

Exploring organisational discrimination in a South African mine

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Abstract

The general purpose of this study was to explore the perception of discrimination under the middle managers in a selected South African mining company, as well as the associated impacts thereof on the individual and organisation. Although discrimination is a global phenomenon with a vast amount of scientific studies conducted on this topic, literature remains rather silent on the prevalence of discrimination among middle managers; especially within the South African mining industry.

Organisational discrimination is defined as actions within an organisation which are biased towards certain individuals or groups. Literature suggests that discrimination is still very prevalent within organisations, both locally and internationally. It is typically influenced by aspects such as culture, and human resources practices and systems. The impacts are widespread with specific impacts on the individual's mental or physical health, as well as productivity. South Africa however implemented a plethora of legislative measures to redress past inequalities and eliminate discrimination in its current form.

This study followed a qualitative approach by means of a survey conducted through an open-ended questionnaire. The results indicated a high personal experience of discrimination within the specific mining company amongst the middle management team members. Their perception of discrimination towards their colleagues was also measured as above average. This exposure to discrimination impacted on their productivity and to a lesser extent on their personal well-being. Their perception of the potential impacts of this discrimination was reportedly higher than their actual experience thereof. The main discriminatory actions associated with this perception was centred on the notion, namely that middle managers were not recognised nor rewarded within this company. General benefits were withheld and expected promotions denied. The study's results also confirm the perception that discrimination towards the middle management team will ultimately impact on the company's overall performance.

The study suggests that this high level, as well as the specific types of discrimination within this mining company, is related to a company specific culture. It further suggests that it is also exacerbated by the current socio-political reforms within the South African mining industry. The study concludes by suggesting that the perception of discrimination within a company is as harmful as the event itself, and should therefore form an integral part of any internal programme aimed at addressing this issue.

Key terms: organisational discrimination; discrimination; inequality; middle management; South African mining; employee well-being; impacts of discrimination.

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Chapter 1 – Research proposal

1.1 Introduction

This mini-dissertation aims at exploring the perception of discrimination under middle managers within a South African mining company. The study defines the concept of organisational discrimination and attempt to establish the perceived level thereof within an anonymous organisation. The study also focuses on the impacts of organisational discrimination both at individual as well as organisational level.

This chapter details the proposal for this study and deals with the overall approach and key considerations which are applied throughout this research. It specifically defines the suggested problem statement and the manner in which this problem is addressed.

1.2 Problem statement

Discrimination is a topic which has been researched extensively across the globe. It originates from people's natural propensity to categorise, and subsequently create explicit boundaries (Berrey, 2014). These categories are by default also applied to other human beings. For this reason, discrimination can be defined as a human characteristic and therefore a worldwide phenomenon. We can obviously expect a higher occurrence of discrimination in countries with higher cultural diversity, where you find explicit differences in race and ethnic orientation. Although numerous formal definitions have been published over the years, the concise Oxford dictionary (1991) defines discrimination as "unfavourable treatment based on prejudice" with specific reference to race, colour and sex.

Organisational discrimination is therefore the above-mentioned unfavourable treatment within the working environment. In many cases, organisational discrimination can actually be endorsed by company specific policies and procedures. Chao and Willaby (2007) state that organisational discrimination has no geographic boundaries and can take on various forms. They also found that certain groups were constantly targeted by discrimination within the workplace. Shih *et al.* (2013), Choa and Willaby (2007), Jackson *et al.* (2011), Williams *et al.* (2003) and Moomal *et al.* (2009), all agree that discrimination within the workplace will negatively affect the targeted individuals. Apart from impacting on the workers well-being, it also affects the individual's work performance and can ultimately lead to a decline in the organisation's performance.

In South Africa the situation is no better. The history of apartheid, specifically the official and legal character it followed, made the country unique (Deane, 2005). Post-apartheid however saw large scale social-political and economic changes transforming South Africa's business

organisations (Jackson, *et al.*, 2011). Unfortunately, even after 20 years of democracy, the South African mining industry is still plagued with accusations of organisational discrimination. These are clearly demonstrated by the high levels of industrial action experienced by most of the South African mining companies over the past few years. Although primarily driven by wage demands, the root cause can be derived from a perceived racial inequality as well as organisational discrimination based on gender, culture and social standing. The researcher, through his own personal experiences, have also seen and experienced discrimination in various forms. As a member of middle management the levels and extent of discrimination were deemed similar to that of the lower level employees. However, the impact thereof, specifically at organisational level, was unknown.

Industrial actions (strikes) are generally initiated and coordinated by organised labour representing the traditional “blue-collar” or lower level employee. These actions are therefore directed towards the senior and executive management of the various mining companies. They also tend to receive the brunt of the accusations of organisational discrimination. This industrial action process excludes middle-management in its totality. Middle management is not directly involved in the discussions with organised labour and therefore plays no part in addressing and resolving the issues surrounding organisational discrimination in their respective companies. As a result of the structures and bargaining agreements within South African mining companies, middle managers have no formal structure in which to voice their own concerns and grievances. The level of discrimination experienced by middle-management, as well the impact thereof on the individuals and the organisation, is therefore not formally addressed.

As middle-management is responsible for the day-to-day operational management of any company and regarded as the senior managers of tomorrow, it is the researcher’s opinion that this group should be proactively measured and managed. Also, from an overall organisational performance point of view, any hostility within this group will definitely have some impact on the organisation’s performance. Given the available literature and personal experience, the researcher has formed the hypothesis that a high level of perceived organisational discrimination exists among middle managers in the identified mining company. As no formal scientific data could be established to verify or rebuff this statement, it forms the foundation of the problem statement and identifies the need for a formal investigation.

Apart from contributing to the pool of research, this study will specifically aid the company in identifying key risks within a critical group of employees. This will enable the company to recognise specific issues and hopefully implement measures to address these. This study can also form the base for future measurement programmes aimed at successfully managing their middle managers.

1.3 Research objectives

This research study consists of both primary (general) objectives as well as secondary (specific) objectives.

1.3.1 Primary (general) objectives

The primary objective of this study is to qualitatively explore and determine the perception of discrimination among middle managers within a specific South African mining company.

1.3.2 Secondary (specific) objectives

The specific objectives of this study are:

- To define the level of perceived discrimination among the middle managers.
- To establish whether any type of discrimination is more prevalent than another.
- To determine whether the perceived discrimination has any impact on the individual's well-being.
- To determine whether the perceived discrimination has any impact on the individual's or even the organisation's performance.

1.4 Research methodology

1.4.1 Research approach

This research study follows a cross-sectional timeframe, as the current status of discrimination within the identified mining company, needs to be established. The South African mining industry has been bombarded with various legislative changes, labour disruptions, and production problems over the past few years. A cross-sectional approach will give a clear indication of what the current situation within the company is. The purpose of this research is exploratory as literature and personal experience suggest that discrimination is still prevalent within South African organisations. The study therefore focuses on establishing the nature and extent of organisational discrimination within the specific mining company. Data collection was done by means of a qualitative survey.

1.4.2 Literature review

The literature review focuses on previous research conducted on or around the topic as to gain detailed insight into the specifics of organisational discrimination. These, including personal knowledge and experience within the mining industry, form the foundation for the proposed study.

Databases such as EBSCO Host, ScienceDirect, Emerald Online and JSTOR were used during the literature review. The reviews were primarily based on published articles in journals, such as:

- South African Journal of Industrial Psychology.
- South African Journal on Human Rights.
- Journal of Psychology in Africa.
- American Psychologist.
- South African Medical Journal.
- Diversity in Practice.
- Gender, Work and Organization.

A general Internet search using Google has also been performed to establish current trends and to access local reports. It was also used to review the current legislative framework in South Africa.

The following key words were used in the literature review: organisational discrimination; discrimination; inequality; middle-management; South African mining; middle-management productivity; employee well-being; impacts of discrimination.

