaborating) and compromise and cooperativeness (accommodating). On the passive style, Zikmann (1992:54) further explains that denial of the existence of conflict occurs when unresolved issues do in fact exist, but those involved pretend their non-existence, which inevitably leads to increased tension. This can result in concealed hostility and the cultivation of a false sense of security, thus avoiding conflict at all costs. In these circumstances, issues of real importance to everyone involved are seldom adequately addressed, often resulting in frustration and a gradual withdrawal of cooperation.

Active responses to conflict can take several forms, thus they can either be aggressive or creative in nature. Aggressive responses include attempts to dominate others (particularly perceived weaker parties) and maximum effort is usually directed towards persuading or forcing some of the parties to modify their adopted positions. An aggressive response is aligned to the dominating style, which occurs when unreasonable demands are made or one-sided solutions are imposed on others. In sharp contrast to the other active responses, creative responses are those which are usually characterised by integrative bargaining and include integration, compromise and cooperation. In this style, parties involved are encouraged to cooperate in joint problem solving. The emphasis is on identifying creative and workable solutions which can satisfy the needs and dispel the fears of the parties. Instead of directing resources and effort towards the defence of positions, the parties concentrate on developing a wide range of possible solutions such as lateral thinking (Zikmann, 1992:55-56).

The size of Stats SA necessitates that in addressing the problem of conflicting roles between the core and support branches, different management styles have to be considered. Each conflict management style is unique and has its advantages and disadvantages, and needs to be applied carefully based on the source of conflict and how it is going to be managed. Notice must be taken that it would not be ideal to have a general management style which can be applied to all sources of conflict within the organisation. When emergencies or certain conflicts happen in the workplace, decisive and aggressive measures have to be undertaken without some consultation, which makes the dominant style important to address the situation. This shows that there is no perfect

style of conflict management, as the situation at hand determines which style is to be applied. For example, if contract fieldworkers are supposed to be paid and there is not enough money from the organisation, the support branch under the Finance Division can take money from any division (which includes the core branches) without consultation.

There may also be some instances where similar cases of conflict are experienced between the two branches under study, which may require applying the same management style, but without necessarily setting a precedent for future cases. Amongst the above-mentioned, the compromising and accommodative styles may be ideal to apply in addressing the conflicting management roles between the core and support branches in Stats SA, as they complement each other and encourage people to work together instead of promoting silos.

The next section focuses on the models of conflict. There are several models of conflict, but for the purpose of this study only two models are considered, namely the Process and the Johari Window Models. Although both models are discussed, only one model is going to be considered in the proposed conflict management strategy.

2.8 MODELS OF CONFLICT

There are many models used in conflict as a discipline, but the appropriate model depends on the study under investigation. Thus only the ideal model is adopted in this study. The management of conflicting roles between the core and support branches in Stats SA was deliberated against the Process and the Johari Window Models, but only the former has been considered in the development of the of Stats SA conflict management strategy, which will be discussed in Chapter 4.

2.8.1 Process Model

The Process Model was developed by Kenneth Thomas in the late 1960s and early 1970s, through a theoretical distinction between conflict processes and the structure in which that process occurs. The process aspect of any system is a temporal sequence of events which occur as the system operates, e.g. the mental and behavioural activities of the conflicting parties, in contrast with the structural aspects whose parameters are much broader and more or less stable (slow-changing) (Thomas, 1992:267). The Process Model

demonstrates conflict as a process or a sequence of events from the beginning until the end, thus forming a cyclical view. The Process Model outlines events or stages in a conflict episode. A basic sequence of events, namely frustration, conceptualisation, behaviour, interaction and outcome is used as a skeleton for arranging specific conflict events and dynamics. In particular, the Process Model provides a way of analysing mental and interpersonal events which lead to different conflict-handling modes and their consequences (Thomas, 1992:267).

Rout and Omika (2007:12) also explain the above-mentioned stages as follows:

- frustration is the emotion which arises when one party perceives the other party as interfering with the satisfaction of his or her own needs, wants and objectives;
- conceptualisation refers to the way in which each party understands and perceives the situation;
- behaviour relates to the actions which result from the perceptions of conflict that influence the behaviour of each party;
- interaction between the two parties can either escalate or diffuse the conflict; and
- outcome is the result when the conflict ceases; the results range from agreement to long-term hostility.

According to Spielbeger (2004) as cited by Jantjies (2015:28), the following are the advantages and disadvantages of the Process Model. The advantages of a Process Model are:

- it creates the awareness that conflict exists between affected parties;
- it capitalises on interaction between the parties in conflict;
- it uses conflict as an opportunity to address the prevailing situation; and
- it can also be used in resolution strategy.

The disadvantage of the Process Model is that it pays too little attention to some factors relating to conflict, but it uses proper challenges when faced with it (Jantjies, 2015:28). The Process Model is ideal in the management of conflicting roles between the core and support branches in Stats SA, as it gives an opportunity to deal with conflict in a manageable way or process. The fact that conflict is managed within certain processes will assist Stats SA – particularly Human Resource Management – to identify sources of

conflict amongst employees in the early stages and manage it effectively. If the current conflicting roles between managers in both branches can be assessed from the time they start (where there is a lot of frustration and anger), and the prevailing working environment is conceptualised and understood while the behavioural patterns of managers in both branches and the way in which they interact with each other are observed, this will result in a particular outcome – all depicted as stages within a cycle. This means that the output will ultimately depend on the way in which conflict is managed, be it positive or negative.

2.8.2 Johari Window Model

The Johari Window Model was created by psychologists Joseph Luft (1916–2014) and Harrington Ingham (1916–1995) in 1955, and is used as a technique which helps people to better understand their relationship with themselves and others. The Johari Window is a graphic model used in increasing awareness of interpersonal relationships and seems to lend itself as a heuristic device to speculate about human relations (Luft, 1982:01). Many people get along fine working with others, without thinking about which foot to put forward. But when there are difficulties, when the usual methods do not work, when they want to learn more, there is no alternative but to examine their own behaviour in relation to others (Luft, 1982:01).

The Johari Window Model is made up of four quadrants, namely open self (behaviour, motives and skills which the individual is aware of and is willing to share it with others), blind self (the state of an individual known to others but not known to him/her), hidden self (the state of an individual known to him/her but not known to the others – also referred to as the façade) and the unknown self (the mysterious state of an individual neither known to him/her, nor known to others). The quadrants of the Johari Window Model are usually presented in the format illustrated below.

Figure 2.1: Johari Window Model

	Known to self	Not known to self
Known to others	Area of free activity *Quadrant (I)* • the area of free activity, refers to behaviour and motivation known to self and known to others	Blind spot *Quadrant (II)* • the blind area, where others can see things in opposing parties of which those parties are not aware
Not known to others	Avoided or hidden area *Quadrant (III)* • the avoided or hidden area, represents things conflicting parties know but do not reveal to others (e.g. personal and sensitive issues)	Area of unknown activity *Quadrant (IV)* • the area of unknown activity. Neither the individual nor others are aware of certain behaviours or motives. Yet they assume their existence because eventually some of these things become known, and it is then realised that these unknown behaviours and motives were influencing relationships all along

Source: (Chapman, 2003)

When conflict is at its peak, people are not able to associate freely with one another, which makes the occurrence of *Quadrant I* very small. When conflict is high, interaction amongst peers becomes restricted, as people keep more to themselves and the blind area in *Quadrant II* becomes bigger. In applying the Johari Window Model to the management of conflicting roles between the core and support branches in Stats SA, the argument may be that when the two branches come together they decrease their blind spots (which is in *Quadrant II)* by moving from their comfort zones, and increase *Quadrant I* by freely associating and working with one another. When the core and support branches are in *Quadrant I,* the chances of their clarifying their conflicting roles increases as they are now open and free with one another. The levels of trust also increase in both branches as they do not avoid each another anymore. In such a prevailing environment, they confront issues together and in the process identify the unknown factors, unusual behaviours, motives and interactions which were unknown to them, as is indicative in *Quadrant IV.*

Note must be taken that in the event of the above-mentioned not being applied, *Quadrant III* and *Quadrant IV* remain bigger. In *Quadrant III,* people are not open with each other and largely play hide-and-seek games to protect their space, while in *Quadrant IV*, it is a

matter of the unknown world to all those who are involved, thus neither the individual nor others are aware of certain behaviours or motives. Considering how effective the Johari Window Model is when implemented properly, Stats SA (particularly Human Resource Management) can use the Johari Window Model to address the sources of conflicting roles between the core and support branches, and the management thereof.

The advantage of the Johari Window Model is that it increases the level of interaction amongst colleagues and improves the level of communication, which ultimately minimises conflict – as demonstrated above. In this particular case the application of the Johari Window Model would resolve the problem of management of conflicting roles between the core and support branches in Stats SA, as the two branches would increase their level of understanding and interaction with one another. The disadvantage of the Johari Window Model is that it is time consuming and more inclined to compromise, as opposed to other styles of managing conflict (Luft, 1982:01). The study recognises that the Johari Window Model could be applicable to managing conflict within Stats SA, but acknowledges that the effectiveness of the Johari Window Model lies in understanding the nature of interpersonal conflict, while the focus of the study is on intergroup conflict.

As indicated in the definition, conflict tends to be associated with negative features and situations, which give rise to inefficiency, ineffectiveness or dysfunctional consequences, but in some cases, it can actually stimulate creative problem-solving and improve the situation for all parties involved (Ojo & Abolade, 2014:127). Conflict within an organisation can either be positive or negative, but it depends on the choices used in addressing the problem. The benefits and consequences of conflict management are outlined in the ensuing section.

2.9 THE CONSEQUENCES AND BENEFITS OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

According to Radivojevic and Klincov (2015:112), conflict does not have to be negative or positive; thus the reaction of participants and conflict (un)management by managerial staff and of staff will turn it into a positive or negative direction, and therefore it is essential that management and staff are aware of conflicts and pay attention to certain signals which indicate their existence. Rahim (as cited by Chappell 2007:34) posits that conflict can

damage relationships and heighten the resistance to change, and conflict can be harmful, especially when it increases stress, dissatisfaction, distrust and decreases performance, commitment, loyalty and communication.

Nischal and Bhalla (2014:186) also point out that conflict is an integral part of the functions of the service workers, because clash of interest is virtually built into the jobs they are expected to perform, thus no organisation is free of conflict, nor should they be; conflict is after all as natural as harmony, and it is difficult to envision the attainment of positive social goals and even many personal ones without it. Nischal and Bhalla (2014:186) further explain that conflict can be a serious problem in an organisation and can create chaotic conditions which make it nearly impossible for employees to work together without looking at the positive side of it.

Aula and Siira (2010:125) assert that conflict has various implications for organisations and can either be positive or negative, depending on the given environment, and managers spend a significant percentage of their time dealing with conflict-related negotiations. Nischal and Bhalla (2014:186) also argue that in a normal working environment managers spend twenty per cent of their routine time handling conflict situations and therefore it is very important to understand the serious consequences of conflict in an organisation, so that they can devise techniques to deal with the relative dysfunctional impacts of conflicts.

Aula and Siira (2010:125) further maintains that this task is momentous, as conflicts have the potential for deteriorating organisational functioning by inducing resignations, absenteeism, accidents and overtime, as well as debilitating individual health and well-being, but on the other hand, conflict may also be viewed as a source of innovation, creativity and development in organisations. Thus, as much as conflict is generally viewed negatively, it is also crucial to note that it can also yield positive results.

Kirti (2016:92) argues that a balanced view on conflict is paramount, as its yields may either be positive or negative, depending on how it is handled within the organisation. Thus, positive conflict may result in improved working relationships amongst colleagues and improved organisational performance, while negative, ill-intended and unmanaged conflict may lead not only to wasted resources and diminished staff morale, but also to the

eventual demise of the organisation. In support of this argument, Duze (2012:164) maintains that as much as conflict is endemic and detrimental in organisations, conflict can be beneficial from the standpoints of both individual and organisational goals and objectives, and the principle of minimising conflict, as subscribed to by some managers and social scientists, makes valid the existence of crises in organisations.

Bradshaw (2011:50) also contends that conflict is simply not a negative phenomenon, as it stimulates many of the life-processes of society, such as innovation, growth and learning. A society without conflict is a dead society, thus conflict is an essential creative element in human relationships. Conflict therefore offers the means to change, the means by which social values of welfare, security, justice and opportunities for personal development can be achieved. There are some cases where people generally manage to control conflict, ignore issues around it and sometimes even learn positively from it, while the opposite applies to other people.

Where victims of conflict management are negatively affected, the consequences can at times be dire, to the extent that it affects their self-esteem and their health in general (thus, conflict leading to a disruption of the general well-being of people), but on the other hand, it can also lead to a re-examination of basic assumptions and practices, to the end that adjustments can be made to improve effectiveness (Osisioma, 2009:91). Osisioma (2009:91) further argues that organisations which confront conflict constructively learn to be creative. Inversely, those which suppress conflict find that it acts as a pressure-cooker - the heat builds up and finally explodes.

Another important part to note while dealing with consequences and benefits of conflict management is that, although the greater part of conflict is consciously recognised by the participants and intentionally produced, it is also crucial to acknowledge that it can be unintentional as well. An example would be when managers get so immersed in the immediate problems in their division that they are likely to forget or disregard other divisions, which can sometimes result in serious conflicts (Osisioma, 2009:91).

A further reason for conflict occurring in Stats SA is that many surveys are run on very strict timelines and there are a number of divisions involved in the survey value chain. However, sometimes (due to pressure), certain decisions have to be taken immediately

without proper communication, and some people feel that they are not consulted accordingly. Thus there is no malice in the intent but in the end, conflict arises amongst those divisions involved (Stats SA, 2012:18).

According to Bush and Folger (as cited by Siira & Aula, 2010:125), conflict needs to be judiciously controlled, because "social interaction itself is a negative force, and this is so because human beings are incapable of engaging in either social interaction or conflict without destructive consequences". Odetunde (2013:5324) outlines some of the negative consequences of conflict as the following: hostility towards colleagues, non-cooperation, lack of performance, depression, considering resigning from current job, developing health problems and retaliation from other staff members. Other negative aspects include time wasted on conflicts, low employee motivation, lower productivity, equipment being stolen or vandalised, relational strain in the workplace, absenteeism and stress (as evident from medical claims), which can drain the organisational finances immensely (Odetunde, 2013:5324).

In contrast to the above-mentioned, Madera *et al.* (2013:30) argue that in a conducive environment (despite conflicts in the workplace), managers tend to perceive a positive diversity climate or a climate which fosters and maintains a multicultural workforce and therefore experience less role ambiguity and role conflict. This might be the case because employees often experience some form of anxiety and stress in interracial interactions, but perceiving a positive diversity climate might reduce the anxiety and discomfort, which would lessen the role stressors. In fact, a perceived positive diversity climate can facilitate the work of a manager because they experience less stress in being perceived as prejudiced. A perceived positive diversity climate can reduce cultural misunderstanding and barriers and therefore decrease negative stressors, such as role ambiguity and role conflict (Madera *et al.*, 2013:30).