1.4.2.1 Research participants

This research is focussed on the middle management team within an identified South African mining company. The majority of the South African mining companies are currently using the Patterson grading system. Middle management is therefore referred to as employees within the D-band of this system, i.e. D1-D4. At the time of the survey, all participants fell within this band. The researcher applied convenient sampling, meaning that the sample was based on the relevant employees available at the time and their willingness to participate.

1.4.2.2 Measuring instrument and protocols

A specifically designed open-ended research questionnaire was distributed to the middle management employees within the company. This questionnaire was distributed in both electronic and hardcopy formats. Completed questionnaires were returned in either electronic or manual format. On request, the questionnaire was applied by means of a one-on-one interview with the participant. This aided in clarifying some of the concepts and supported the thinking process. Due to this study following a qualitative approach, no complex statistical evaluations were performed.

1.5 Ethical considerations

Participants were informed of the aim of the project by means of a cover page accompanying the questionnaire. Participation was done on a voluntary and anonymous basis. Although approval for this study was obtained from the relevant company representative, it was requested that the company name remain anonymous and that no sensitive company information be included in the report. This study report was also distributed to the company representative.

1.6 Layout of the study

This mini-dissertation has the following structural layout:

- **Chapter 1** introduces the context of this study and defines the problem statement and the suggested approach to address the problem.
- **Chapter 2** provides an overview of current literature as well as the foundation for this research study.
- **Chapter 3** focuses on the research approach and methodology as well as the ethical considerations during this study.
- **Chapter 4** represents the results obtained from the survey.
- **Chapter 5** includes the discussion on the obtained results as well as the final conclusion and recommendations.

1.7 Chapter summary

This chapter has provided the premise for this research study by defining the problem statement and perceived value thereof. It further detailed the approach to this study by identifying the principle objectives, methodology that was followed, as well as the ethical considerations. It concluded by defining the structural layout of this report.

The researcher will give a literature overview in Chapter 2 on specific aspects of organisational discrimination. These will include the concept of organisational discrimination and characteristics thereof. The impacts on employee well-being and performance will also be discussed.

Chapter 2 – Literature review

2.1 Introduction

People have a natural tendency to make categorical distinctions which are used by both individuals and organisations to judge the value of one category relative to another; resulting in workplace inequality (Berrey, 2014:350). Categorical distinctions are symbolic in nature and result in distinct boundaries being created. These boundaries lead to people being sorted into specific identity groups often drawn around social status and job type. Shih *et al.* (2013:147) add that the members within these various groups have very similar experiences specific to that group.

Given the differences in the perception of fairness within an organisation, businesses and corporate entities have stormy waters to negate to ensure successful management of inequality (Oosthuizen & Naidoo, 2010:2). As discriminatory behaviour towards individuals leads to repressive practices within the organisation, it is imperative that companies address this type of behaviour and culture (Metzler, 2003:18). This chapter not only aims at defining the concept of organisational discrimination but also to highlight the impact of discriminatory practices on the individual, as well as on the organisation itself.

2.2 An overview of organisational discrimination

2.2.1 Defining organisational discrimination

Although various variations on the definition of organisational discrimination have been published over the years, the basic factors underpinning this concept have stayed fairly constant throughout. In her study on gender discrimination, Kolb (2013:246) states that discrimination can in part be explained by the different stereotypes and how the actions associated with these stereotypes affect action. Hebson and Cox (2011:192) add that differences relating to gender or any other disparity might result in employees holding contrary values. Therefore, insisting that homogeneous values are shared by all, is inconsistent with any equality agenda.

Sociologists typically define discrimination as “the treatment of a functionally irrelevant status (such as race or sex) as relevant for the distribution of some reward or penalty”, while the United States (US) legal scholars concur that “discrimination involves the disparate treatment of similarly situated individuals because of their sex, race, colour, national origin, religion or some other protected characteristic” (Hirsh & Kornrich, 2008:1397). They further add that the workers’ perception of unfairness forms the base of this legal definition and is driven by their willingness

to mobilise their legal rights. Moomal *et al.* (2009:383) argue that “discrimination includes actions (subtle or overt, direct or indirect) that limit the social, political or economic opportunities of particular groups and may have short or long-term consequences”. Their definition implies that discrimination is associated with specific negative or unconstructive actions, which wrongly affect the group or individual. Choa and Willaby (2007:679) refer to employment discrimination as employers treating employees differently because of their class status. The concise Oxford dictionary (1991:334) defines discrimination as “unfavourable treatment based on prejudice”, especially with regard to race, colour or sex. Shih *et al.* (2013:145) terms discrimination as “prejudicial treatment that unfairly places current or prospective employees at a disadvantage based on their group membership”. United States companies are prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, colour, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability and sexual orientation (Gelfand *et al.*, 2007:7). In 1958 the International Labour Organisation (ILO) defined discrimination as “any distinction, exclusion or preference made on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin, which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity or treatment in employment or occupation” (Du Toit, 2014:5). What is important to note on the definition of the ILO, is that any distinction, exclusion or preference in respect of a particular job based on the inherent requirements of that job, is not regarded as discrimination.

It can thus be construed from these literature findings that organisational discrimination refers to discrimination within the workplace, and is generally defined as treating an individual or group unequally with respect to recruiting or hiring, or any other terms and conditions of employment due to the person's or group's race, colour, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation or political opinion. These discriminatory actions are typically endorsed through company specific policies, practices, and strategies that may be biased towards certain individuals or groups.

2.2.2 Occurrence and characteristics of organisational discrimination

Although the effort to increase equal access and opportunity for socially devalued groups are increasing, organisational discrimination still occurs (Shih, *et al.*, 2013:145). As a result, most nations have updated their inequality laws in recent years. The act of workplace discrimination has no geographic, political or cultural boundaries according to Chao and Willaby (2007:679). As defined previously, discrimination within the working environment can take on many forms. Arguably, discrimination centred on race or gender is deemed the most prominent. The myriad of academic research articles which discusses either of these two aspects support this statement. The researcher has also found that research typically focuses on only one of the

numerous discriminatory elements. Shih *et al.* (2013:146) references various studies which reported on the following discriminatory aspects:

- Gender-based harassments;
- discriminatory practices aimed at the lower income groups;
- union related discrimination;
- discrimination felt by lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgender (LGBT) because of their sexual orientation;
- the prevalence of ageism in organisations;
- stigmas associated with disabilities; and
- even unfair behaviour towards the obese.

Chao and Willaby (2007:679) also list the following bases of discrimination, after reviewing literature on international employment discrimination:

- Gender;
- race/ethnicity;
- national origin;
- social or descent origin;
- age;
- disability;
- sexual orientation; and
- religion.

Through this research, it was found that certain groups were constantly targeted as victims of discrimination. Women, people with disabilities, and homosexuals were common examples.

Balser (2002:137), through her research, refers to the repeated findings that individual characteristics and organisational, occupational, and industry level factors affect the disparate workplace outcomes of people belonging to different demographic groups. She adds that discrimination is driven by interpretation, which forms part of the perceptual processes. This is influenced by both the characteristics of the perceiver and the environment being perceived. Therefore, to fully understand the perception of discrimination, we need to account for both the individual and organisational characteristics (Balser, 2002:137; Hirsch & Kornrich, 2008:1400). The variation of experience at individual level may in part be due to the fact that the perception of discrimination and the raising of disputes depend on the social context in which the individual workers are embedded (Hirsch & Kornrich, 2008:1400). The individual's characteristics are thus responsible for the extent to which individuals experience inequality and discrimination within their working environments (Balser, 2002:140). The organisation on the other hand, tries to negate the individual's interpretation of discrimination, by adopting practices and procedures

that signals their concerns for the fair treatment of their employees. Perceptions of discrimination will therefore be consistent with the factors that contribute to the individual's workplace outcomes and vulnerability to inequality. Balser (2002:143) explains that according to the neo-institutional theory, organisations elaborate their structures to meet the expectations of the institutional environment. Companies therefore create structures that symbolises procedural fairness. The actual effect of these structures is of lesser importance, as it is their symbolic value which actually matters. By adopting these structures, the organisation guides the employees in their interpretations, and subsequently decreases the likelihood of perceived discrimination within the organisation.

2.2.3 Aspects influencing or impacting discrimination within the workplace

To fully understand and appreciate the dynamics of organisational discrimination, we need to view some of the key drivers that influences or impact on discrimination within the workplace. Organisational culture and the management of diversity through organisational structures and systems are two elements which continuously surfaces throughout literature.

2.2.3.1 Culture

Green (2005:630) suggests that work culture “is a human process that is both separate from and intimately related to broader organisational structures and requirements” and is most useful for the antidiscrimination discourse. Culture is further defined as a matter of micro-social action and the relational or behavioural expectations that signal membership with a specific group. It shapes beliefs, expectations and behaviour, and creates a dynamic process of social interaction. Work culture establishes expectations and suggests norms and boundaries on many work related topics. According to Gelfand *et al.* (2007:11), the concept of organisational culture can be referred to as the “personality” of an organisation which is typically defined by shared values, common understandings and patterns of beliefs and expectations within the workplace. Green (2005:633) states that there is rarely one work culture operating within an organisation, but rather multiple cultures differing across professional and hierarchical divides. Culture therefore influences the extent to which discrimination will occur within organisations, as it is believed that discrimination against certain groups are codified in cultural norms (Gelfand, *et al.*, 2007:7).

Work culture is therefore useful in understanding anti-discriminatory practices, both conceptually and practically. Apart from discriminatory work culture which stems in part from cognitive and motivational biases of employees, there is also a strong structural dimension associated with it (Green, 2005:648). It is suggested that organisations influence and shape work culture through institutional and structural choices. In other words, employers “create the context in which work

cultures develop” (Green, 2005:648). Through their research, Hirsch and Kornrich (2008:1401) suggest that the organisation of work within a company is important in determining the level of inequality between ascriptive groups. Characteristics of the working environment which provides context for the worker’s experiences, can affect how employees perceive discriminatory behaviour. They add that their analysis suggests that the immediate work environment constructs how workers understand discriminatory behaviour and whether these workers determine it to be worth addressing (Hirsch & Kornrich, 2008:1401). Culture also plays an important part in shaping expectations and measuring merit. With the employer’s focus on culture, the employee’s willingness and ability to engage in the behavioural expectations associated with work culture, becomes crucial to job success (Green, 2005:684). Leaders within organisations hold stereotypes with regard to which employees are the best, and this lead to these types of discriminatory cultural beliefs manifesting in behavioural norms and human resource related practices (Gelfand, *et al.*, 2007:11). Gelfand *et al.* (2007:13) conclude that organisations must neither have a strong nor a weak organisational culture in order to be successful at eradicating organisational discrimination.

Strongly linked with an organisation’s culture, is the level to which politics influence and shape discriminatory practices within the organisation. A number of authors acknowledge the importance of organisational politics (OP), as it has been associated with a number of different management issues, such as organisational culture, trust, job performance, decision-making, leadership, conflict management, and the behaviour of individuals, groups and organisations (Beaty, *et al.*, 2007:69). According to Mintzberg (cited by Beaty, *et al.*, 2007:69) OP is defined as “individual or group behaviour that is informal, ostensibly parochial, typically divisive, illegitimate and sanctioned, neither by formal authority, accepted ideology, nor certified expertise”. It is therefore implied that OP has a negative influence on behaviour in organisations, as it leads to the pitting of individuals or groups against each other or against the organisation. This results in poor job performance and negative attitudes and can lead to job distress and aggressive behaviour. Through their research into OP in South Africa, Beaty *et al.* (2007:78) found that both men and woman with higher levels of education and sophistication are more understanding and tolerant in their perception of OP. They also found that gender differences might be subservient to the need to focus on a super ordinate goal, which can unite rather than divide them. This finding has a significant implication in defining a strategy that will unite diverse employees. It is however important to note that Louw and Jackson (2008:35) have found specifically that managers in South Africa are generally more positive in their perceptions of organisational culture compared to that of the lower level employees.

2.2.3.2 Structures and systems

Gelfand *et al.* (2007:8) state that the “glass ceiling” within organisations are perhaps the most widely publicised form of discrimination for specific groups, such as women and racial minorities, as there is substantial evidence that suggests that these groups are underrepresented in management structures. According to them, this is important not only because it is a symptom of the level of organisational discrimination, but the fact that it is also an antecedent of further discrimination. Segregation perpetuates itself as individuals hire and promote those who are like themselves, thereby resulting in fewer opportunities for those who are different to those in power (Gelfand, *et al.*, 2007:8). There are also various aspects of organisational structures which relate to discrimination within companies. Bureaucratic organisations characterised by formal job ladders, tend to perpetuate gender discrimination. Larger companies with stable and unchanging employment conditions might have fewer opportunities to reduce discrimination and reshape their demographic compositions than smaller companies that might hire and promote with greater frequency (Beaty, *et al.*, 2007:10).

Human resource’s practices and systems also play a critical role in defining and shaping the extent of discrimination within an organisation (Gelfand, *et al.*, 2007:20). This is due to it influencing the access that employees have to opportunities and rewards within an organisation, as well as their treatment as citizens within that organisation. It is also stated that disproportionate opportunities or biased treatment in one area of an organisation can have a ripple effect on other functioning areas within that same organisation. Gelfand *et al.* (2007:21) reports that the extent of discrimination during the recruitment and selection process depends on the channels being used to recruit applicants. The US Department of labour has found lower levels of discrimination where organisations have actively recruited females and minority-orientated colleagues. In comparison, organisations which rely on informal networks to fill open positions may increase the probability of discriminating against groups who typically do not have equal access to jobs. They state that one of the best ways to combat discrimination in the recruitment and selection process is to use selection measures that tap as many aspects of job performance as possible. It is also advocated that that the use of non-cognitive measures, such as personality and integrity tests, should be increased. Performance management or appraisal systems are also cited as having the potential to aggravate discrimination within an organisation (Gelfand, *et al.*, 2007:20). They further reiterate that biases sometimes still exists in the evaluation process and the rewards system does not necessarily reinforce the goal of managing diversity and eliminating discrimination within the workplace. The feedback process must also be formalised and consistently enacted to avoid critical feedback from managers who holds stereotypical beliefs. The differential expectations of the employee’s ability on the part of the supervisors, can have pervasive effects on employee performance and is thus seen as a

potentially important source of discrimination within organisations. Gelfand *et al.* (2007:21) argue that programs, and systems for that matter, are most effective in reducing organisational discrimination when they incorporate all kinds of diversities and lifestyles. It is however important to note that diversity should not be seen as the mere repackaging of equal employment opportunities and the application of affirmative action, according to Booyesen (2007:51). Emphasis should rather be placed on accelerated training and the development of disadvantaged groups which will enable effective performance and support workforce diversity.

2.3 Organisational discrimination in South Africa

Post-apartheid efforts have been focussed on large scale socio-political and economic changes, by transforming South Africa's business organisations and public services, from discriminatory structures to ones which reflect the demographic composition and values of the South African society in its entirety (Jackson, *et al.*, 2011:385). Unfortunately the measures taken to achieve this are viewed by many of the previously advantaged groups as reverse discrimination. Jackson *et al.* (2011:385) are of the opinion that achieving this goal of demographic representation, is still far away, and that it seems very optimistic given the country's history that huge strides have been made in the eradication of separatism, racism and discrimination. They also suggest that there still remains a lack of empirical evidence on the prevalence of negative conditions on intercultural relations in the South African workplace.