Zikmann (1992:54) contends that the undesired consequences of domination can often be the stifling of future initiative, reduced creativity and the creation of an environment where poor future decisions are allowed to go unchallenged. Thus failure to adequately confront and deal with problems can result in the creation of 'no go' areas and encourage shallow commitment to project goals. Capitulation to the demands and threats of other project participants also often brings with it an incorrect perception that a conflict has been

resolved, when in fact it has only been unwillingly suppressed. (Zikmann, 1992:56) further maintains that if both parties can be satisfied that their needs can eventually be met, it is far more likely that they will be prepared to modify their adopted positions, and even if it eventually becomes clear that the needs of all parties cannot be fully met, a cooperative climate will have been established. In this environment the probability of achieving a satisfactory resolution to the conflict will have been greatly increased.

The next section deals with the legislative and regulatory frameworks and how they are used in the management of conflict at the workplace, particularly in the Public Service and Stats SA, being the case study. Special focus is placed on the understanding and application of legislation and regulatory frameworks.

2.10 LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS

South Africa is renowned for having one of the best constitutions in the world, and the Constitution is very powerful on the fundamental rights of every citizen in the country. This includes fair labour practices, organised labour and many others as enshrined in the Constitution. One of the unique features of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, in Section 23(1), is that every person shall have the right to fair labour practices. Similarly, it is also important to acknowledge the role played by the Public Service Act 103 of 1994, as amended by the Public Service Amendment Act 30 of 2007, which, amongst other things, under Section 41(1)(b)(v), advocates for a code of conduct for employees. The Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 under Section 1(d)(iv) maintains the effective resolution of labour disputes, while the Senior Management Service (SMS) Framework of 2003 outlines roles and responsibilities of senior managers in the Public Service. All the above-mentioned are significant in the management of conflicting roles between the core and support branches in Stats SA. Thus, apart from their fundamental legal roles in various ways, the above-mentioned documents also deal with issues of conflict in the workplace.

In support of the Constitution and the Public Service Labour Relations Act, the updated Public Service Regulations of 2016 under Regulation (91) state that members of the SMS shall:

- display the highest possible standards of ethical conduct;

- set an example to those employees reporting to them and maintain high levels of professionalism and integrity in their interaction with political office-bearers and the public;
- ensure that they minimise conflicts of interest and that they put the public interest first in the performance of their functions; and
- avoid any conflict of interest which may arise in representing the interests of his or her department and being a member of a trade union, as defined in Section 213 of the Labour Relations Act.

The conflicting management roles between the core and support branches in Stats SA as outlined in this study, depend greatly on the understanding, appreciation and implementation of what is required by all public servants. An assumption is that if senior managers in the respective branches under this study are displaying the highest possible standards of ethical conduct towards each other, minimising conflicts of interest in work related matters and displaying the highest level of professionalism at all times, the problem of conflicting management roles would be contained.

In addition, the updated Public Service Regulations of 2016 under Regulation (92) states that the Minister may, subject to the Labour Relations Act, issue a directive to establish misconduct and incapacity procedures for members of the SMS. The main roles for senior managers in the Public Service are covered as Core Management Criteria (CMCs) in the Competency Framework as defined in the Public Service Regulations, 2016. The introduction of the SMS Competency Framework is key in ensuring that the Public Service achieves its objective of professionalising the Public Service, especially at senior management level. According to the SMS Competency Framework under Paragraph 1(1.2), in developing the SMS Competency Framework focus was placed on critical generic competencies, which senior managers would be expected to possess, rather than functional/technical competencies, which are essential to a specific department or a specific job (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2015).

The SMS Competency Framework, Paragraph 4(4)(2), consists of a set of eleven generic competencies which communicate what is expected of senior managers. However, it is critical to note that the SMS Competency Framework does not describe the functions or

responsibilities of particular senior management levels such as a manager, senior manager, director or chief director, but is inclusive of all in both its current and emerging form (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2015). These eleven generic competencies are strategic capability and leadership, programme and project management, financial management, change management, knowledge management, service delivery innovation, problem solving and analysis, people management and empowerment, client orientation and customer focus and communication, and honesty and integrity (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2015).

The study argues that the ability of senior managers to manage conflict is inherent in the competencies required to manage changes and the general people management responsibility. Apart from the outlined key roles and responsibilities of senior managers in the Public Service, note must be taken that in general, senior managers characterise competence as a combination of the right type and level of skills, knowledge, experience, and a proven ability to meet specific job requirements and performance standards (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2015).

In addition to these generic competencies, managers must exhibit particular proficiency in areas such as leadership, team development, cultural proficiency, assessment and understanding of political climate, appreciation of economic dynamics at large, knowledge management, strategic thinking and planning, ethical decision-making, learning how to learn, and community development in order to facilitate organisational change through transformational management (Botha, 2013:30). Stats SA conducts its strategy sessions with senior management on an annual basis, in order to review past experiences and to position the organisation better in future (Stats SA, 2017a:18). These sessions require an environmental analysis which has to consider various factors beyond senior management roles and includes the above-mentioned, such as transformational management and assessment of the country's political climate.

This study is on the management of conflicting roles between the core and support branches in Stats SA, focusing on the appropriate legislative and regulatory frameworks which can be used to address conflict and management thereof. One of the official documents used in the Public Service during disputes, conflicts and disciplinary hearings is the Disciplinary Code and Procedures (2003). The purpose of this code and the

procedures is to support constructive labour relations in the Public Service, promote mutual respect between employees and between employees and employer, ensure that managers and employees share a common understanding of misconduct and discipline, promote acceptable conduct, provide employees and the employer with a quick and easy reference for the application of discipline, avert and correct unacceptable conduct and prevent arbitrary or discriminatory actions by managers toward employees (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003:02).

In addition to the Disciplinary Code and Procedures, which is applicable to all public servants regardless of their levels, there is Chapter 7 in the SMS Handbook which outlines the code and procedures for senior management employees in the Public Service. The only difference between the Disciplinary Code and Procedures and the SMS Handbook is that in the latter, one would not appeal a disciplinary outcome. If the senior manager is aggrieved, the first step is to address the matter as close to the point of origin as possible, following all internal processes. If the matter is not resolved, the next level will be to request the executing authority to escalate it to the Public Service Commission (PSC). Once the matter has been elevated to the PSC, a trail of records generated would be required to ensure that internal processes have been undertaken and exhausted. In cases where the aggrieved party is still not happy with the outcome, he/she can seek assistance at the General Public Service Sectoral Bargaining Council (GPSSBC), but SMS members are not allowed to appeal cases internally (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2015:21).

Once the matter has been elevated to the GPSSBC it is important to note that it is no longer considered to be a grievance, but immediately becomes a dispute. Under the revised disciplinary procedure for SMS it is stated that the objective of the amendment was to streamline and shorten the procedure; to this effect the appeal stage of the disciplinary procedure was removed whilst the utilisation of external employer representatives and chairpersons was introduced (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2015:21). This process of SMS seeking legal remedies outside the organisation when conflicts occur makes the management of conflict very difficult and promotes undesirable tendencies. In general, the core branches consider administrative and governance issues as a waste of time, but most importantly, as an impediment in the adjudication of their core roles, while

support branches somehow over-stretch their responsibilities, particularly in areas of financial management (Stats SA, 2016b:11).

Failure to uphold respect and promote acceptable conduct amongst colleagues exacerbates the problem for the management of conflicting roles between the core and support branches in Stats SA, as no one is willing to listen and negotiate with each other (Stats SA, 2017b:8). These two behaviours (i.e. respect and correcting unacceptable conduct) have been outlined in both the procedures for SMS contained in the SMS Handbook (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2015) and the Disciplinary Code and Procedures (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003). The next section concludes the discussions made in Chapter 2.

2.11 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the two different viewpoints of conflict were explained, namely traditional and contemporary views. Additionally, sources of conflict, management styles and types of conflict and conflict models, specifically the Process Model and the Johari Window Model were explained. The importance of applying either the Process Model or the Johari Window Model was demonstrated. The consequences of conflict were also covered by indicating the negative and positive aspects of conflict. Legislative and regulatory frameworks which ensure fair labour practices for all employees were discussed. Stats SA runs a number of big projects and surveys and cooperation between the core and support branches is essential as opposed to the conflicting management roles, as indicated in this study.

The next chapter analyses data and summarises the results on the data collected for Stats SA, as the organisation under study.

CHAPTER 3: ANALYSIS OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN STATS SA

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the analysis of conflict as identified by managers within the core and support branches in Stats SA. Chapter 1 comprised the theoretical background of the study and detailed the research approach, design and instruments used in collecting data. Data collection was based on personal interviews with senior management in Stats SA. Chapter 2 consisted of the literature review on conflict and the management thereof. The review of the literature informed the identification of themes used for analysing data to reflect a clear picture of the status of conflict and the management thereof at senior management level within Stats SA.

The research objective which will be addressed in this chapter entails an analysis of the nature of conflict and the challenges associated with the management of conflict between the core and support branches within Stats SA.

The emerging themes are as follows:

- understanding conflict as a concept;
- sources of conflict;
- management of conflict;
- the role of communication in conflict; and
- the legislative and regulatory framework supporting the management of conflict.

Before the thematic analysis is presented, an overview will be given of how the research was operationalised.

3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research paradigm for this study is constructivist and aligned to the qualitative approach as indicated in Chapter 1. The constructivist paradigm leans more towards the use of a qualitative approach and emphasises the existence of multiple realities; that knowledge is subjective and idiographic, and truth is dependent upon the context. This paradigm is value-laden and emphasises that values influence how participants think and

behave, as well as what they find to be important; findings in these studies typically rely on in-depth descriptions that help to explain the situation being studied (Chilisa & Barbara, 2012).

Stats SA is made up of eight branches, which are divided into the core and support branches. The management structure constitutes the Statistician-General, Deputy Directors-Generals (DDGs), Chief Directors and Directors (Stats SA, 2015:17). The management structure forms part of the population from which the sample was selected. It is important to note that in this study the purposive sample design had two stages: the first stage involved the selection of two branches out of the eight, and the second stage involved the selection of 20 respondents out of the population of 57 senior managers. The two selected branches, namely Population and Social Statistics and Corporate Services were the two strata within which the two branches were selected, thus making the sample design a stratified purposive sample.

The two branches sampled for this study (Population and Social Statistics and Corporate Services) consisted of a total of 57 senior managers based on filled and permanent positions for the financial year 2016/17, which covered the period 1 April 2016 to March 2017 (Stats SA, 2016d:3). The sample of the study comprised two Deputy Directors-General (DDGs) from both branches (however, one of the DDGs resigned before the interviews could be conducted), 12 Chief Directors (4 from Corporate Services and 8 from Population and Social Statistics); and 43 directors (19 from Corporate Services and 24 from Population and Social Statistics). The study selected only 20 out of 57 (35%) senior managers across the two strata at all levels in both branches; thus 10 from each branch and were interviewed using the semi-structured interview guide.

Personal interviews were then conducted with these 20 senior managers in both branches and with only one Deputy Director-General (DDG), 9 Chief Directors (5 from Population and Social Statistics and 4 from Corporate Services), as well as 10 Directors from both branches using a semi-structured interview guide. The table below details the above-mentioned information.

Table 3.1: Respondents of the study

Branches under study		Population and Social Statistics	Corporate Services	Totals
Senior Management Levels	Deputy directors-general	1	1	2
	Selected sample	(0)	(1)	(1)
	Chief directors	8	4	12
	Selected sample	(5)	(4)	(9)
	Directors	24	19	43
	Selected sample	(5)	(5)	(10)
	Total	**33**	**24**	**57**
	Total number selected	**(10)**	**(10)**	**(20)**

Source: Stats SA – Corporate Services Monthly Report (March:2016)
NB. The total sample units are numbers without brackets, whereas the selected sample is within the brackets.

The next section illustrates the respondents' understanding of conflict. The respondents gave various definitions of conflict and conveyed their points of view on whether conflict was positive or negative. Interviews were held after an appointment was booked and all respondents had been sequentially coded i.e. Respondent One through to Respondent Twenty.

3.3 UNDERSTANDING CONFLICT AS A CONCEPT

Mayer and Louw (2012:03) define conflict as part of being human and highlight it as a pervasive aspect of socio-cultural and professional interaction: conflict is a feeling, conflict manifests as disagreement, whether real or perceived regarding incompatible interests, inconsistent worldviews, or a set of behaviours. People who have never experienced conflict in the workplace are "living in a dream world" blind to their surroundings or are confined to a solitary existence. Klinkhamer (2015:338) explains conflict as a disagreement through which the parties involved perceive conflict as a threat to their needs, interests or concerns. The above-mentioned definitions, as well as those covered in the previous chapters, indicate that serious conflict could cause losses in productivity because certain individuals or groups may not cooperate in getting work done. Similarly,

too little conflict creates comfort zones and can equally negatively affect productivity within the organisation.

The understanding of conflict amongst the respondents differed, but they all acknowledged its existence in the workplace. Firstly, the respondents explained conflict as a product of divergent or different sets of views, agreeing to disagree or opinions between people without necessarily fighting. One specific respondent said that "Conflict is when there are contrasting views between people; for example, different positions on issues of governance between the core and support branches" (Respondent Sixteen, 2017). This implies that people respect each other's point of view in spite of the fact that issues are seen differently, for example disagreements between colleagues on any particular matter.

Secondly, the respondents argued that conflict is a stage where two or more people are not in agreement, do not reach consensus nor do they see eye to eye, where nothing is basically achieved, but they are rather fighting for space. In this case the respondents maintained that during conflict the parties involved agree to disagree: "It is a situation where one party is not willing to listen to another or both of them are not prepared to find each other in any way, nor are they prepared to compromise" (Respondent Three, 2017), thus maintaining an antagonist approach, for example a disagreement between a supervisor and a subordinate in the workplace.

Finally, the respondents understood conflict from the "ideological point of view, which includes political and religious affiliations" (Respondent Four, 2017), as well as "cultural, societal and traditional differences" (Respondent Five, 2017). The larger part of the ideological differences is based on values and moral connotations, "not understanding the vision and mission of the organisation the same way, and misalignment of ideas" (Respondent Thirteen, 2017), or theories on "good leadership and management styles and the practical side of things such as allocation of budgets, particularly in the working environment" (Respondent Eighteen, 2017).

Some of the respondents highlighted a disjuncture in understanding Stats SA's vision, and one respondent (Respondent Thirteen, 2017) specifically said that "the Statistician-General's vision on Stats SA is totally different from the rest of us; he is surely on another level and most of us are not there as yet, all we do is to comply without necessarily

understanding what is required. This is one of the main sources of conflict in the organisation."

The fact that the respondents understood conflict as a stage where people disagree without necessarily fighting, but rather have different opinions and different ideologies gives a positive organisational outlook from the respondents' point of view on the understanding of conflict.

In asking whether respondents perceive conflict to be positive or negative, the majority of respondents indicated that conflict can either be positive or negative, depending on how it is managed or handled. One respondent specifically argued that "when you work on something and you do not get any feedback, you should be worried: it is from both positive and negative comments that a person or institution grows" (Respondent Five, 2017). Stats SA's centenary celebration was given as one of the examples of positive and negative conflict: "The intent behind the celebration was noble, thus to acknowledge the journey of statistics in South Africa, while on the other hand, some people felt that the majority of South Africans were marginalised under the previous regime, and could not understand the celebration of such a history. What was good about that event was to realise that a lot still needs to be done in terms of bringing the organisation together and shaping it forward" (Respondent One, 2017).

Only a few respondents considered conflict to be negative "as it brings more harm than good, adding to the stress levels of people and making them very sick and with few or no mechanisms to deal with it" (Respondent Eleven, 2017). The respondents who regarded conflict as positive maintained that "it challenges people's thinking and attitudes, particularly those in comfort zones, thus conflict stimulates thinking and people become more innovative" (Respondent Nine, 2017). Respondents who identified conflict as positive also argued that conflict brings change and growth: "There is no way change can happen without conflict" (Respondent Thirteen, 2017).

The respondents who considered conflict to be positive, further stated that the conflict breaks ground and helps to uncover issues which under normal circumstances people are not comfortable with or free to discuss. That conflict goes hand-in-hand with diversity and change management, and also encourages people to be open-minded and to think outside

their boxes, which brings people together. It also improves communication and encourages positive competition, which brings about a lot of innovation and capacity for growth. Slogans such as "we swim and sweat together" were used to demonstrate the positive side of conflict (Respondent Two, 2017). An example of Stats SA going digital through Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) was given and the respondents said that the world has changed and that "Stats SA cannot afford to be stuck in the past by collecting data manually" (Respondent Eleven, 2017).

The majority of the respondents asserted that positive and negative aspects of conflict are critical for change and development within the organisation. The respondents further argued that homogeneity kills innovation and people need to debate issues from different viewpoints without necessarily fighting.

On the types of conflict dominant between the core and support branches at senior management level in Stats SA, both affective and substantive conflicts were identified and were explained in detail in previous chapter 2. The respondents said that both affective and substantive types of conflict are dominant within the organisation, indicating that when projects are implemented conflict starts as substantive, as people want assistance and buy-in from all stakeholders, but once all is in order, the opposite applies - people start taking positions, playing power politics and simply personalising almost every little detail, for example, "my money for my project, instead of organisational money, any big project simply runs into their heads" (Respondent Nine, 2017). The "us and them" phenomenon was continuously mentioned by the respondents during interviews where statements such as these were put forward: "Core branches cannot be advised on anything as they know it all" (Respondent Seven, 2017), and in contrast, "Support branches suffocate us with rules and regulations to cover their incompetence" (Respondent Fourteen, 2017).

The respondents further said that the organisational budget affects everyone, thus conflict is substantive in nature, but people personalise it and reduce it to being affective: "There is no direction as to who is exactly taking the final decisions and people are left to speculate, which in the end causes serious conflicts between the core and support branches" (Respondent Eleven, 2017). The problems of poor leadership and communication are that they relegate substantive conflict into affective conflict. The same scenario applies to the issues of culture and values within the organisation: "Stats SA's moral compass leaves so

much to be desired, many people are not sure of our values except to see them on entrances to the buildings. Some people in this organisation are just disrespectful, there are some managers on the same level as ours that you cannot challenge or tell them anything as they are just too powerful" (Respondent Twelve, 2017).

In contrast to the above-mentioned, some respondents were adamant that conflict between the core and support branches was purely substantive. Thus, whatever the kind of problems the organisation has are in the interest of the organisation and there is nothing sinister about them, except that some people have their own insecurities. These respondents argued that many projects are done collaboratively, but the culture of the organisation of operating in silos and the poor leadership reduces issues to being personal. "There is a need to revamp management strategies, particularly on governance. It cannot be right that everything is elevated to the Statistician-General with so many senior managers within the organisation. Management needs to manage while the head of the organisation needs to lead" (Respondent Eighteen, 2017).

Similar to the respondents who argued that conflict is substantive, there were also some respondents who maintained that conflict within the organisation is purely affective. These respondents asserted that Stats SA managers are unprofessional and disrespectful, thus the culture of the organisation was that of favouritism: "It is very important to be wise and understand who is who in the zoo, otherwise you will be in serious trouble" (Respondent Three, 2017). The respondents also indicated that management did not want to take responsibility and suggested refresher courses for all SMS, arguing that a large number of SMS have been with the organisation for far too long, the least could be ten years, which creates a serious problem, as they are not receptive to change. "They can hardly suggest anything positive or innovative except to refer everything to the past – in the 1996 Census we did this, as it was in 2000 when this happened – nothing futuristic whatsoever. In order for this organisation to move forward, a serious restructuring is needed, otherwise we are heading for trouble" (Respondent Twenty, 2017).

The level of understanding and appreciation on types of conflict in Stats SA is fairly reasonable, considering that only 15% of the respondents regarded conflict to be purely personal. Although the majority of respondents regarded the prevailing conflict to be both

personal and organisational, a number of them argued that conflict was largely aligned to organisational issues.

In responding to the question about conflict between the core and support branches within Stats SA, the majority of respondents considered conflict between the core and support branches at senior management level in Stats SA to be very bad, highlighting the following as being indicative of the conflict:

- strained relationships amongst colleagues due to working in silos;
- creation of centres of power;
- vague and poorly implemented organisational strategy, people just comply without understanding what is required;
- no one advises nor listens to one another, with everyone thinking they know better;
- the power is vested in very few individuals; and
- there is a high level of favouritism and indecisive leadership.

The respondents argued that the core and support branches are supposed to work together, where the former has to give direction on what is required and the latter has to play a supportive role by ensuring proper governance and administration. The respondents indicated that, unfortunately in the current environment, the situation was the other way around: "The dog was literally following the wagging tail" (Respondent Fifteen, 2017).

Apart from the above-mentioned, some of the respondents argued that conflict between the core and support branches is due to poor administration of policies, practice notes, procedures and regulations. There is poor consultation and a disregard of timelines between the core and support branches, particularly on governance and administrative issues: "When projects are done despite submission of all relevant documents on time, support will always require many memorandums with more than five signatures for just a packet of cookies for a meeting" (Respondent Seven, 2017). Contrary to this assertion, some respondents argued that "core branches want to operate without rules and regulations – always saying please do not tell me about the PFMA and fruitless expenditure" (Respondent Six, 2017).

One respondent (Respondent Eight, 2017) said that "Support branches are like Moses from the Bible: all he needed was for people to obey the rules so that they could reach the

Promised Land. Similarly, all that Corporate Services needs is adherence to the policies in place and procurement procedures, so that we can attain clean audits at the end of the financial year. As much as people are complaining that we are rigid and unreasonable in our work, so were the Israelites complaining about Moses punishing them, but all for a good cause."

On unclear roles, the respondents said that neither branch understands the other's responsibilities. They maintained that if the structure and roles could be corrected, conflict would be easily managed. People were just frustrated by all these cross-cutting roles. "Management in this organisation does not want to take responsibility or manage anything – including conflict. This is really sad as it starts from the highest level of the organisation" (Respondent Ten, 2017). All managers, by virtue of their positions, are supposed to handle conflict, but "every little thing is pushed to Human Resource Management, whose staff are considered as people from hell with all sorts of names" (Respondent Twenty, 2017). The respondents further said that "Core branches do not actually understand what the organisational budget is made up of. For example, in Programme One, the bulk of the money goes to maintenance, assets and facilities of all Stats SA buildings in nine provinces, which are very expensive. That budget is central and does not reside in any budget from support branches" (Respondent Eighteen, 2017).

On poor planning, the respondents indicated that there were always meetings without direction and documents which were never implemented. The respondents concurred that both branches should be proactive, instead of being reactive, in order to ensure proper planning. Only five per cent of respondents said that conflict between the two branches was due to the poor structure. "There is no way where support branches can be bigger than core branches and expect things to be normal. Support branches have too many people, so their budget is big; thus the structure is more prone to support branches versus core branches, so their level of power and authority is equivalent to this" (Respondent Fourteen, 2017).

Many respondents considered conflict between the core and support branches at Stats SA to be very bad and that the organisation was suffocating people with rules and regulations without proper communication. Thus, in understanding conflict, respondents agreed that conflict exists, that it manifests in various ways and that the biggest culprit leading to

increased conflict is poor communication and uncertainty around roles and responsibilities. The next section focuses on the sources of conflict in Stats SA, as articulated by the respondents.

3.4 SOURCES OF CONFLICT

According to Osisioma (2009:90), wherever large numbers of people live and work together, there arise an infinite number of relationships between individuals and groups. Any of these relationships is a potential source of conflict because, as human beings interact, differing values and situations may create tension. Conflict arises within an organisation when one or more of its members (individuals, groups, or a network of groups) latently or openly opposes another member of the group. Their goals, desires and interests are not only inharmonious, but they may also be incompatible (Osisioma, 2009:90). The main issue in this study revolves around conflicting management roles between the core and support branches in Stats SA. This affects the use of available resources which are not shared equally, and ultimately results in unnecessary conflict in both branches, as referred to in Chapter 1.

On the questions pertaining to the sources of conflict, the respondents said that they generally emanate from poor communication and soft issues such as differences in culture and values. Regarding soft issues, respondents argued that an organisational culture and its associated values that were not clear, created serious problems. Values identified in all official documents were not upheld, as everyone interpreted them in their own way. Other soft issues, as highlighted by respondents, include "prejudice, territorial gains – my things and your things, nothing communal" (Respondent Sixteen, 2017), different backgrounds and belief systems, and not respecting each other's views and political differences. One respondent said that, "Some of Stats SA's rules are treated like bedroom rules and simply do not want to get to that space. In this organisation peace is more at stake than fairness and justice" (Respondent Ten, 2017).

On poor communication, the respondents reported that the main problem was leadership. This was highlighted in one specific comment from Respondent Two (2017), who stated that "communication by the Statistician-General on people not coming to work during taxi strikes is a big problem and no one is saying anything. A lot of employees are simply

taking advantage of that and our hands are tied". Furthermore, leadership was silent when it came to competition between the roles and responsibilities as implemented by the core and support branches in Stats SA. Ultimately this resulted in conflict and, worse still, "there are too many instructions without proper communication. This national key point story is a good example. We sometimes see policemen walking up and down here in the building and do not know what they want, and we cannot even ask anyone" (Respondent Sixteen, 2017). One of the respondents (Respondent Nineteen, 2017) said that "The current situation is really frustrating, maybe we need a new broom to sweep between the core and support branches. This organisation honestly needs change".

The problem of not understanding the mission and vision in the same way was highlighted as one of the main reasons behind the conflict between the core and support branches. The respondents further explained that communication pertaining to the organisational strategy was very poor and "our understanding on the organisational strategy as management is different and a recipe for disaster" (Respondent Seventeen, 2017). Poor communication seemed to be the main source of conflict within the organisation which needed to be addressed with the agility that it deserves.

In answering the question pertaining to the sources of conflict at specifically the senior management level at Stats SA, the majority of the respondents said that the main sources of conflict between the core and support branches were due to power struggles and silo mentality. The other sources of conflict at senior management level were cited as follows: conflicting roles between the two branches, organisational mission and vision, disregarding timelines and leadership management styles. Issues raised as part of the power struggles and silo mentality between the core and support branches in Stats SA include fighting for limited resources, disrespecting each other as professionals and working in a regulated environment where emphasis is placed on policies and regulations, instead of delivering on the organisational mandate, which is to produce quality statistics.

On respecting each other as colleagues, one respondent specifically said that "core branches think they have better brains and all of us have to jump every time they need something, instead of just following the required procedures" (Respondent Seven, 2017). The same issue was supported by another respondent (Respondent Nine, 2017), who said that "core expects support to bend the rules, while support is very clear on the regulations,

which unfortunately always puts everyone under undue pressure and results in unnecessary conflicts".

The respondents acknowledged the culture of disregarding timelines as a source of conflict between the core and support branches. The respondents further maintained that the work around surveys is time-bound and all stakeholders have to be cautious about it. During the interviews the respondents complained about issues of procurement. The respondents from the core branches indicated that during surveys there are standard things that are done such as organising training venues, printing of survey questionnaires and many others. In all of these, memorandums are required by the support branches but the core branches are subjected to numerous signatures which take a lot of time unnecessarily, ultimately resulting in conflict. In support of the above-mentioned, one respondent said that "Stats SA's core function is to run surveys which are time-bound and with almost similar requirements, but core branches always have to beg support branches for the same thing. Too many meetings occur without direction and motivation takes place of things that are crystal clear to all of us" (Respondent Three, 2017).

Thus, one of the main sources of conflict identified by the respondents was on conflicting roles between the core and support branches. It is important to note that this study revolves around conflicting management roles between the core and support branches in Stats SA. The respondents indicated that there were some instances where the core and support roles seemed to be unclear and in conflict with one another, despite the fact that roles of both the core and support branches are clearly defined, with the former focusing on production and delivery of official statistics, while the latter focuses on support for various aspects. The respondents indicated that "there is a lack of understanding between the core and support branches: we simply do not understand each other's roles" (Respondent Two, 2017).

Regarding conflicting roles, the respondents stated that "We are not sure of each other's roles. Internal surveys are critical to assess things like these and the environment at large" (Respondent Sixteen, 2017). "Ignorance versus knowledge, core is ignorant about policies while support also does not understand the core business of Stats SA" (Respondent Five, 2017). "Currently, each branch has its own strategy separately and does not know what the other branches are doing" (Respondent Eighteen, 2017). The situation of conflicting

roles and not understanding each other's roles contributes to the creation of a conflict management gap at Stats SA.

The issues of power struggles, silo mentality, soft issues and conflicting roles between the core and support branches go hand-in-hand with the problem of poor communication, which was identified by respondents as one of the main sources of conflict within the organisation.

On what can be used to identify other sources of conflict between the core and support branches, the respondents cited the following platforms and mechanisms: workshops, seminars on soft issues, skill audits, training of employees to identify sources of conflict, rotation of employees and use of perception interviews and exit interviews. On platforms to be used to identify other sources of conflict between the core and support branches, the majority of respondents suggested workshops, as they promote dialogue, discussions and unity.