2.3.1 Legislative framework to promote equality and diversity

Prior to 1994, when South Africa was ruled by the white minority, a large section of the population was excluded from participating in various social and economic activities (Mining Media Inc., 2007:52). While discrimination occurs around the globe, it was the systematic official and legal character of apartheid which made the country unique (Deane, 2005:2). Since then the newly formed South African Government has attempted to counter a legacy of grossly unequal allocation of resources, wealth and power (Kok, 2008:445). The first included a string of legislative changes to undo the effects of years of race-based oppression and marginalisation. Although statutory based racial discrimination has systematically been abolished in South Africa since the 1980s, the significant law reforms only started in post 1994 (Booyesen, 2007:47). The list below depicts some of the more instrumental pieces of legislation which came into effect in South Africa. The majority of these have subsequently been amended:

- Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995;
- Constitution of South Africa of 1996;
- Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997;
- Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998;
- Skills Development Act 97 of 1998;

- Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000;
- Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment Act 53 of 2003.

No area of the South African law is more important than the cluster of laws addressing inequality and the prohibition of unfair discrimination based on aspects such as sex, religion, disability, and political opinion (Du Toit, 2014:1). Pityana (2002:4) states that “discrimination and inequality are probably two of the greatest social ills South African society has ever suffered”. The eradication of unfair discrimination in the workplace was essential for developing the new employment dispensation envisaged by the Constitution, Labour Relations Act, and the Employment Equity Act (Du Toit, 2014:1).

The Constitution of South Africa (1996)

Section 9 of the Constitution of South Africa guarantees equality before the law and freedom from discrimination to the people of South Africa. It defines equality as follows:

- (1) Everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law.
- (2) Equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms. To promote the achievement of equality, legislative and other measures designed to protect or advance persons or categories of persons disadvantaged by unfair discrimination, may be taken.
- (3) The State may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth.
- (4) No person may unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against any on one or more grounds in terms of subsection (3). National legislation must be enacted to prevent or prohibit unfair discrimination.
- (5) Discrimination on one or more of the grounds listed in subsection (3), is unfair unless it is established that the discrimination is fair.

(South Africa, 1996)

Labour Relations Act (1995)

During the pre-apartheid years an employee could be dismissed in terms of his/her contractual agreement and therefore permitted any reason for dismissal. Since the enactment of the Labour Relations Act in 1995, an employee may be dismissed only for misconduct, operational reasons and incapacity. This Act is a pivotal piece of legislation as it recognises the need for fast and easy access to justice in labour disputes; which was not accessible to all labourers at the time as the Industrial Court had the same status as the High Court (Wikipedia, 2014a).

Basic Conditions of Employment Act (1997)

The Basic Conditions of the Employment Act was designed to give effect to the right to fair labour practices. This Act therefore regulates labour practices and defines the rights and duties of both the employer as well as the employee. The main aim of this Act is to promote social justice by establishing basic standards for employment. This involves issues such as working hours, leave, payment, dismissal and more (Department of Public Service Administration, 2014).

Employment Equity Act (1998)

The main reason for the Employment Equity Act is to fulfil a constitutional mandate to veto discrimination in the workplace and promote affirmative action (Oosthuizen & Naidoo, 2010:2). The Act specifically focuses on implementing the transformation agenda in South Africa, by transforming all organisations and making them representative of the country's citizens. Most of the law on unfair discrimination was also removed from the Labour Relations Act and transferred to the Employment Equity Act. The rationale for introducing the Act was to enforce transformation as it was believed that organisations would not empower sufficient numbers of black employees out of their own free will. Unfortunately Oosthuizen and Naidoo (2010:1) state that there is evidence that transformation of the workforce is often reduced to a question of legal compliance. This is as a result of the scepticism and cynicism of business leaders in that they believe that the attitudes and experiences of employees affected by the implementation of these transformation laws are often not taken into consideration. It is therefore argued that employment equity is one of the most pressing challenges facing managers in the post-apartheid South Africa. Many organisations underestimate the process of instituting employment equity on different organisational procedures, practices and roles, as well as the company's climate and culture. Managers therefore require the necessary tools to effectively and professionally manage this change process. They must also consider whether the business has the capacity to design and lead the process of creating fair, equitable, and tangible actions that demonstrate their commitment to employment equity (Oosthuizen & Naidoo, 2010:2).

Skills Development Act (1998)

When the Skills Development Act was promulgated in the 1998, South Africa was experiencing high levels of unemployment and low levels of investment into the labour market. Inequality of opportunities as a result of apartheid was still heavily impacting the country, with disparities in income distribution highly pronounced (Wikipedia, 2014b). The aim of this Act is therefore mainly twofold: the need to improve skills and increase productivity to allow successful participation in the global economy, and also to reverse apartheid imbalances and create a more inclusive and cohesive society. According to Booysen (2007:47), the Skills Development Act as well as the Skills Development Levies Act, have started shifting the focus away from

mere affirmative action (AA) appointments to the recruitment, succession planning, and development and training of persons within the designated groupings, i.e. Africans, Coloureds, Indians, as well as women, and people with disabilities.

Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (2000)

The Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act was drafted: (1) in fulfilment of the constitutional mandate of the Constitution of South Africa; and (2) in fulfilment of South Africa's international obligation as signatory to various Conventions. The Act therefore seeks to underscore the primacy of equality and South Africa's historic struggle against discrimination as a foundation of South African libratory ethics (Pityana, 2002:2). "Equality" is regarded as similar to the United States' "liberty", as it forms the cornerstones of these countries' constitutional systems.

Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment Act (2003)

The Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment Act, or the BBBEE (pronounce "triple BEE") as it is commonly referred to, is a form of economic empowerment initiated by the South African Government. This was in response to fierce criticism against the "narrow based empowerment" which was instituted in the country during 2003/2004 and led to the enrichment of a few previously disadvantaged individuals (Wikipedia, 2014c). The goal of this Act is thus to distribute wealth across a broad spectrum of previously disadvantaged South African citizens. The Act is divided into 9 subsections with each of these performing as an independent Code of Good Practice for industry (South Africa, 2003).

The apartheid laws were clearly impacting on the most fundamental rights and freedoms of the majority of South Africans and thus necessitated immediate and effective legislative reform. Deane (2005:8) reminds us that apartheid evolved through a steady accumulation of laws and amendments which were aimed at creating a deeply entrenched system of discrimination in South Africa.

2.4 Impacts of organisational discrimination

Persons targeted by discrimination are aware of the social costs of making it known and are thus reluctant to disclose or fight any form of discrimination (Shih, *et al.*, 2013:146). They add that employees who are targeted by discrimination at work often have a difficult time escaping the context in which this discrimination occurs, as they perceive the cost to be too high. They might fear losing their jobs or experience some form of retaliation as persons who claim discrimination are often viewed as troublemakers. Shih *et al.* (2013:147) report that discrimination in the workplace can lead to greater absenteeism, withdrawal, and a large staff turnover. By adopting a culture where discrimination is not addressed, the organisation can

ultimately alienate productive workers and end up hurting the “bottom line”. Bailyn and Fletcher (2003:29) argue that the cost of not making the change is equal to the recruitment and retention costs. Chao and Willaby (2007:686) states that positive outcomes such as job satisfaction and performance may be realised when employees work in an environment that embraces diversity. Although addressing discrimination by the employer is imperative, it does hold certain consequences for the organisation. Firstly, the company becomes vulnerable to some form of legal action. Secondly, not addressing discrimination has certain consequences on employee productivity (Shih, *et al.*, 2013:147).

It is suggested that because commitment maintains behavioural direction when there is little expectation of formal organisational reward for performance, it is likely that the organisational citizen’s behaviour will be determined by the commitment (Bar-Haim, 2007:204). Commitment is defined by three dimensions:

- A strong belief in the organisation’s goals and accepting its values;
- Willingness to display considerable effort on behalf of the organisation and;
- A strong desire by the employee to maintain their membership within the organisation.

(Bar-Haim, 2007:205).