In support of workshops and working together as teams, the respondents argued that: "Both core and support branches must have workshops together to assist them in their different areas of work" (Respondent Two, 2017). "The two branches must have regular meetings and dialogues to discuss the current challenges followed by implementation and not these talk shows without results" (Respondent Four, 2017). "Create opportunities to communicate such as in workshops, but critically adhere to set plans as per timelines, especially senior management" (Respondent Nine, 2017) and "management has to move along with everyone, it cannot move at 260 km while others are moving at 60 km and, most importantly, have eyes and ears on the ground" (Respondent Twenty, 2017).

Rotation of employees was also deemed crucial by the respondents who stated that: "The silos between the two branches must go. We used to work and play hard together but that does not happen anymore. Most importantly, we must continuously expose each other to our different areas of work" (Respondent One, 2017). One respondent said that "Historical information must be used to solve some of the problems. We never learn from the past, there is a lot of information that can be used to identify problems such as the audit reports and debriefing reports on various surveys, but nothing is done about them. The biggest problem in this organisation is about people and their egos instead of working together, it

is always about me and me all the time, especially at senior management level" (Respondent Eight, 2017).

Training of employees and skills audits were also identified as other platforms which could be used to identify other sources of conflict between the core and support branches. When it came to training, the respondents said that "There has to be training on diversity to minimise the level of conflict, induction courses must be revisited and should include substantial content instead of only telling people about the mission and vision of Stats SA. We also need to revisit our policies, they are too loose and useless to a large extent. Thus instead of helping to address the problem of conflict, they actually exacerbate it" (Respondent Ten, 2017). Similar to training of employees, the respondents indicated that skills audit was equally important and argued that "employees have to be placed according to their abilities and qualifications which are critical in the performance plans and evaluations of employees" (Respondent Thirteen, 2017).

With regard to seminars on soft issues the respondents said that "Stats SA is poor on issues of culture, values and "*Ubuntu*" in general. Let us create a safe space to talk honestly instead of these talk shows without results. The current culture creates cliques, silos and preferential treatment" (Respondent Six, 2017) and "there are no consequences nor repercussions in this organisation, up until this problem is addressed very little can be achieved" (Respondent Three, 2017). The respondents further stated that "We also need to use communication channels to address the problem of soft issues - moral values are not emphasised. We need to work hard on the organisational culture as it is very bad" (Respondent Three, 2017).

The respondents argued that "soft issues are a serious problem that have to be addressed maturely, particularly within the context of the current problems the organisation is facing. Budget cuts and restructuring are eminent, so we need to do more with less in terms of budgets and people. We are simply at a cross-roads where tough decisions have to be taken, there are fifty-three people whose contracts ended in August 2017. These employees had to be retrenched and the unions took the organisation to task" (Respondent Eighteen, 2017).

Only five per cent of the respondents suggested the use of a perception survey and exit interviews on identifying other sources of conflict between the core and support branches. On perception surveys, one respondent asserted that "perception surveys are crucial in a number of ways and usually assist the organisation in identifying some of the key problem areas which include conflicts. But these must be done anonymously and must ensure that many people participate" (Respondent Seventeen, 2017). Regarding exist interviews, one respondent indicated that "it is very important to understand why people leave the organisation. Stats SA is only concerned about products and not people" (Respondent Twelve, 2017).

Poor communication and soft issues were identified as the main sources of conflict by the respondents. The next section focuses on the understanding of conflict management by respondents.

3.5 MANAGEMENT OF CONFLICT

Nischal and Bhalla (2014:186) state that successfully managing conflict has a domino effect, allowing managers to create a workplace where employees can thrive, while maintaining that for an organisation to grow effectively and efficiently depends on the way in which conflict is managed within itself. The argument is made that the existence of the organisation can be threatened by conflict amongst the different levels of management in the organisation. The conflict between the core and support branches in Stats SA needs a good conflict management strategy, which will be covered in Chapter 4, in order to address concerns which were highlighted during the personal interviews. Nischal and Bhalla (2014:186) further explain that the management of organisational conflict involves the diagnosis of the styles (strategies) used to handle conflict arising in the workplace, and although conflict management is complex and sometimes hard to achieve, a greater understanding of the behavioural skills associated with it can have a bottom-line impact on organisational productivity.

As to the question of how conflict management is understood, the respondents suggested the following: conflict resolution, understanding conflict strategies and prevention of conflict. Many respondents said that management of conflict is all about conflict resolution, which entails managing differences, harmonising the working environment, maintaining

good relationships, containing different views, finding better ways of doing things, dealing with issues as and when they happen instead of procrastinating, acknowledging different opinions, having the authority to make decisions and being prepared to compromise for the sake of the organisation. "Collaboration and compromise are absolute in effective conflict management" (Respondent Six, 2017). Conflict resolution strategies in highly intellectual organisations such as Stats SA are crucial, as "professionals are more prone to conflict because they think they know everything, which in the end results in conflict" (Respondent Eighteen, 2017).

Understanding organisational strategies and policies on management of conflict is equally crucial. In order to manage conflict effectively, the organisation needs to set procedures and guidelines on conflict management. To ensure effectiveness of these procedures and guidelines, the organisation has to outline escalation processes and consequences thereof during transgressions. The respondents also maintained that "Understanding organisational strategies also means managing the working environment, which includes management of products, services and people" (Respondent Ten, 2017). Regarding policies, the respondents further said that "Employees must follow protocol and avoid unnecessary conflicts, and managers need to have a fair idea of what to do when conflicts arise, especially on procedures to be followed other than being reactionary" (Respondent Four, 2017).

Pro-activeness was preferred as opposed to reactiveness, in response to the question on the prevention of conflict in the management of conflict. The respondents specifically linked conflict management to being consistent with one's principles, in order to avoid unwarranted conflict. The respondents implied that leaders and managers needed to manage conflict before it happened and not afterwards, but also acknowledged the fact that conflict cannot be prevented completely as it is part of life. "Conflict is part of human nature that has to be managed and controlled like any other thing in life – all that is needed is to sanitise conflict and put it at an acceptable level" (Respondent Eight, 2017). One respondent specifically asserted that "management of conflict is all about principles. Stand by your principles and keep your morals sane, this is the only way one can prevent unwarranted conflicts. The manner in which a person manoeuvres conflicts requires a

special character, qualities and skills. It is not everyone else's cup of tea" (Respondent Twenty, 2017).

The respondents' understanding of conflict management is on application of conflict resolutions, acknowledging different management styles such as collaboration and compromise, an appreciation of organisational polices and the prevention of conflict where possible.

In response to the question about how conflict is managed between the senior managers in the core and support branches, the majority of the respondents maintained that Stats SA does not have conflict management strategies in place, does not manage conflict at all and cannot in any way manage conflict between the core and support branches. Furthermore, the respondents placed the management of conflict in the hands of the accounting officer who they deemed solved everything. The respondents also indicated that conflict was managed by status and through policies, regulations and integrated planning. Stats SA was regarded as very casual in the manner in which it managed conflict. "This organisation is very casual about conflict management issues and conflict is not given the attention it deserves" (Respondent Three, 2017).

The respondents further stated that "Stats SA's conflict management structures are very poor and managers are very indecisive and use the ostrich approach all the time: they bury their heads in the sand and expect things to solve themselves. The Chief Director Management Forum (CDF) is a good example of a senior management structure without power, they can hardly make any decisions" (Respondent Nineteen, 2017). The CDF was initially called the Executive Management Forum (EMF), and one of the respondents, (Respondent Twenty, 2017), said that "Stats SA does not manage conflict at all. Conflict is part of our culture and business as usual. Management is not a position but a skill coupled with responsibility, unlike this Executive Moaning Forum – where senior managers are always complaining instead of coming up with solutions".

When the respondents were asked how conflict is managed between the core and support branches at senior management level in Stats SA, most of them asked a question in return, for example "Is it managed or do you perhaps have some information that we do not have?" (Respondent Four, 2017). Some of the respondents further said that "People

are managed through marching orders here, management is very casual about conflict, nobody cares, management largely uses avoidance strategy" (Respondent Six, 2017) and "When there is a crisis they use firefighting strategy" (Respondent Nine, 2017). "Conflict in this organisation is like a white elephant that runs itself and it does not help to even complain about it, managers are just complying as they are not protected by either the unions or leadership" (Respondent Fifteen, 2017).

The respondents who argued that conflict is managed by the Accounting Officer said that "People have no respect for one another, especially at our level. Everything is escalated to the Statistician-General" (Respondent Eighteen, 2017). On managing conflict through integrated planning, the respondents "advocated for integrative planning, especially on big projects such as the upcoming Census 2021" (Respondent Eight, 2017). Regarding management of conflict by status, one respondent replied: "It depends on who you know in the high ranks and you will be protected. Stats SA's conflict is managed by rank and status" (Respondent Twelve, 2017). Only five per cent of the respondents maintained that the management of conflict between the two branches is through policies and regulations, and indicated that "people are just suffocated with these rules and regulations" (Respondent Seventeen, 2017).

Many respondents asserted that Stats SA does not manage conflict, which is a worrying factor when considering how big the organisation is, particularly at senior management level. Sentiments such as managing conflict by status, the head of the organisation being the main person to solve conflict and administration of rigid rules and regulations were constantly echoed during interviews.

On the management styles which can be used to address the problem of conflicting roles between the core and support branches at senior management level, the respondents mentioned all manner of management styles, namely competing, avoidance, collaboration, accommodating and compromising management styles. However, the majority of the respondents considered collaboration, accommodating and compromising as the best management styles of conflict. With regard to collaboration, accommodating and compromising management styles, respondents argued that people should be polite and open-minded to different ideas, treat each other with respect, stop working in silos, create a safe environment in order to discuss issues without fear of being penalised and, most

importantly, be honest with each other. As one respondent (Respondent Eleven, 2017) indicated, "The attitude of knowing everything – especially at our level as senior managers – has to be avoided as it is a real problem".

The respondents further advocated for a participatory management style, since they regarded the prevailing management styles as lacking in innovation due to the fact that too much power was centred around a few individuals. One respondent specifically said that "The current management style chokes innovation, as too much power is centred on a few individuals. We can definitely do more if the organisational management can be reviewed" (Respondent Six, 2017). Another respondent also stated that "We cannot continue to treat conflict within the organisation as a by-the-way; it must also not be part of the Transformation and Change Management Team (TaCT), as it needs special attention" (Respondent Seventeen, 2017).

The respondents who advocated for all the differing management styles maintained that circumstances differ and cannot be treated in the say way: "Stats SA is a big organisation and needs to apply different management styles, but that requires astute leadership" (Respondent Twelve, 2017). In support of adoption of various conflict management styles, one respondent maintained that "there is no one-size-fits-all management style. People need to be open-minded in transformational leadership – do not put people in boxes, take them outside the product mode mentality and assist them thinking beyond what they do; this is a key ingredient for growth, change and transformation" (Respondent Ten, 2017).

The Khaedu Programme under the National School of Government was also highly recommended by some respondents, as it encourages deployment of employees at service delivery points versus their daily routine. This will ultimately have a positive effect on conflict in the workplace (Respondent Ten, 2017). Only five per cent of the respondents recommended a competing management style and one respondent indicated that "I like the Statistician-General's management style and his level of authority. When he coughs everyone sneezes and for me that is a true leader, this democracy has destroyed our country, there is simply no law and order" (Respondent Three, 2017).

The majority of respondents recommended conflict management styles which encourage working together as teams, accommodating each other as colleagues and compromising

in the workplace. The respondents' choice of conflict management style gives a positive outlook which will be considered in the next chapter on conflict management strategy. In addition to management styles of managing conflict between the core and support branches in Stats SA, the respondents suggested the following as options to be considered in addressing conflict between the branches: team work, cultural change, soft skills, motivating people, training and minimising *ad hoc* projects.

With regard to the culture of the organisation, respondents said that Stats SA urgently needs a step change similar to organisational values - they leave so much to be desired at all levels. The respondents argued that there is an urgent need to bring back the basics, there has to be emphasis on accountability for all, especially at senior management level. The respondents further explained that leadership does not have any interest in change management, hence, "we do not have structures that deal with conflict efficiently, which is very dangerous in a big organisation such as ours. We cannot continue like this, the trust levels are just too low" (Respondent Six, 2017). One of the respondents (Respondent Ten, 2017) said that "SMS must stop playing the blaming games: Directors blame Chief Directors at the CDF, Chief Directors blame the DDGs at Exco, Exco blames the SG, the SG blames the Minister, the Minister blames the President, the President blames the party, the party the Constitution and the Constitution blames the universe. We are in serious trouble in this country. No-one wants to take responsibility".

In terms of motivating people, the respondents suggested the Annual General Meetings (AGMs), specifically saying "bring back the AGMs, they were very good and informative" (Respondent Thirteen, 2017). Regarding teamwork, the respondents suggested facilitation of open discussions between the core and support branches, saying "an informed staff is able to make informed decisions" (Respondent Sixteen, 2017), and "involving both branches mainly in planning will address a lot of problems very early, which in the final analysis will minimise conflict between the two branches" (Respondent Seventeen, 2017). Still on the issue of teamwork, a respondent (Respondent Eight, 2017) stated that "The Statistician-General portrays a united front for Stats SA and has worked very hard to build and manage Stats SA as a brand and as a reputable organisation. In the past Stats SA was known only for census, but today things are different as we work collectively and all claim glory for all products and services produced as a whole. Let us subscribe to a

positive way of doing things by breaking down the silos, and rather capitalising on positive aspects and continuing to grow".

On suggesting that Stats SA minimise *ad hoc* projects, the respondents argued that "we have to follow processes and work in an organised manner. There is too much work already in the organisation due to the current financial environment. Core branches are simply sinking and support branches do not have enough resources to assist in *ad hoc* projects" (Respondent Three, 2017). With regard to training, the respondents emphasised that employees have to be trained on conflict management: "Managers need to lead by example – I am a great advocate of managing oneself first and better before managing other people, I hate being reactionary. Good leadership sees conflict before it happens. People need to appreciate conflict as part of the working environment and not as a problem. We can learn and grow so much from conflict" (Respondent Twenty, 2017).

Cultural change, teamwork and soft skills cut across all themes in this study. They seem most dominant amongst the factors which have been identified by respondents to manage conflict between the core and support branches in Stats SA. Real change cannot happen without teamwork and management of soft skills – particularly the latter, as it is very sensitive. The identified factors by the respondents in the management of conflict are equally important, as is the communication in conflict, which will be discussed in the next section.

3.6 THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION IN CONFLICT

Communication is one of the most important tools in any organisation. When it is used effectively, it should result in efficient systems and processes. The existence of a specific signal should be a cause for alarm because it clearly indicates that communication amongst employees is interrupted, and ignoring conflicts can interfere with the service delivery process, interpersonal relationships within the public administration or between the public administration and the users of its services (Radivojevic & Klinkov, 2015:112). Verma (1998:354) explains that conflict is seen as a dysfunctional outcome resulting from poor communication, a lack of openness and trust between people and the failures of the managers to be responsive to the needs and aspirations of employees. The poor

communication between the core and support branches in Stats SA was indicated as one of the main sources of conflict within the organisation.

As to the question pertaining to the role of communication between senior managers in the core and support branches, the respondents were unanimous in arguing that the role of communication in managing conflict in both the core and support branches is critical. In this particular question all respondents (thus literally a hundred per cent of the respondents) maintained the importance of communication in conflict management. The respondents further said that it is not what one communicates, but how one communicates which leaves an impression, and that the two branches must work together. The respondents also indicated that the two branches needed to continuously communicate, in order to empower each other and stop working as adversaries.

During interviews the respondents strongly emphasised that soft issues must be addressed in order to enable a conducive environment for communication, and further suggested the establishment of forums where they can engage as colleagues. "We sometimes need to engage on general discussions that have nothing to do with work as colleagues, just to get ourselves outside the working environment mode. That will automatically improve relations between the two branches without any hassle. People are tired of strategies, policies and formal structures. We need platforms that can allow us to breathe" (Respondent Three, 2017).

The respondents also mentioned the importance of direct communication and not corridor talk, which is currently dominant within the organisation. Slogans such as "clean, clear and simple communication" (Respondent Twenty, 2017), and "communication and communication all the time, one message to all and at the same time" (Respondent Seventeen, 2017) were used. One respondent (Respondent Eight, 2017) was specific about communication that is stuck in the past and said, "We cannot always be talking about issues of past or historical data and disregard the future. The past has its own merits but is gone and we have to focus on the future. These past census stories bore so much. We need a barometer that will help us to assess the environment much better and smarter, so much has changed and we need to move with the times. We need suggestion boxes at entrances, opinion surveys, platforms where people can share their views without being victimised, and feedback sessions on issues raised".

The respondents also contend that the organisation needs an effective internal communication strategy, since its communication strategy is currently more externally focused. One of the main complaints by almost all respondents was on communication of organisational policies through emails, instead of organising platforms where proper discussions could take place. On the policies circulated through emails, one respondent (Respondent Five, 2017) specifically said "What a futile and useless exercise as no one reads them. I can assure you half of the employees, if not all, delete those emails. These people just push the button and circulate these policies without any explanation whatsoever, whether people read them or not they just do not care". In support of poor communication within the organisation, another respondent (Respondent Nine, 2017) said that "People must stop sending emails, they are very irritating, let us talk and re-organise ourselves better. Good communication eliminates confusion and real communication starts with self, so that you can be able to communicate with others. If you don't know who you are, you cannot tell me about yourself, let alone other people – that is what communication is all about".

The fact that all respondents complain about poor communication signals a serious danger which should not be ignored by all those responsible, especially by the organisational leadership. Communication is very important and can easily destroy the organisation if not carried out effectively. Apart from the problem of communication through emails, a number of respondents also complained that the current communication is more prone to core branches versus support branches, which adds to the current conflict between the two branches.

On critical communication messages which must be used to address conflict between the core and support branches at senior management level in Stats SA, the respondents suggested the following: working together as colleagues, messages on governance, strategy, organisational existence and working experiences.

The messages which encouraged working together included: we are Stats SA, one body with one mission and vision; we are here for the same thing. "Every role is part of the whole and must be considered important. We are united as one as we co-exist – united we stand and divided we fall" (Respondent Twenty, 2017). Respondents stated that messages of hope and unity, collaboration and partnerships should be crafted. "Talk in one voice and

not us-and-them phenomenon" (Respondent Five, 2017), as well as focusing on supportive messages which uphold the *Batho Pele Principles*. One specific respondent further said that "Stats SA is bigger than projects and individuals in their different capacities, it belongs to all who work in it. We are all in this together. I have as much responsibility to you, as much as you have it unto me – good communication is not a one-way street, it requires a lot of effort, respect towards one another and responsibility" (Respondent Nine, 2017).

On governance and administration, the respondents suggested messages on reflection, introspection and reconciliation, what governance and administration are all about, and outlining specifications related to acts, regulations and policies. "This email story is not working, people must be guided in order to obey the rules and regulations of the organisation. Some people still eat in their offices and arrive late without any repercussions" (Respondent Thirteen, 2017). The respondents further argued that awareness of legal aspects is crucial, and both the core and support branches must adhere to and respect the regulations: "Core has a parent authority syndrome where everyone has to play by what they say, regardless of the polices in place" (Respondent Eighteen, 2017).

The respondents who advocated for strategy suggest that "good communication starts with strategy, it is an epitome of all – if strategy and planning are done well, everything else will fall into place" (Respondent One, 2017). Those commenting on general experiences focused on work relationships and maintained that "effective messages should be on challenges and successes in the past, but most importantly on the current environment. People will relate to the existing experiences better" (Respondent Three, 2017). On the organisational existence, one respondent emphasised the question of "why are we here and do we exist as the organisation? If all public servants could appreciate that, everything else would change. Private sector induction is all about who they are and I promise you they carry their organisations with pride and responsibility, that is their secret and it works" (Respondent Fourteen, 2017).

Collaboration and partnerships are key to ensure good communication. The majority of respondents recommended communication messages which encourage unity, working together as teams and breaking down the silos between the core and support branches.

The issue of poor communication on policies, regulations and governance also seems to be one of the main problems in the conflict between the core and support branches.

On the improvement of communication between the core and support branches at senior management level in Stats SA, the respondents suggested workshops on soft issues, proper planning with very clear punitive measures, exhibitions, a fieldworker newspaper and improving communication platforms such as "*Asikhulume*" in the past. On exhibitions, one respondent (Respondent Two, 2017) said that "Stats SA people only know the work in their respective divisions. We need a branch or division day and should close business on that day. Various branches have to present their plans, share their successes and failures and have pamphlets to showcase their work. We have so many days on which we celebrate events such as Women's Day and Heritage Day, and others which could be used for something that will add value to the organisation".

Regarding workshops on soft issues, the respondents suggested the following: quarterly or biannual workshops for Directors, as Chief Directors and Exco have their own forums. Pulse messages – they should be about empowering everyone and creating opportunities for all, and not only about international trips or conferences. "Let us go back to what we used to do in the past, where the voices of the voiceless were heard. We should invite motivational speakers from outside the organisation to address the staff – people are demotivated and need a fresh voice of hope" (Respondent Three, 2017).

The respondents also suggested institutionalising the *Batho Pele Principles* and aligning them to organisational values and culture, which are currently not given the necessary attention. The respondents further stated that "all SMS must attend the Khaedu Programme organised by the National School of Government, as it recommends people to be deployed in other areas of work, either within or outside their departments. This makes them appreciate the roles played by their colleagues – that coalface exercise is critical" (Respondent Twelve, 2017). The Khaedu Programme was also recommended by respondents in the management of conflict.

One of the key suggestions on improving communication between the core and support branches was proper planning and outlining punitive measures, and one respondent (Respondent Five, 2017) said that "We need to regularly take stock of what we are doing

and ensure that all plans are implemented. If not there have be consequences, otherwise we are just wasting time". In support of implementation of punitive measures, another respondent (Respondent Nine, 2017) stated that "Charity begins at home. Exco and the CDF need to take responsibility and if they fail, they must bear the consequences. Our work is largely time driven and anyone who fails to meet the date lines must be held accountable." Some of the respondents argued that the messages they have in Stats SA are all about the core branches and nothing on the support branches. There is hardly an article or message from Stats SA leadership on the work done by support branches. For example, "Explaining in detail the work that is done to attain clean audits except to see one photo with a trophy in Pulse *(internal communication forum for Stats SA),* but if it is the core braches, there are photos, speeches, media briefings, life videos and so many things, the list is endless. We are all ambassadors of change and communication" (Respondent Ten, 2017).

One of the fundamentals to be considered in the development of a Stats SA conflict management strategy is good communication. All respondents acknowledged the problem of poor communication within the organisation and its importance in shaping the way forward for the organisation. Regarding poor communication, a lot of emphasis was placed on dealing with soft issues, particularly at management level, and rigid rules and regulations.

The next section is on legislative and regulatory frameworks, which links very well with the above-mentioned discussions. There has been acknowledgement by respondents on poor communication on policies and other legislative documents within the organisation.

3.7 LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS SUPPORTING THE MANAGEMENT OF CONFLICT

The legislative and regulatory frameworks play a significant role in the governance and administrative roles in the organisation. A number of documents have also been developed to clarify the roles and responsibilities of various levels, including those of senior managers, such as the Competency Framework, which basically defines the competencies which are important for the Public Service to be successful, and also ensures that senior managers have the requisite competencies and associated proficiency

levels to succeed at a strategic level (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2001:03). Having the knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes described in one place in a competency model is a helpful tool which allows both the individual and the organisation to know what knowledge and skills are needed to be effective in a given role (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2001:03). One of the key *foci* in this study is the conflicting roles at senior management level between the core and support branches in Stats SA, which have to be aligned to the organisational policies, in order to be understood and accepted by all employees.

As to the question of whether respondents are familiar with the acts and regulations governing their work, they were unanimous in acknowledging that there are regulations pertaining to how conflict is to be managed. In addition, the majority of the respondents acknowledged that they had read, understood and used them at some stage, while other respondents said that they were aware of them but were not interested in understanding or using them. The respondents who were not interested argued that conflict management belongs to Human Resource Management and if they find themselves in a conflict situation they will consult their human resource practitioner: "Human Resource Management is there to take care of conflict issues, I honestly do not have time for that" (Respondent Fourteen, 2017).

The respondents further explained that one of the factors which influenced their negative attitude towards governance is that management is not interested in the organisational policies and regulations: "They do not make any effort in terms of awareness of these policies, except to use them to fight their own battles" (Respondent Sixteen, 2017). One respondent (Respondent Nineteen, 2017) said that "In the past we used to have Friday seminar sessions which worked well for awareness campaigns, but they disappeared into thin air without any explanation nor communication. We need training on all of these policies and legislation".

The documents which the respondents know in relation to conflict management include the Public Finance Management Act, 1 of 1999, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, 75 of 1997 (as amended in 2002), the Public Service Act, 103 of 1994 (as amended in 2013), the Labour Relations Act, 66 of 1995, arbitration rules and dispute resolutions. Organisations which exist and through which conflict may be mediated include the Public

Service Commission and the Public Protector. In addition, the Disciplinary Code of Conduct, ethics and dispute resolution mechanisms, the Basic Conditions of Employment, the *Batho Pele Principles*, the performance and evaluation mechanisms for the Public Service and the SMS Handbook were further identified as important in the management of conflict.

On using the current legislative and regulatory frameworks to address the problem of conflict between the core and support branches at senior management level in Stats SA, the respondents suggested the following: workshops and training, leadership taking responsibility, third party intervention (on soft issues) and no intervention claiming that things are fine. The respondents who advocated for maintaining the *status quo* said, "Things are fine for now and whatever we have is manageable" (Respondent Four, 2017).

The respondents who recommended responsible leadership indicated that employees were aware of the existence of conflict at Stats SA, but leadership was not keen on issues of governance and administration except where the budget is concerned: "People are aware of conflict but we do not have leadership that is keen on governance and studies such as yours are a waste of time with the current leadership" (Respondent Nineteen, 2017). In support of the same argument another respondent stated that "Exco must take the lead in ensuring understanding and appreciation of all these regulations and outline related consequences, but above all things to be considered, filter the related messages to the lowest level within the organisation " (Respondent Nine, 2017).

Regarding third party intervention, the respondents said that "Stats SA needs a complete overhaul; we need a middle man to assist, people here are tired and overwhelmed. There has to be repositioning of the whole organisation, and most importantly, it is necessary to learn how to manage people and not processes. Management is so inhuman, all they are concerned with is work and more work, and not people. They do not even care about these acts and regulations" (Respondent Three, 2017). The respondents further said that continuous messages such as these from management are draining: "get your hands dirty, our core activities are time bound and should not miss the deadlines. Be technical as we are an intelligent organisation, and nothing is evident on the *Batho Pele* ethos" (Respondent Three, 2017). Furthermore, emphasis was placed on the implementation of the *Batho Pele Principles,* since "The culture of this organisation is so discouraging and

does not encourage ethical behaviour – I am here because of you and not myself – we need to not self-serve, but rather to aspire to serve other people which include our colleagues at all levels" (Respondent Ten, 2017).

In support of the same argument, another respondent (Respondent Six, 2017) claimed that "One day this organisation is going to collapse, as we are not products but human beings. Stats SA is all about work and disregards the human side of things. Soft skills are completely ignored and concentration is on hard skills. For example during big projects such as census, people get very sick with all sorts of ailments related to stress. We need psychologists to deal with the stress of people in addition to employee assistance programmes" (Respondent Six, 2017).

The majority of the respondents who suggested workshops, indicated the need to train everyone on all of the legislative and regulatory frameworks, including the DDGs, and argued that "there are no awareness campaigns on policies. To make the situation worse there are not even consequences during transgressions, as long as you belong to the right clique you are safe" (Respondent Five, 2017). The respondents further said that Exco must spearhead the implementation of legislative and regulatory frameworks, in order to ensure buy-in from both the core and support branches. One respondent (Respondent Thirteen, 2017) said that "these policies and acts, let alone their use, are not clear. We need to be trained and to minimise the animal syndrome on the application of rules and regulations."

The respondents further suggested that these workshops must be part of senior management orientation. For those who are already in the system, there has to be retraining. The workshops must be regular, mandatory and should use case studies so that people may relate to real stories in the workplace. One respondent specifically stated that "Stats SA SMS is too old and they have been here for too long. We need to do things differently as opposed to when they joined this organisation. We need to mix the older generation with the young blood, as they are too rigid – it is a serious challenge to teach old dogs new tricks" (Respondent Twenty, 2017). The respondents further said that employees must sign attendance registers during workshops, in order to ensure that everyone attends but, most importantly, to hold people accountable during conflict situations. Legislative and regulatory frameworks should be part of SMS annual

performance plans and evaluations, and: "People are rebellious by nature, hence we have rules and regulations in all facets of life – if this cannot be enforced into people's performance contracts or anything mandatory, the situation will remain the same" (Respondent Five, 2017).