It is therefore argued that organisational commitment is not a state of mind, but rather an unequivocal behaviour of being obligated by performing or not performing certain activities that signify commitment. This is particularly true during unpleasant conditions when the organisation is unable to reward it (Bar-Haim, 2007:206). We can therefore argue that these unpleasant conditions of not rewarding employees, will also apply when not supported or even discriminated against. Organisational commitment, though partial and in a non-linear manner, is dependent on the perception of the organisational power as well as the employment alternatives (Bar-Haim, 2007:213).

2.4.1 Employee wellness

Jackson *et al.* (2011:387) reported that a vast majority of the studies they examined have found that discrimination is associated with an increased risk of mental and physical health problems and that negative mental health outcomes have been preceded by self-reported experiences of racism. They state that the work environment characterised by more mainstream segregation, discrimination, and subtle racism leads to ethnic separation within the workforce as well as higher levels of ill-health symptoms. Their findings therefore agree with previous findings which indicate a link between racism/discrimination and poor psychological outcomes. They recommend that organisations with a multicultural workforce deal with overt and subtle racism, as a strong separation orientation among employees as it can contribute to the development of ill-health. Williams *et al.* (2003:103) highlights the nature and scope of emotions experienced

during times of change, as any of the mainstream actions listed by Jackson *et al.* (2011:387) which can result in the experience of a change process by the employee. They list the following as typical emotional experiences: loss of self-esteem, feelings of helplessness, fear, and anger. They also suggest that psychological counselling and appropriate support would probably be required.

Moomal *et al.* (2009:383) similarly reports that discrimination can have a profound psychological effect on the oppressed victims and that there is evidence of a strong association between discrimination and the objective indicators of inequality, and that of psychiatric disorders. They also state that national data confirms that these psychological distresses are unrelated to self-rated ill health. More importantly is the fact that their research suggests that the generic perceptions of discrimination are adversely affecting health. The perceived discrimination is also differentially distributed in their population groups and inversely associated with mental health. Acute racial discrimination is associated with an elevated risk of lifelong substance disorders, whereas chronic racial discrimination has no significant association. Interestingly, their research indicates that non-racial discrimination is more strongly linked to mental health risks than racial discrimination. Although no formal reason could be given for this finding, it has been suggested that the years of discrimination towards black people have in a way desensitised them and they basically have become accustomed to it and developed better coping mechanisms (Moomal, *et al.*, 2009:387). This research finding was duplicated in the United States where it was noted that exposure to discrimination sometimes affect the health of Whites more adversely than that of Blacks. It has even been established that stressful events have more negative effects on the mental health aspects of the socio-economically advantaged individuals, than on their more disadvantaged counterparts (Moomal, *et al.*, 2009:388).

2.4.2 Performance impacts (individual and organisational)

Mafini and Pooe (2013:2) report that researchers have defined a range of factors which influences employee satisfaction. These include recognition, communication, co-workers, fringe benefits, working conditions, the nature of the work itself, the nature of the organisation, organisational systems, policies and procedures, compensation, personal development, promotion, appreciation, security, and supervision. They report a positive correlation between job attitudes of individuals and their performance. It is therefore argued that individual employee satisfaction is linked to factors such as motivation, job involvement, organisational citizenship and specifically job performance. Therefore, when employee satisfaction is optimised and expedited, it acts as an incentive to enhance performance. However, when employees are dissatisfied, organisational performance will diminish (Mafini & Pooe, 2013:7). There has also

been found a positive correlation between employee satisfaction and productivity, profit, turnover, customer satisfaction, as well as the organisation’s market performance.

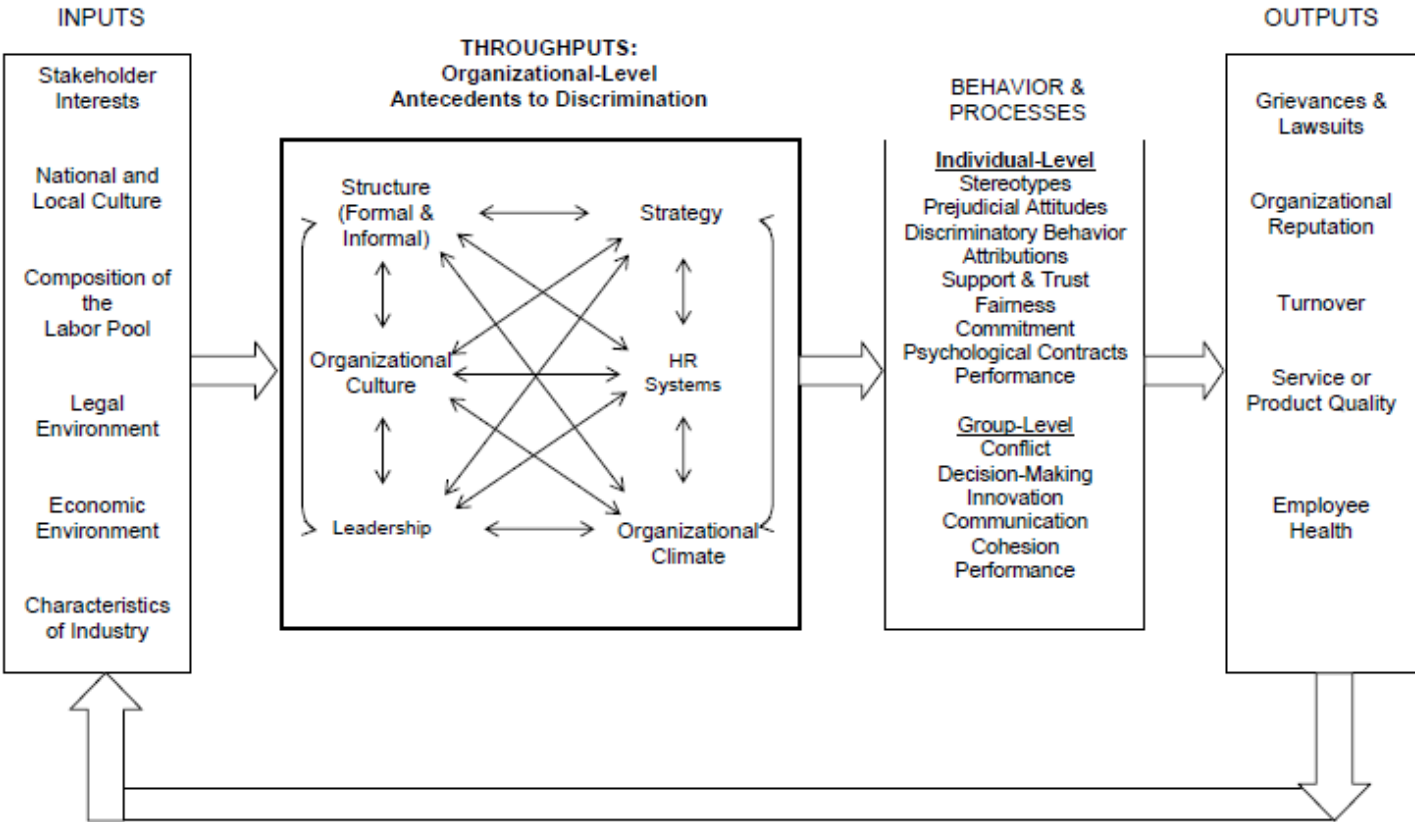


Figure 2-1: A model of discrimination at the level of the organisation

Gelfand *et al.* (2007:24) argue that the aggregate of individual discrimination within the organisation creates serious and expensive consequences for the company. They explain by means of Figure 2-1 (Gelfand, *et al.*, 2007) that the negative outcomes of discrimination feed back into the environment, and subsequently impact on the organisational-level throughputs in a cyclical process. They deem cost to be the most tangible consequence of discrimination, both in terms of personnel time and resources due to lawsuits, investigations and grievances. If the cost of recruiting, selecting, and training is included, discrimination can become extremely costly to the company. Apart from the financial impacts, discrimination can also seriously impact the organisation’s effectiveness and reputation (Gelfand, *et al.*, 2007:24). The above-mentioned impacts should be seen as extremely important, as South African companies are competing with international organisations for talented employees and can therefore not afford to alienate any of their staff members through discriminatory or other negative actions (Muteswa & Ortlepp, 2011:13).