In order to ensure effective implementation of legislative and regulatory frameworks, the respondents recommended the following: workshops and training, addressing the soft skills, responsible leadership and implementation of punitive measures (all as recurring themes throughout the whole chapter). With regard to punitive measures, the respondents suggested that: "There must be some level of enforcement of rules and regulations. That is the only way we are going to win, otherwise we are wasting each other's time" (Respondent Fifteen, 2017). In support of implementation of punitive measures, one specific respondent argued that "any implementation without holding people to account is problematic, there have to be consequences. People must be punished for non-submissions of documents legislatively required. These are mandatory requirements and one cannot afford to have managers who fail to understand things as basic as that. People are too comfortable here, especially SMS. They need to be shaken and bitten a bit, in order to make them more responsible and accountable" (Respondent Twenty, 2017).

Workshops and training seemed to dominate all other alternatives which could be used to ensure effective implementation of legislative and regulatory frameworks between the core and support branches in Stats SA. The interesting part was that workshops and training were also considered by the majority of respondents as the best mechanisms to address the problem of poor communication, breaking silos, addressing the problem of soft issues and platforms which could be used to resolve conflict between the core and support branches in Stats SA.

Other issues which were equally significant during the interviews with the respondents included the following: power struggles, soft issues, poor communication, silos, poor leadership and administration of rules and regulations. One of the biggest problems during the interviews was the rigidity around the administration of rules and regulations, and this was considered as one of the key factors behind conflicting roles between the core and support branches in Stats SA. All of the above-mentioned issues would form the basis of

the conflict management strategy. The next section summarises the analysis and findings of the study.

3.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter analysed empirical data presented according to themes which have been highlighted in previous chapters, using Stats SA as a case study and giving a clear picture of Stats SA managers' points of view on the status of conflict within the organisation. A number of challenges were raised and suggestions made, in order to address the problem of conflict between the core and support branches in Stats SA. One of the highlights in this study was the problem of soft issues, closely linked to culture in Stats SA. It consistently came out in almost every theme which was discussed, namely sources of conflict, management thereof, communication and legislative and regulatory frameworks. Workshops and training were considered as excellent platforms which could be used to address various problems which were identified as key in the conflict between the core and support branches in Stats SA.

The next chapter focuses on the proposed Stats SA conflict management strategy, influenced by recommendations made by the respondents during personal interviews.

CHAPTER 4: PROPOSED CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR STATISTICS SOUTH AFRICA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is a presentation of the proposed conflict management strategy which can be considered to address the argued conflicting roles at senior management level between the core and support branches in Stats SA. The proposed conflict management strategy is informed by the problems identified in Chapter 3 and assumed in the first and second chapters of this study. The problems are aligned with the identified literature and themes which emerged from reviewed literature (Chapter 2) and interviews (Chapter 3). The proposed conflict management strategy focuses on one type of conflict, namely intergroup/interdepartmental conflict and the Process Model. The link between the intergroup/interdepartmental conflict and the Process Model has been elaborated on in the previous chapters. The definition of the word conflict will be reiterated below to put the study into perspective.

Chapter 1 acknowledged that conflict is an intrinsic part of human nature and happens almost every time when people interact with one another. Lederach (1988) defines conflict as a psycho-social process, which includes social interactions and which is shaped by individual and cultural meanings. These cultural meanings, which actually create conflict, are constructed through perceptions, interpretations, expressions and intentions. Intergroup conflict seems to cover a number of areas which are a concern in the management of conflicting roles between the core and support branches of Stats SA.

The proposed conflict management strategy should enable Stats SA to resolve conflict on its own, with a full understanding of the capacity required to resolve intergroup conflict. Thus, for the purpose of the study, the management of conflict will be viewed as a strategy for identifying, analysing and resolving differing stances on any organisational managerial roles, specifically between the core and support branches in Stats SA.

This chapter outlines the purpose of the proposed strategy, then focuses on the proposed conflict management strategy for Stats SA. The conflict management strategy is illustrated in terms of a results chain approach, consisting of the following elements: inputs, processes, outputs, outcomes and impact of the conflict management strategy. The overall

goal of the chapter is to focus on addressing the third objective of this study, namely to develop a conflict management strategy which addresses conflict between the core and support branches in Stats SA.

The next section discusses the purpose of the proposed conflict management strategy for Stats SA.

4.2 PURPOSE OF THE PROPOSED CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR STATS SA

The purpose of the proposed conflict management strategy is to reduce and manage conflict between the core and support branches in Stats SA. The proposed conflict management strategy for Stats SA will serve as a preventative mechanism in managing conflict. Harrison and John (2013:80) believe that a strategy provides strategic direction to an organisation and is established and communicated through tools such as mission and vision statements. Mission and vision statements are regarded as important, in order to communicate ideas and a sense of direction and purpose to internal and external stakeholders, and also to guide managers in the making of decisions about how resources should be allocated.

Porter (2011:20-35) explains strategy as making trade-offs in competing. Thus in essence strategy is choosing what not to do. Strategy therefore renders choices about what not to do to be as important as choices about what to do. Without trade-offs, there would be no need for choices and thus no need for strategy. Mintzberg *et al.* (2009:9-10) also describe strategy as a plan, or something equivalent to a direction, a guide or course of action into the future. It is a path to get from here to there, a pattern that is, consistency in behaviour over time. Organisations develop plans for their future and they also evolve patterns out of their past, thus, by design, a strategy can either be intended strategy or realised strategy.

The vision for Stats SA is "to deliver the South Africa I know, the home I understand", while the mission statement is, "to lead and partner in statistical systems for evidence-based decisions". The mandate for Stats SA is "to produce, coordinate and disseminate official statistics" (Stats SA, 2018:12). The study contends that the effective management of organisational conflict is a necessity in order to ensure that Stats SA fulfils its vision, mission and mandate.

Reduction and management of conflict at Stats SA, especially at management level, can only be achieved if a conflict resolution mechanism is established. The proposed conflict management strategy will address the conflict management gaps identified by the respondents, as illustrated in Chapter 3 of the study.

4.3 PROPOSED CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The proposed conflict management strategy is illustrated as a framework, with elements highlighting the model and management styles of managing conflict. The proposed strategy is operationalised through the use of a Process Model. Chapter 2 of this study acknowledged that there are many models used in conflict as a discipline, but the appropriate model depends on the conflict under investigation. Thus the proposed conflict management strategy will adopt only one model, namely the Process Model. Kenneth Thomas developed the Process Model in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The Process Model theoretically distinguishes between conflict processes and the structure in which that process occurs (Thomas, 1992:267). The conflicting roles between the core and support branches in Stats SA emanate from hierarchical structures in the organisation.

According to Thomas (1992:267), the Process Model has a cyclical connotation which demonstrates conflict as a process or sequence of events from the beginning until the end, thus outlining events or stages in a conflict episode. In the context of the Process Model, a conflict episode occurs in a basic sequence of events, namely frustration, conceptualisation, behaviour, interaction and outcome. Each of the sequences of events was explained in detail in Chapter 2 of the study. The Process Model therefore provides a way of analysing interpersonal events which lead to different conflict-handling modes and their consequences.

The proposed Process Model of conflict management is illustrated in the following phases: inputs (sources of conflict and tools and techniques to identify the sources of conflict), processes (management styles), outputs (development of a strategy), outcomes (behavioural interventions) and impact (conflict resolutions). Additionally, the proposed conflict management strategy will serve as a clear road map in the form of a framework aligned to the Stats SA organisational strategy. The strategy for Stats SA is based on a

conduit of trust, and adjudication of its mandate and relations amongst all employees, particularly at managerial level.

Chapter 2 indicated that conflict is an invertible organisational feature, with implications for both functional and dysfunctional effects on organisational life, depending on how it is managed. Mayer and Louw (2009:1) further indicate that conflict management is the art of identifying the appropriate intervention to achieve conflict settlement and does not necessarily imply the avoidance, reduction or termination of conflict. Therefore, the study acknowledges that conflict management is the positive and constructive management of differences as it helps in the design of effective strategies to both minimise dysfunctions and enhance the constructive functions of conflict, thereby improving learning and the effectiveness of the working environment.

As indicated in Chapter 3, the proposed conflict management strategy will be for the core and support branches – representing the two groups within Stats SA – indicative of intergroup/interdepartmental conflict. Moreover, different types of conflict will be effectively managed, based on the application of the appropriate model. Additionally, Huan and Yazdanifard (2012:141) confirm that managers, supervisors, employers and leaders should use different types of conflict management styles and strategies when facing different kinds of subordinates, employees and team members. Huan and Yazdanifard (2012:142) conclude by indicating that if a manager (employer or leader) only uses one type of conflict management style in handling all conflict in the workplace, it may not work as they expect it to work.

The findings of the study indicate that respondents complain about poor communication and rigid legislative and regulatory frameworks, which are a signal of frustration and should not be ignored by all those responsible, especially by the organisational leadership. In addition, respondents conceptualised that communication and application of legislative and regulatory frameworks are very important and can easily destroy (outcome), thus they can escalate conflict in the organisation if not done accordingly. Apart from the problem of communicating organisational legislative and regulatory frameworks through emails, a number of respondents also complained (frustration) that communication at Stats SA was more pro the core branches than the support branches, escalating conflict (behaviour) between the two branches. On critical communication messages which must be used to

address conflict between the core and support branches at senior management level in Stats SA, the majority of the respondents advocated for messages which encouraged the use of legislative and regulatory frameworks, and working together as one organisation (interaction), which diffuses conflict. The proposed conflict management strategy is illustrated in the form of a Process Model as presented in Figure 4.1

Figure 4.1: Proposed Process Model in managing conflict

Input → **Process** → **Output** → **Outcome** → **Impact**

Sources of Conflict

- Power struggles
- Disregarding timelines
- Silo mentality
- Soft issues
- Conflicting roles
- Poor communication
- Organisational strategy (vision and mission)
- Structure
- Poor planning
- Favouritism
- Leadership
- Policies and regulations

Tools & Techniques to identify other sources

- Workshops
- Seminars on soft issues
- Skills audit
- Training
- Use of perception survey
- Exit interviews
- Suggestion boxes
- Tips to the SG

Management Styles

Compromising

Accommodating

Collaborating

Strategy Development

- Proposed conflict management strategy

Behavioural Interventions

- Facilitation of open discussions (soft-issues)
- Efficient and effective communication channels
- Training of new employees
- Re-training of old employees
- Annual general meeting
- Conduct sessions on change management (cultures, values and Batho Pele Principles)
- Developing of conflict management documents that can be used to minimise conflict (update policies)

Conflict Resolutions

- Review of roles and responsibilities (core and support branches)
- Innovative hubs (intellectual war zones)
- Improvement of existing processes and systems
- Expanded service programmes
- Free participation on strategy sessions (vision and mission)
- Feedback sessions (issues)
- All SMS enrol with School of Government (Khaedu programme – deployment on service delivery programmes)
- Compulsory bi-annual sessions on legislative and regulatory frameworks
- Rotation of employees
- Minimise ad-hoc projects
- Institutionalising change management

The advantages and disadvantage of the Process Model have been outlined in Chapter 2. However, in relation to the proposed Process Model for conflict management in Stats SA the following were considered:

- it creates the awareness that conflict exists between affected parties (findings of the study confirmed that the respondents were aware of the existence of conflict);
- it capitalises on interaction between the parties in conflict (the majority of the respondents advocated for messages which encourage working together as one organisation);
- it addresses the problem of organisational culture and values (one of the biggest problems identified in all themes in this study is the silo mentality entangled in soft issues);
- it uses it as an opportunity to address the prevailing situation (conflicting roles between the core and support branches); and
- it can also be used in a resolution strategy (which the study has proposed).

The Process Model is therefore ideal in the management of conflicting roles between the core and support branches in Stats SA, as it gives an opportunity to deal with conflict in a manageable way or process. The Process Model of conflict management in Stats SA is illustrated in the following phases, namely input, process, output, outcome and impact, and each phase will be discussed below.

4.3.1 Inputs

Inputs relate to all the resources which contribute to the production and delivery of outputs. In simple terms inputs are "what we use to do the work". These are building blocks or tools which we need to do our work. In the working environment the inputs may include finances, personnel, equipment and buildings (Department of National Treasury, 2007:06). In this particular study inputs are tools and techniques which have been identified in assisting to find sources of conflict between the core and support branches in Stats SA.

Findings of the study confirmed that the majority of the respondents assert that conflict is neither positive nor negative, as both sides have some advantages and disadvantages; conflict is therefore a normal phenomenon, particularly in the workplace. Once conflict is acknowledged, the proposed conflict management strategy posits that the source of the

conflict be identified as well. Meyer and Surujlal (2013:101) contend that sources of conflict include conflicting resources, conflicting styles, conflicting perceptions, conflicting goals, conflicting pressure, conflicting roles, different personal values and unpredictable policies.

The respondents also outlined the sources of conflict between the core and support branches of Stats SA as follows: power struggles, silo mentality, soft issues and conflicting roles, poor communication, organisational strategy, poor planning, favouritism, leadership, structure, as well as policies and regulations.

Once Stats SA leadership and management become aware of the sources of conflict between the core and support branches, the proposed conflict management strategy requires management to determine the platforms and mechanisms which can be used to identify other sources of conflict. The respondents cited the following platforms and mechanisms which can be used to identify other sources of conflict (input): workshops, seminars on soft issues, skill audits, training of employees to identify sources of conflict, tips for the Statistician General, suggestion boxes, rotation of employees, use of perception interviews and exit interviews.

The inputs of both the core and support branches need to be genuine so that the correct sources of conflict are identified, in order to inform the correct processes for effective implementation of the conflict management strategy. Additionally, tools and techniques to identify other sources of conflict need to be free from bias, in order to ensure that the inputs yield the desired outcomes and impact. The next element in the proposed conflict management strategy is the process and this will be discussed below.

4.3.2 Processes

Processes are what managers need to use in order to achieve what they want to achieve. These processes can be efficient systems, communication strategies, management styles, legal documents and any other mechanism that would assist in delivering the outputs or outcomes. In essence, processes describe "what we do". It is critical to note that these processes use a range of inputs to produce the desired outputs and ultimately outcomes (Department of National Treasury, 2010:06). In this study, three management styles have

been chosen to address the problems of conflict and its management in Stats SA, namely the compromising, the accommodative and the collaborating conflict management styles. The findings of the study indicate that effective conflict management enhances the performance of employees in an organisation.

Kirti (2016:94) differentiates between conflict management styles in two basic dimensions: firstly, concern for self, and secondly, concern for others. As described in Chapter 2, Osisioma (2009:93-95) reviewed these two dimensions and identified five conflict management styles, namely competing, collaborating, avoiding, accommodating and compromising styles. Nischal and Bhalla (2014:186) argue that the management of organisational conflict involves the diagnosis of the styles (strategies) used to handle conflict arising at the workplace.

In spite of the recommendations made by the respondents on the management styles in this study, notice must be taken that it would not be ideal to have general management styles which can be applied to all sources of conflict within the organisation. Crawley and Graham (2011:3) state that managers must develop conflict management styles which affect the way a conflict is perceived and handled. Apart from using the blanket approach in the selected management styles, managers at Stats SA should realise that conflict management styles which are generally accepted as appropriate can equally be harmful in a conflict situation. For example, collaborative styles are inappropriate in conflict situations in which managers could take advantage of naïve employees who are considered to be vulnerable (Leas, 2014:4).

The justification for selecting the above three cited conflict management styles is that they complement each other and encourage people to work together instead of promoting silos. These management styles also advocate that senior managers must accommodate each other as colleagues and to compromise when necessity arises versus pursing personal interests. Furthermore, the suggested conflict management styles are evident throughout the findings of the study.

The justification for the three management styles, namely collaborating, accommodating and compromising, are based on the following:

- employees will be polite and open-minded to different ideas;

- employees will treat each other with respect;
- employees will stop working in silos;
- the levels of trust amongst colleagues will increase, dispelling the culture of fear;
- employees will be innovative, as they will be open with each other;
- employees will own and appreciate the organisational vision and mission;
- the culture of the organisation will change;
- soft issues will be addressed (behavioural interventions);
- leadership will take up its position and give direction when required;
- roles and responsibilities will be clarified as the environment will be conducive; and
- employees will be honest with each other.

The respondents' choices of conflict management styles are in line with the conflict management styles suggested in the proposed conflict management strategy for Stats SA. The next element in the proposed conflict management strategy is the outputs.

4.3.3 Outputs

Outputs refer to the final products, or goods and services produced for delivery. Outputs may be defined as "what we produce or deliver" (Department of National Treasury, 2010:06). What this study wants to produce or deliver is to develop the conflict management strategy for Stats SA. Waters (2006:10) defines a strategy as a fundamental pattern of current and planned objectives, resources and interaction with markets, competitors and other entities. The proposed conflict management strategy will provide strategic direction for Stats SA with respect to what it wants to achieve and how it wants to achieve it.

Lafley and Martin (2013:3) define a strategy as a detailed plan which specifies what the organisation will do in order to reach its goals and objectives. Once this document has been developed, discussed with various stakeholders and approved by Stats SA leadership (Exco), there has to be facilitation of behavioural interventions in order to ensure its implementation within the organisation. However, it is critical to ensure that all managers who give approval to the proposed conflict management strategy are provided with adequate implementation capacity through targeted training and development. The literature and findings of the study indicate only two forums for Stats SA senior

management, namely Exco, consisting of the Statistician-General, the DDGs and a few Chief Directors, and the CDF which is mainly made up of Chief Directors. There is no forums at all for Directors who are part of Stats SA senior management.

In support of this, the findings of the study suggest establishment of a Directors forum and their inclusion in the CDF, similar to that which Exco has adopted. The exclusion of Directors who were also part of the respondents shows a serious gap which needs to be addressed if the proposed conflict management strategy is to work. All levels of senior management within the organisation need to be trained, in order to capacitate them in implementing the proposed conflict management strategy. Directors are a critical link between the Chief Directors and the lower levels.

The exclusion of Directors upon the approval and adoption of the proposed conflict management strategy may result in the lack of buy-in on the proposed conflict management strategy and could sabotage the implementation process. Levels of trust amongst senior management and confidence in delivering the message to both middle management and lower levels are key. As a result, all senior managers have to be trained in conflict management strategies, in order to equip them to be able to implement the proposed conflict management strategy. The main recommendations will be covered in the last chapter, which covers recommendations and conclusions.

The next element explains possible behavioural interventions (outcomes) which emanate from resolving conflict between the core and support branches in Stats SA.

4.3.4 Outcomes

Outcomes are the medium-term results for specific beneficiaries which are the consequence of achieving specific outputs. Outcomes should relate clearly to an institution's strategic goals and objectives set out in its plans. Outcomes are in actual fact "what we wish to achieve" (Department of National Treasury, 2010:06). In this specific study the intent is to implement appropriate organisational behavioural interventions that would minimise the level of conflict within the organisation. These behavioural interventions would also assist in the implementation of the proposed Stats SA conflict management strategy.

Chapter 2 of the study indicated that, although conflict management is complex and sometimes hard to achieve, a greater understanding of the behavioural skills associated with it can have a bottom-line impact on organisational productivity. Golembiewski (2000: 383) acknowledges the need for behavioural interventions in order to assess whether there is too little or too much conflict and whether the conflict is not handled effectively. This study confirms that conflict has not been managed successfully at Stats SA.

The possible outcomes of the Process Model in managing conflict are influenced by solid managerial decisions in terms of the appropriate behavioural interventions necessary in order to reduce conflict. Decision-making is a conscious choice amongst alternatives that usually involve facts and values (Thornhill, 2012:302). Pride *et al.* (2010:6) define decision-making as an act of choosing one of the alternatives. In concurrence with the definitions provided above, Griffin and Van Fleet (2014:281) indicate that decision-making can either refer to an act or a specific process. In the context of this study, managers need to make decisions on behavioural interventions which lead to the resolution of conflict between the core and support groups of Stats SA. Decision-making plays a crucial role in the management of conflict in any work environment.

The majority of the respondents suggested that unresolved conflict yielded the following negative outcomes between the core and support branches within Stats SA:

- strained relationships amongst colleagues due to working in silos;
- poor communication in general;
- creation of centres of power;
- poorly implemented strategy (people just comply without understanding what is required);
- negative attitude towards legislative and regulatory frameworks;
- curtailed rotation of skills between the core and support branches;
- unavailability of advisors or listeners amongst the core and support branch members of Stats SA (everyone thinks they know better);
- investment of power into very few individuals; and
- high level of favouritism and indecisive leadership.

Some of the suggested behavioural interventions for Stats SA, as illustrated in Figure 4.1 and also confirmed by the findings of the study are: training and retraining of its employees in the area of conflict management. The interventions of training and retraining create a conducive working environment for the employees. Training and retraining interventions also influence the establishment of efficient and effective communication channels between and amongst all categories of the employees in the organisation. This will reduce conflict situations in the organisation. Findings of the study indicate that critical communication messages which must be used to address conflict between the core and support branches at senior management level in Stats SA should:

- encourage working together as one organisation;
- discourage silo mentality (the "us and them phenomenon");
- emphasise clarity on governance and administration, particularly encouraging an awareness of policies; and
- focus on strategy, general experiences and organisational existence as effective and efficient messages to be communicated between the branches.

The findings of the study also indicate that the respondents suggested that Annual General Meetings (AGMs) were a critical intervention in motivating employees, and the AGMs were regarded as very informative. Furthermore, the respondents also suggested that facilitation of open discussions between the core and support branches would be another intervention which would encourage teamwork in the results chain of the Process Model of conflict management. The respondents indicated that the outcomes of open discussions would lead to informed employees who are able to make informed decisions. The respondents concluded by suggesting the intervention of involving both branches in planning, in order to address problems timeously, thereby minimising conflict between the two branches at Stats SA.

Another appropriate intervention which can be implemented by Stats SA is the development of policies or documents which can be used to minimise conflict and to advise on what exactly needs to be done when it happens. The development of conflict management policies must be done by the Human Resource Management Division under Corporate Services. The policies or documents which can be used to minimise conflict will

be aligned with legislative and regulatory frameworks which are used to address the problem of conflict management.

One of the official documents used in the Public Service during disputes, conflicts and disciplinary hearings is the Disciplinary Code and Procedures (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003:02). The Process Model of conflict management recommends reference to the Disciplinary Code and Procedures during the intervention of the development of policies or documents to minimise conflict. Stats SA (2017:8) indicates that failure to uphold respect and promote acceptable conduct amongst colleagues exacerbates the problem for the management of conflicting roles between the core and support branches in Stats SA, as no-one is willing to listen and negotiate with each other.

The outcomes of the proposed Stats SA conflict management strategy complement the behavioural interventions as proposed by the respondents during interviews. The impact of the Process Model of conflict management is discussed below.

4.3.5 Impacts

Impacts are what managers want to change, usually with the intent of improving or enhancing the *status quo*. Impacts are on a bigger scale and they fulfil the dream, the vision and mission to a larger scale such as the organisation, the community, the country or the world at large (Department of National Treasury, 2007:06). In the context of a country, the results of achieving specific outcomes include the reduction of poverty, creating jobs and addressing the problem of inequality as advocated by the South African National Development Plan while the impact is on improving the life of all citizens in the country (National Planning Commission, 2012:14). The impact of this study would be evident in the institutionalisation of the proposed conflict management strategy in Stats SA. The majority of the respondents alluded to the fact that Stats SA does not have a conflict management strategy. Thus this would improve the organisational conflict management mechanisms.

The proposed conflict management strategy envisions Stats SA in a better position to address conflicting roles at management level between the core and support branches through the use of appropriate management styles which address the core causes of

conflict. Rout and Omiko (2007:46) believe that learning from conflict situations in the workplace contributes towards improving decision-making and also helps to identify problems and find alternative solutions. The Process Model of conflict management envisages that the application of appropriate behavioural intervention (outcomes) will provide information on whether the model is working or not and promote organisational learning from the use of the model. This means that the impact will depend on the outcomes of the model applied and will automatically influence the conflict resolutions to be undertaken by the organisation.

Organisational learning is defined as a process of detecting and correcting a certain error in the workplace (Rahim, 2015:34). This means that organisational learning can assist in the achievement of the desired impact through improved processes and better knowledge and understanding. King (2009:5) also regards organisational learning as the most important way in which any organisation can sustainably improve the utilisation of knowledge.

Chapter 2 of the study indicated that public administrators must view conflict as an opportunity instead of viewing it as good or bad. It is critical that those who make decisions have to always think about the positive and negative consequences of the conflict. Huan and Yazdanifard (2012:148) also indicate that leaders should view conflict as an opportunity, then understand and apply various conflict management techniques and conflict resolution styles in order to form strong relationships with subordinates.

Conflict is therefore an important force in bringing out the differences amongst agents' opinions, logic and worldviews, which in turn leads to conflict resolution. This approach advocates the acceptance of conflict and rationalises its existence. As a result of the potential benefits from conflict, public managers, including management of the core and support branches of Stats SA, should focus on managing conflict effectively, rather than suppressing or eliminating it.

Huan and Yazdanifard (2012:149) also contend that unresolved conflict can negatively impact the success of an organisation. Leaders must therefore learn how to address and manage conflict, depending on the situation and the party involved. The proposed Process Model of conflict management therefore acknowledges what the majority of the

respondents envision – that the core and support branches are supposed to work together, where the former has to give direction to what is required and the latter plays a supportive role by ensuring proper governance and administration.

4.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter proposed a conflict management strategy for Stats SA. The main purpose behind the proposal of a conflict management strategy is that the findings of the study confirmed the existence of conflict at Stats SA. In addition, the findings of the study indicated that Stats SA does not have a conflict management strategy, despite the fact that various gaps of conflict as well as sources of conflict were confirmed. The identified conflict management gaps between the core and support branches of Stats SA were aligned with the themes which emerged in the previous chapters. The chapter proposed a Process Model of conflict management illustrated as a results chain from inputs (sources of conflict together with tools and techniques to identify other sources of conflict), to processes (management styles and the Process Model), outputs (development of the strategy), then outcomes (behavioural interventions) and lastly, to the desired achievement-impact (conflict resolution).

It is envisaged that the proposed conflict management strategy will serve as an opportunity to resolve conflict, enhance organisational performance and promote organisational learning at Stats SA. The subsequent chapter makes recommendations aligned to the study, before an overall conclusion to the study is given.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The primary purpose of this study is to investigate sources of conflicting roles between the core and support branches in Statistics South Africa (Stats SA). Chapter 5 serves as the final chapter of this study and gives a synopsis of each of the previous chapters. This study is guided by research objectives which are linked to each chapter. A total of five themes emerged from the qualitative study, namely understanding conflict as a concept, sources of conflict, management of conflict, the role of communication in conflict and the legislative and regulatory framework in supporting the management of conflict. The recommendations of the study are aligned to the emerging themes of this study and will serve as a conduit to the adoption and implementation of the proposed Stats SA conflict management strategy.

5.2 SUMMARY

Chapter 1 of this study outlined the orientation, the problem statement, the central theoretical statements, the research objectives and the thematic themes aligned to the study. The following research objectives were formulated for the study:

- describe the theoretical and statutory framework which enables the management of conflict within public organisations;
- explain the nature of conflict and the challenges associated with the management of conflict between the core and support branches within Stats SA; and
- develop a conflict management strategy which addresses the conflict between the core and support branches.

In addition to the research objectives, the study used a qualitative research methodology approach to enable in-depth discussions during personal interviews with the respondents. For data collection, semi-structured interview guides were administered face-to-face. A literature review was also used to substantiate the importance of the study. Also included were limitations of the study, ethical considerations and the significance of the study. Finally, an overview of all the chapters of this study was outlined.

Chapter 2 of this study provided a theoretical overview on conflict management and regulatory frameworks (as proposed for the first study objective). Stats SA is a national government department accountable to the Minister in the Presidency: Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation. Stats SA is responsible for the production and dissemination of official statistics and this study had to be contextualised within the requirements of the Public Service. The theoretical overview was analysed against the research objectives and emerging themes which were discussed in detail in Chapter 3. Moreover, the theoretical overview of this study took cognisance of factors around conflict at the workplace, which include defining conflict, identifying sources of conflict and management thereof. Various definitions of conflict were given to provide a broad view of conflict and how it is generally understood and managed in various organisations.

Chapter 2 also delineated different types of conflict, namely substantive and affective conflict. Substantive conflict refers to organisational conflict, while affective conflict revolves around individuals. These two types of conflict were further classified into interpersonal conflict, intrapersonal conflict and intergroup conflict. The intergroup conflict was deemed to be appropriate for addressing conflicting roles between the core and support branches in Stats SA. Most importantly, the intergroup conflict was harmonised with the Process Model, which was regarded as the appropriate model in the proposed Stats SA conflict management strategy. The Process Model was chosen for this study due to its simple and logical process in addressing the problem of conflict in the working environment.

In addition to different types of conflict, the literature review outlined conflict management styles, namely the compromising, accommodating, collaborating, dominating and avoidance styles. The selected management styles for this study were compromising, accommodating and collaborating, and detailed definitions of each of the styles were provided in Chapter 3. Finally, both the legislative and regulatory frameworks relating to conflict and its management were discussed and analysed as required from all government departments.