2.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided an overview of available literature on specific aspects of organisational discrimination. The concept of organisational discrimination was defined and the occurrence and characteristics discussed. It highlighted aspects influencing discrimination within the workplace and specifically examined the impact on employee well-being and performance as well as company performance. It briefly discussed the South African situation and elaborated on the legislative reforms over the past 20 years.

The following chapter will detail the approach and methodology followed during the research study.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 1 gave a brief overview of the purpose of this study and highlighted the overall approach and key considerations which were applied throughout this research. This chapter will elaborate on the research approach and research method with specific reference to the participants, measuring instruments, procedure followed and data analysis. It will conclude by discussing the ethical considerations during this study.

3.2 Research design

The structure adopted during this research study was that of a typical non-experimental research design. *Welman et al.* (2012:94) state that there are three non-experimental research designs which are all aimed at measuring a specific construct at single point of time. These are specified as correlation, criterion-groups, and cross-sectional. This study followed a cross-sectional design as only a few variables were measured at a specific point in time. This was essential in establishing the current perceived levels of discrimination within the organisation.

3.2.1 Research Approach

Welman et al. (2012:2) describe research as the process of obtaining scientific knowledge and insight by utilising various objective approaches by means of specific methods and procedures. Research methodology has a wide scope, as it considers and explains the logic behind the research methods and techniques applied. *Welman et al.* (2012:6) also highlight the **positivist** (quantitative) and **anti-positivist** (qualitative) approaches as the two main approaches to conducting research. They describe them as follows:

Positivist approach

The positivist approach is based on the philosophical approach known as logical positivism. It underlies the natural-scientific method in human behavioural research and states that research must be limited to what we can observe and measure objectively. By specifically defining objectively, it is implied that we can only measure things that exist independently from the feelings and opinions of individuals. Objectivity means that people other than the researcher should agree on what is observed. This approach attempts to formulate laws that apply to populations and explain the behaviour which was observed or measured objectively. This approach to research is generally known and referred to as the **quantitative** approach.

Anti-Positivist approach

The positivist approach is opposed by the anti-positivist approach. It is based on the intention to uphold the natural-scientific method as the norm when it comes to human behavioural research. The anti-positivists approach deems it inappropriate to follow strict natural-scientific methods during the collection and interpretation of data. They state that although the positivist approach plays an important role in certain research, it is not applicable to the phenomena being studied in the human behavioural sciences. It is argued that as the object of behavioural research is the human experience, this cannot be separated from the person whom is experiencing it. One can therefore not distance oneself from the phenomena being studied when researching the business and administrative sciences. This approach is also commonly known as the **qualitative** approach.

The quantitative and qualitative research approaches are compared in Table 3-1 below:

Table 3-1: Comparing quantitative and qualitative research approaches

	Quantitative	Qualitative
General framework	Seek to confirm hypotheses about phenomena Instruments use more rigid style of eliciting and categorising responses to questions Use highly structured methods such as questionnaires, surveys, and structured observations	Seek to explore phenomena Instruments use a more flexible, iterative style of eliciting and categorising responses to questions Use semi-structured methods such as in-depth interviews, focus groups, and participant observations
Analytical objectives	To quantify variation To predict causal relationships To describe characteristics of a population	To describe variation To describe and explain relationships To describe individual experiences To describe group norms
Questions format	Closed-ended	Open-ended
Data format	Numerical (obtained by assigning numerical values to responses)	Textual (obtained from audiotapes, videotapes, and field notes)

Flexibility in study design	<p>Study design is stable from beginning to end</p> <p>Participant responses do not influence or determine how and which questions researchers ask next</p> <p>Study design is subject to statistical assumptions and conditions</p>	<p>Some aspects of the study are flexible (for example, the addition, exclusion, or wording of particular interview questions)</p> <p>Participant responses affect how and which questions researchers ask next</p> <p>Study design is iterative, that is, data collection and research questions are adjusted according to what is learned</p>
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(Mack *et al.*, 2005)

The table above by Mack *et al.* (2005:3) is a comparison of the two suggested research approaches. They define the key difference between the two approaches as being flexibility. Although the inflexibility of the quantitative approach allows for a meaningful comparison of responses across participants and study sites, it requires a thorough understanding of the important questions and the range of possible answers.

Given the fact that the purpose of this research study is mostly exploratory in nature, it conforms better to a qualitative approach. The comparison given in the table above also clearly supports the decision for following a qualitative approach; especially given the objective of the study. As Mack *et al.* (2005:3) state, one of the advantages of following a qualitative approach in exploratory research, is the use of open-ended questions and providing the participants with the opportunity to respond in their own words. Thus, given the requirements and advantages, this research study followed a qualitative approach.

3.2.2 Research method

3.2.2.1 Research participants

As this research was focussed on the perception of discrimination under middle managers, the study's population comprised of all middle managers within the selected South African mining company. Middle managers were defined as all employees who had a "D-level" job grading at the time of the study. This D-level grading is defined by the Patterson Grading System which is predominately used by the South African mining industry. A total of 29 employees participated in the study (n=29).

3.2.2.2 Research procedure

The researcher applied convenient employee sampling during this research study. Oosthuizen and Naidoo (2010:3) define this as a technique where only employees available at the time of the study, are sampled. This was specifically relevant during this study as the South African mining industry was amid some of the worst industrial strike actions by organised labour. This resulted in many management employees not being at work due to the suspension of some of the mining operations. The study's research objective and characteristics made the purposive sampling method the most appropriate. Mack *et al.* (2005:5) define purposive sampling as one of the most commonly used qualitative sampling techniques where sample size is determined on the basis of theoretical saturation.

The official language of choice among middle managers in the selected organisation is English and therefore this was used throughout this study. An open-ended questionnaire was circulated to the available and qualifying employees by means of an e-mail. The questionnaire was accompanied by a cover letter detailing the purpose of the study. A copy of the cover letter and questionnaire is attached as Appendix A. It gave a broad overview of organisational discrimination and detailed the reasons for this specific study. The cover letter also gave some technical inputs into the concept of organisational discrimination. This was deemed important as to ensure that all participants were equally informed on the specifics and definitions associated with the topic.

Participants were given various options by which this questionnaire could be completed. They were given the choice of completing it electronically and e-mailing it back in that format, or to print and complete it by hand, and then to return it either manually or electronically (scanned). Only six electronically completed questionnaires were received. Participants were also given the option to remain completely anonymous and return the completed questionnaires via internal post. All participants were afforded the opportunity to have the questionnaire administered to them by the researcher by means of an interview. Only six employees opted for this approach. These interviews were on average around 15-20 minutes long. It was found that in all four cases the reason for requesting the interview was a lack of understanding of the technical complexities of organisational discrimination. The researcher could thus highlight the pertinent issues and thus ensure that the employee participate in an effective manner.

3.2.2.3 Measuring Instrument

As stated above, the research study was conducted by means of an open-ended questionnaire. As the purpose of this study was focussed on exploring the perception of discrimination and identifying the important aspects governing discrimination within this company, an open-ended

questionnaire was deemed the most appropriate measuring instrument. It was designed in a manner which not only measured the occurrence of perceived discrimination under the middle managers, but also the type and impact thereof. The real value of this open-ended format was that it allowed for some detailed explanations on personal experiences and in many cases resulted in the participant sharing quite explicit and personal information.

The questionnaire was structured in two sections; the first being the demographic information of the participant followed by the questions for discussion. The content of the questionnaire can be summarised as follows:

Demographic Information

- Gender;
- Age;
- Race;
- Qualifications;
- Years of service with the particular mining company.

Questions for Discussion

- As a middle manager in your current organisation, were you ever personally subjected to some form of organisational discrimination? (Yes or No). If no, please elaborate briefly.
- Apart from your personal experience, what do you perceive the level of organisational discrimination towards middle management to be in your organisation? (High, Medium or Low). Briefly elaborate on your answer.
- Has your personal experience of organisational discrimination ever affected your work performance? (Yes or No).
- Do you think that middle managers in your organisation are currently less productive or ineffective due to continued organisational discrimination towards them? (Yes or No). Please clarify your answer.
- Has your personal experience of organisational discrimination ever affected your personal well-being (physical or mental health)? (Yes or No). Please provide examples to explain your answer by listing any symptoms.
- Do you think that the current level of organisational discrimination among middle managers is affecting your organisation's performance? Please elaborate.

3.2.2.4 Data Analysis

As this study followed the purposive sampling method where sample size is determined by theoretical saturation, a preliminary data analysis was done throughout the data collection process. Mack *et al.* (2005:5) state that this sampling method is based on the point in data

collection when new data no longer reveal additional insight into the research questions. To accurately determine this point, data review and analysis are done in conjunction with the data collection. The researcher therefore adopted a method where returned questionnaires were chronologically numbered. The numbers P1/P2/P3...P29 were allocated to the questionnaires as they were returned. They were then entered into a database in this order. The database was used to identify and highlight the pertinent issues raised by each participant. This was used as the base on which to determine theoretical saturation.

Apart from the demographic information which was analysed using basic descriptive statistics, the discussion questions were treated in a typical qualitative manner. The individual responses of each participant were categorised and sorted as per the dimensions they represented. Similar responses were grouped together and numerically quantified. Except for obvious spelling errors, responses were kept unedited, meaning that all quotation exhibits in Chapter 4 represent the exact wording of each participant. This was deemed essential for ensuring the authenticity of the data and to correctly communicate the spirit in which the responses were made.

3.2.2.5 Ethical Considerations

Walliman (2011:43) defines the two key aspects of ethical issues in research as:

- The individual values of the researcher relating to honesty and frankness, and personal integrity; and
- The researcher's treatment of other people involved in the research, relating to informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and courtesy.

He highlights four important issues for consideration during any research study. These form the basis of the discussion below.

Intellectual Ownership and Plagiarism

As the direct copying or using of the thoughts, ideas and work of another without acknowledgement is unethical, special care was taken during this study to ensure that all sources were correctly interpreted and acknowledged.

Acknowledgement and Citation

To avoid any accusations of plagiarism, all sources of information included in this study report was cited accordingly. The Harvard referencing style as modified and prescribed by the Potchefstroom Business School of the North-West University was used for all citations.

Responsibility and Accountability of the Researcher

Honesty throughout this research study was a key element. All attempts were made to accurately describe all actions taken, as well as the manner in which information was obtained and the techniques used.

Data and Interpretations

Although difficult to maintain, distorting data or results based on a certain bias from the researcher, is a serious lapse of honesty. The researcher therefore strived throughout this research to remain objective, even though the researcher himself was part of the study's population. Any personal judgements or assessments by the researcher were clearly stated. At no point was evidence silently rejected or ignored due to personal beliefs and experiences.

The researcher was also advised that the company wanted to remain anonymous and therefore all references to the company's identity were removed from this study. Similarly, the participation of all middle management employees in the research was done on a voluntary and anonymous basis. All respondents were therefore coded with no reference to any personal information or details. A copy of this report was forwarded to the assigned company representative. As part of this mini-dissertation, the researcher also confirmed compliance with the North-West University's (NWU) guidelines for research ethics as well as the policy on plagiarism and academic misconduct. This research study did not evoke a positive response to any of the questions listed below as contained in the "Student Statement on Research Ethics":

- Does the study involve participants who are particularly vulnerable to, or unable to give informed consent (e.g. children, people with learning or other mental or physical disabilities, people who are incarcerated, unemployed or otherwise compromised in responding to your questions)?
- Are you planning on making use of NWU students or direct and secondary/contracted staff members in this research?
- Will the study require the co-operation of a gatekeeper for initial access to the groups or individuals to be recruited (e.g. students at school, members of self-help groups, residents of a nursing home, the Minister of Education, a tribal chief or village elder)?
- Will it be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge and consent at the time (e.g. covert observation of people)?
- Will the study involve discussions of or questions about a sensitive topic (e.g. sexual activity, drug use, crime, harassment, violence)?
- Are drugs, placebos or other substances (e.g. food substances, vitamins) to be administered to the study participants or will the study involves invasive, intrusive or

potentially harmful procedures of any kind or any physical, psychological or socioeconomic intervention?

- Will blood or tissue samples be obtained from participants?
- Could the study induce physical, psychological or social stress or anxiety, or cause harm or negative consequences beyond the risks encountered in normal life?
- Will the study require the identification of individuals for follow-up evaluation?
- Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) or inducements of any other kind be offered to participants?
- Could the image of the NWU, the relevant academic department, your employer, or any other institution however affected by/involved in the project be negatively affected by this research or put in a bad light?

3.3 Chapter Summary

This chapter detailed the approach and methodology followed during the research study. It defined a qualitative research approach by means of an open-ended questionnaire. The sample size was determined by means of theoretical saturation; meaning that the researcher stopped the administration of the questionnaire once the survey data reached a point where no new information was received. The following chapter deals directly with the results obtained from this survey.

Chapter 4 – Results

4.1 Introduction

Following the survey as detailed in the previous chapter, this chapter focuses on the reporting of the collected results. For ease of reference and quick comparison, the demographic information is primarily displayed by means of graphs. The results obtained from the discussion questions are reported per individual topic as outlined in the questionnaire. The results reflect the responses of 29 respondents (n=29). No questionnaires were excluded due to incompleteness or disqualifying responses. Citations from the various participant responses were not altered except for obvious spelling errors.

4.2 Demographic information

Five different demographic parameters were measured during the survey. They are represented by the graphs below. Both the number and associated percentage (%) are included for each parameter.