Chapter 3, in answer to the second study objective, focused on the analysis of the case study, namely determining the nature of conflict as well as the challenges related to the current manner in which conflict is managed within Stats SA. Twenty managers were

selected for empirical data collection consisting of a Deputy Director-General, nine Chief Directors and ten Directors. The findings of the study were presented according to the emerging themes. The highlights of the findings in line with the emerging themes were as follows:

- understanding of conflict as a concept: the majority of the respondents generally understood conflict as a concept but explained it from different perspectives;
- sources of conflict: the findings of the study identified several sources of conflict in Stats SA as well as inconsistent organisational values contributing to conflict;
- management of conflict: the respondents indicated that Stats SA is very casual about the management of conflict and that the leadership does not play its part accordingly;
- communication of conflict: the respondents were unanimous in the critical role of communication in the management of conflict between the core and support branches in Stats SA; and
- legislative and regulatory frameworks: the findings of the study indicated that the legislative and regulatory frameworks are not used effectively to manage conflict within the organisation.

Chapter 4 of the study focused on the proposed conflict management strategy for Stats SA. The purpose of the proposed strategy is to address the current gaps which were identified during personal interviews with senior management of Stats SA. Chapter 4 addressed the final objective of the study, which is to develop a conflict management strategy, intended to address conflict between the core and support branches in Stats SA. The analysis of the results clearly shows that the current policies on conflict management are not sufficient to contain conflict in Stats SA, especially at senior management level. A Process Model of managing conflict at Stats SA was proposed, in order to address the identified gaps.

The proposed Process Model was illustrated in line with the results chain approach, namely inputs, processes, outputs, outcomes and impact, which will be summarised below:

- Inputs – identifying sources of conflict in Stats SA:
  - various sources of conflict were identified, particularly at senior management level in both the core and support branches;
  - leadership was seen not to be playing its part accordingly in conflict management and considered one of the main sources of conflict within the organisation; and
  - tools and techniques that will further assist in identifying other sources of conflict were identified.

- Processes – recommending management styles:
  - once the sources of conflict have been identified, the second stage is to recommend the appropriate management styles;
  - the following management styles were recommended in this study: compromising, accommodating and collaborating; and
  - appropriate management styles should be applied for different types of conflict.

- Outputs– development of the proposed strategy:
  - outputs relate to the actual development of the proposed Process Model in managing conflict in Stats SA;
  - the proposed strategy is in line with the legislative and regulatory frameworks; and also
  - the proposed strategy is aligned with the organisational values and *Batho Pele Principles*.

- Outcomes – behavioural interventions to ensure proper implementation of the strategy:
  - behavioural interventions in ensuring that the proposed strategy is implemented accordingly;
  - various communication channels should be used to ensure that the strategy is properly defined and known within the organisation, particularly at senior management level; and
  - training and re-training on legislative and regulatory frameworks.

- Impact – what the proposed Process Model in managing conflict in Stats SA aims to change:
  o one of the main resolutions of the proposed model is to review roles and responsibilities of the core and support branches at senior management level at Stats SA;
  o create platforms where employees can discuss issues of strategy and conflict management; and
  o institutionalise the proposed Process Model in managing conflict in Stats SA.

The recommendations of this study are in line with the identified themes, as suggested by the respondents during the personal interviews. The following section presents specific recommendations in line with the proposed conflict management strategy.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

In presenting recommendations, the study uses the themes identified and through which the empirically collected data was presented. The following section focuses on each of the themes and unpacks specific recommendations related to these themes.

Recommendation 1: Understanding of conflict – The study recommends that senior managers as leaders within the organisation must have a unified understanding of conflict as a concept. The study argues that the Stats SA leadership should be proactive in dealing with conflict and clearly communicate that while conflict is sometimes necessary in the working environment, the senior management of the organisation should not allow it to influence organisational performance. In addition, conflict management platforms should be created to assist senior managers to appreciate and understand conflict better. This would assist senior managers to understand the strategy in the same way and help them in the buy-in of the proposed strategy, as well as to be accountable. The study further suggests upgrading of skills and rotation of employees between the core and support branches in Stats SA should be considered, as it not only empowers employees, but makes them appreciate the roles played by other colleagues. Most importantly it makes them understand areas which they did not understand before and assists in minimising conflict within the organisation. In ensuring a shared understanding of conflict, collective leadership should be promoted which would actively advocate against working is silos.

One of the key findings identified in the study was the problem of working is silos, both within and outside the core and support branches.

Recommendation 2: Sources of conflict – The respondents of the study acknowledged that conflict is part and parcel of the working environment. What was key though was to create a conducive environment where employees can be honest about sources of conflict within the organisation. The findings of the study indicated the problem of soft issues as one of the main sources of conflict within the organisation which cuts across all themes of this study. The sources of conflict have been identified as key inputs for the proposed Process Model in this study. Once sources of conflict have been identified, leadership and management would be in a better position to address the problem of conflict within the organisation. The study recommends that leadership and management of the organisation must create an environment which is safe and fair for all employees, in order to identify the real sources of conflict so as to address them successfully.

The study also recommends institutionalisation of change management, so that conflict may be dealt with without fear and favour from both leadership and management. This study focuses on conflicting roles and responsibilities of senior managers in the core and support branches in Stats SA, and the recommendation is to review roles of different senior managers in both branches. This review also assists in minimising duplication of roles and responsibilities in the related branches. The study suggests diffusing centres of power, particularly between the core and support branches, but most critically assisting in harmonising leadership structures such as Exco and the CDF. The establishment of the Directors Forum was also considered to be very important in this study. The study further suggests review of the structure. The current one is not aligned to functions of the organisation. The recommendation of a flat structure was especially suggested, particularly as the organisation is going digital. Certain functions have to be reviewed and merged where possible.

Recommendation 3: Conflict management – The study advocates for collaboration across the organisation. Both internal and external collaborations are critical in delivering the organisational mandate. Management of conflict requires the highest level of professionalism in the working environment, hence everyone – especially senior management – has to uphold and abide by the ethos of the *Batho Pele Principles.*

Management of conflict is in the second phase of the proposed Process Model in this study, and results recommend various conflict management styles in order to address the problem of conflict between the core and support branches in Stats SA. These recommended management styles are compromising, accommodating and collaborating styles. The study recommends that the core and support branches should not undermine each other's roles, but should rather compromise when necessity arises. When people understand the bigger picture which revolves around the organisational vision, they become less personal in their daily interactions. In addition, the study encourages senior managers to accommodate and collaborate with each other, both within and outside their respective branches. A professional working environment is about hard choices and trade-offs which cannot be realised unless people collaborate and accommodate each other.

Recommendation 4: Communication – One of the main findings in this study is that of poor communication. A lot of information is filtered through e-mails for which there is no evidence as to whether people read them or not. The study therefore recommends using different communication channels to ensure management of conflict effectively within the organisation. The study also suggests the use of various communication tools and techniques, in order to address the sources of conflict identified. Once the proposed conflict management strategy has been developed, there have to be mechanisms in place in order to communicate it effectively to the whole organisation. Very important communication messages have to consider the behavioural interventions which have been suggested by the study, in order to ensure the buy-in and implementation of the proposed conflict management strategy. Communication therefore covers the phases under the proposed conflict management strategy, namely outputs and outcomes. Another suggestion from the study was on clear roles and responsibilities on who, what, how and when to communicate the proposed conflict management strategy.

Upon the adoption of the conflict management strategy, it has to be clear which messages are going to be conveyed by the head of the organisation (SG), Exco, the CDF, Directors, the communication division, provinces and any other structure within the organisation. The study also recommended that internal communication has to be integrated and aligned to shared organisational values. Internal communication is usually done by the communication division and there are times when employees use platforms such as

emails to express their frustrations, resulting in an unpleasant working atmosphere. When clear platforms have been outlined, problems such as these would be minimised. The study further recommends feedback sessions on issues raised. The results of the study highlight that there have been several platforms used for employees to lodge their complaints, but they are never given feedback, which finally results in unnecessary conflict.

Recommendation 5: Legislative and regulatory frameworks – One of the main sources of conflict in this study has been on the policies and legislative and regulatory frameworks. The study therefore recommends an effective approach on communication of policies, e.g. annual workshops on policies and legislative and regulatory frameworks. The study also recommends training of new employees and re-training for senior managers on policies and legislative and regulatory frameworks. Workshops and presentations should not only be used in communicating legislative and regulatory frameworks, but special training, especially for senior managers, has to be organised at least on an annual basis. The study also recommends approval and adoption of the proposed conflict management strategy by Stats SA management and leadership (Exco). Upon approval and adoption of the proposed conflict management strategy, which has to ensure implementation of all phases in this strategy, institutionalisation of the conflict management strategy would be relatively easy. In the same vein, the impact would have a similar effect. Thus the proposed conflict management strategy would have a significant impact on both internal and external stakeholders – especially the former which is currently identified as one of the main gaps in this study.

The study further recommends the Khaedu training by the National School of Government. The National School of Government supports all the initiatives mentioned in this study, hence its establishment. The National School of Government advocates for programmes which encourage putting the needs of stakeholders first, in order to enable government departments to achieve their mandates and improve service delivery. The recommendation from the National School of Government is that all senior managers must enrol for the Khaedu Programme, which advocates for deployment of employees in others areas of work apart from their own.

5.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Taking into consideration the limitations of this study, the following suggestions are made in relation to future studies. It is recommended that future research studies:

- be conducted across similar institutions for comparisons and generalisations;
- target private institutions in order to compare the management of conflict across diverse institutions;
- use the quantitative approach to guard against the disadvantages of the qualitative approach; and
- consider investigating other types of conflict as opposed to intergroup or departmental conflict.

5.5 CONCLUSION

The proposed conflict management strategy for Stats SA is intended to assist the organisation to manage conflict better. Although the focus in this study was on the management of conflict in Stats SA, it is crucial to understand that the existence of conflict is part of human nature and does exist in the workplace. It is most important though, to bear in mind that conflict cannot be viewed from one side only, as it has both positive and negative aspects. During analysis, the respondents maintained that Stats SA does not manage conflict and uses avoidance strategy instead of addressing the current problems. The management of conflict is one of the requirements at senior management level and it is essential that all senior managers be trained and re-trained biannually on the organisational policies and legislative and regulatory frameworks.

An acknowledgement was also made on how casual the organisational leadership was on the management of conflict and how dormant the organisational managerial forums are on issues of conflict. These include the role played by Exco and the CDF. These managerial forums have to be intensified, in order to support divisions and clusters tasked with managing conflict within the organisation. It is critical to note that most of the sources of conflict identified in this study were also highlighted in the literature review. What was outstanding amongst the identified sources of conflict was the problem of not understanding the mission and vision in the same way within the organisation. The other problem was the fact that the respondents were unanimous in acknowledging the

importance of the legislative and regulatory frameworks pertaining to conflict management but not interested in their application within the organisation.

The identified sources of conflict prompted the adoption of the proposed conflict management strategy, in order to address the management of conflicting roles between the core and support branches in Stats SA. The study also recommended implementation of the programmes which will assist in enhancing the organisational values, as they will help in the implementation of the proposed conflict management strategy. The proposed conflict management strategy for Stats SA is intended to assist the organisation to manage conflict better. Institutionalising the proposed Process Model in managing conflict in Stats SA would have a significant impact on delivering the organisational mandate, which is that of producing and disseminating official statistics in the country.

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Annexure A: Stats SA Organogram

Statistician-General

Internal Audit — Strategy

SG Support

Programme Office

Corporate Services
Office of the DDG
- Human Capacity Development (HCD)
- Facilities Management, Logistics and Security (FMLS)
- Corporate Governance
- Financial Administration
- Human Resource Management (HRM)

Economic Statistics
Office of the DDG
- National Accounts
- Short-term Indicators
- Structural Industry Statistics
- Price Statistics
- Government Financial Statistics
- Private Sector Financial Statistics
- Economic Analysis

Population and Social Statistics
Office of the DDG
- Population Statistics
- Social Statistics
- Poverty and Inequality Statistics
- Demography
- Health and Vital Statistics
- Labour Statistics

Survey Operations
Office of the DDG
- Corporate Data Processing
- Household Survey Operations
- Census Operations
- Survey Monitoring and Evaluation

Methodology, Standards and Research
Office of the DDG
- Survey Standards
- Business Register
- Methodology and Evaluation
- Policy Research and Analysis

Statistical Support and Informatics
Office of the DDG
- Geography Frames
- Geography Support
- Data Management and Technology
- Business Modernisation
- Publication Services

Statistical Collection and Outreach
Office of the DDG
- Corporate Communications
- International Statistical Development
- Stakeholder Relations and Marketing
- Provinces
  - Western Cape
  - Eastern Cape
  - Northern Cape
  - Limpopo
  - North West
  - KwaZulu-Natal
  - Gauteng
  - Mpumalanga
  - Free State

South African National Statistics System (SANSS)
Office of the DDG
- Social Statistics Subsystem
- Economic Statistics Subsystem
- Standards and Measurement
- Independent Assessment Unit
- Statistical Reporting
- Information Management

Annexure B: Interview Guide

Developing a conflict management strategy for Stats SA

Conflict management themes:

a).   Understanding of conflict as a concept:

1. What do you understand by conflict as a concept? Please explain and give examples for your answer.

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2. Is conflict a positive or negative thing to happen within an organisation? Please motivate your answer and give examples.

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3. How do you see conflict between the core and support branches at senior management level in Stats SA? Please motivate your answer and give examples.

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4. What types of conflict are dominant between the core and support branches at senior management level in Stats SA? Please give examples.

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b).   Sources of conflict:

5.   What are the sources of conflict in general? Please give examples.

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6. What are the sources of conflict between the core and support branches at senior management level at Stats SA? Please give examples.

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7. What can be used to identify other sources of conflict between the core and support branches for senior management at Stats SA? Please give examples.

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c).   Management of conflict:

8. What do you understand by conflict management? Please elaborate and give examples.

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9. How is conflict managed between the core and support branches at senior management level in Stats SA currently? Please elaborate and give examples.

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10. What management styles would you recommend to address the problem of conflicting roles between the core and support branches at senior management level in Stats SA?

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11. What can be done additionally in current situations to manage conflict between the core and support branches at senior management level in Stats SA?

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d).   Communication in conflict:

12. What is the role of communication between the core and support branches at senior management level in Stats SA? Please elaborate and give examples.

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13. What are critical communication messages which must be used to address conflict between the core and support branches at senior management level in Stats SA? Please elaborate and give examples.

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14. What are suggestions that must be considered to improve communication between the core and support branches at senior management level in Stats SA? Please give examples.

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e). Legislative and regulatory frameworks:

15. Do you know of any Acts, frameworks or official documents which are used in conflict situations in the Public Service? Please indicate them in your answer.

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16. How would you suggest conflict be addressed between the core and support branches at senior management level in Stats SA using the current legislative and regulatory frameworks?

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17. What must be done to ensure effective implementation of legislative and regulatory frameworks in relation to the core and support branches at senior management level in Stats SA? Please explain and give examples.

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Thank you for your participation