Gender

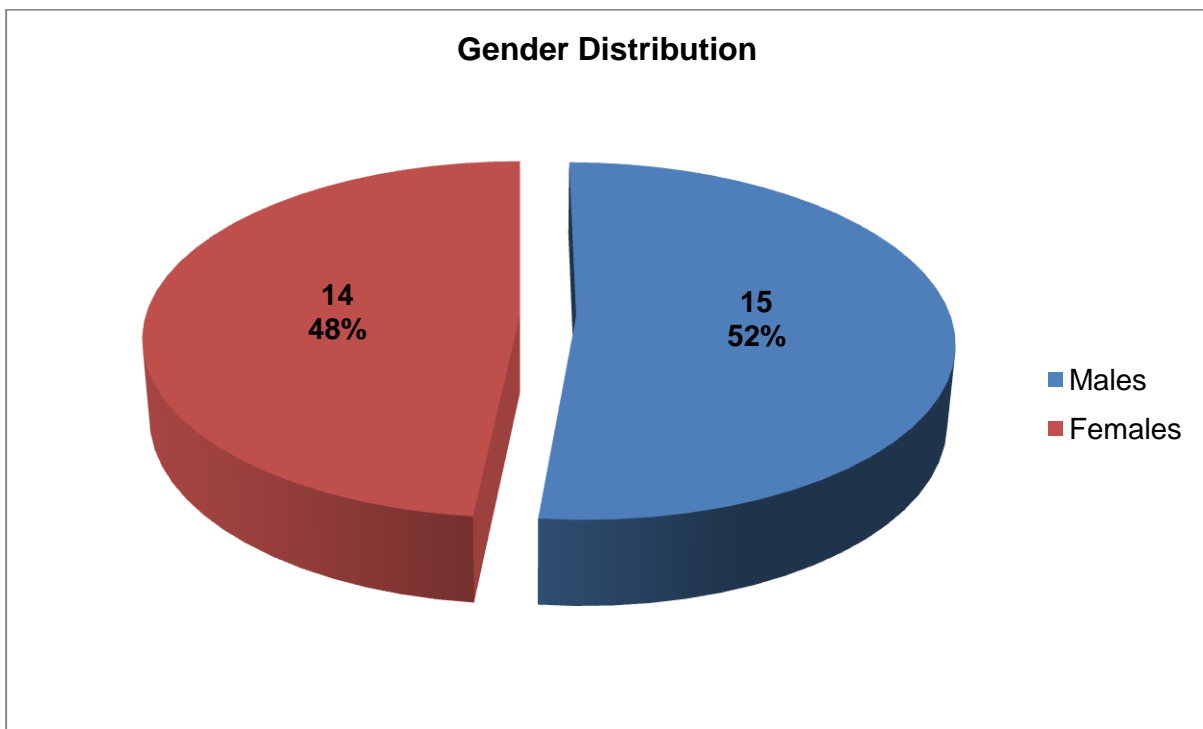


Figure 4-1: Graph indicating gender distribution

The figure above indicates a fair representation of both males and females. Although these do not necessarily represent the gender ratio within the mining company, it remains relevant as the study is focussed on the middle manager’s perception of organisational discrimination. As males and females might have a different perspective on this matter, it was essential that both genders be equally represented during this study. From this perspective, the gender comparison supported the study objectives.

Age

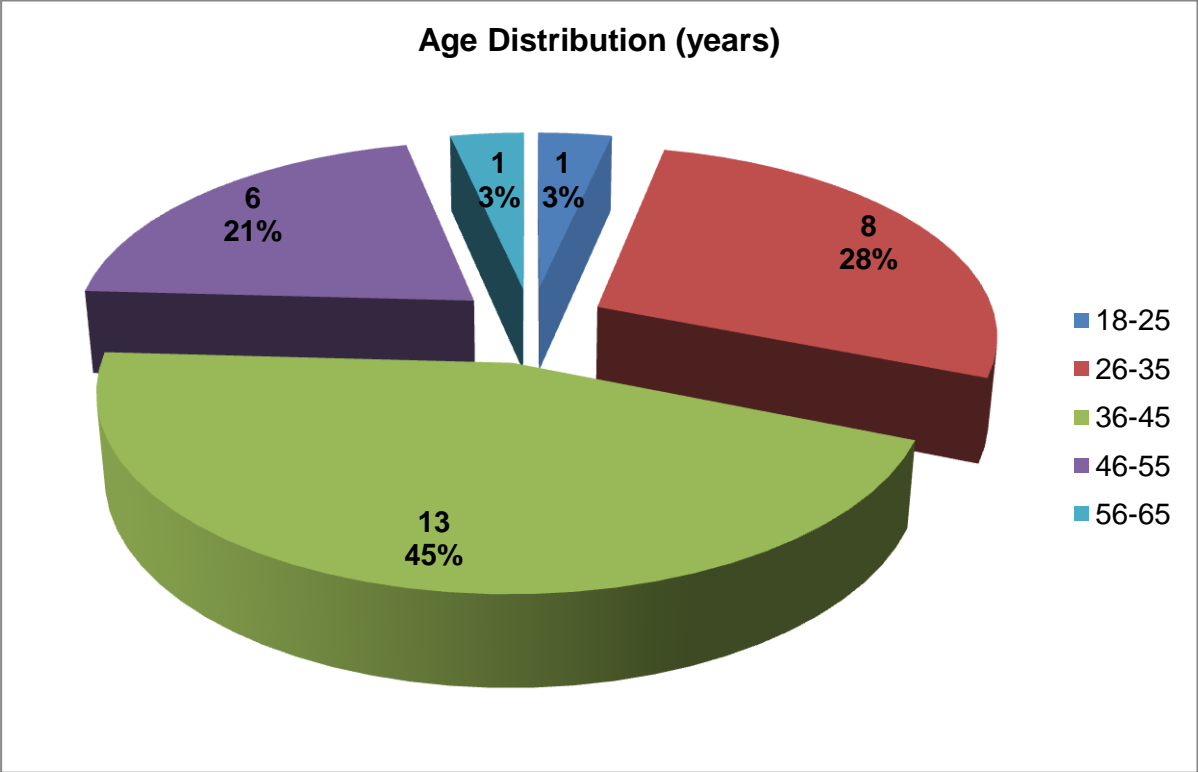


Figure 4-2: Graph indicating age distribution

The age distribution as depicted by the figure above represents what can be regarded as a typical management structure, where nearly half (45%) of the participants were between the ages of 36–45 years. 94% of the participants were between the ages of 26–55 years.

Race

The race distribution is represented in the figure below. Given the objective of the study as explained under the gender distribution, the participants had a balanced representation with 59% white and 41% non-white. A total of 35% of the participants were black. This enabled the researcher to get representative views on the perception of organisational discrimination within the two dominant race groups.

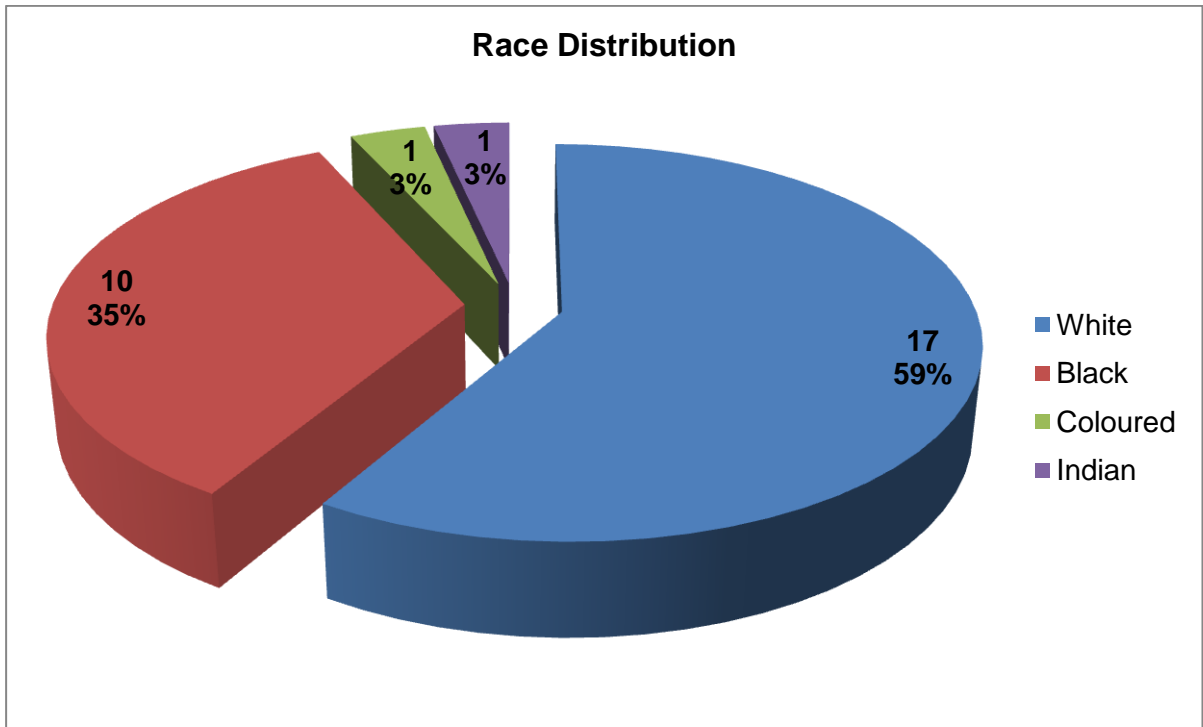


Figure 4-3: Graph indicating race distribution

Qualifications

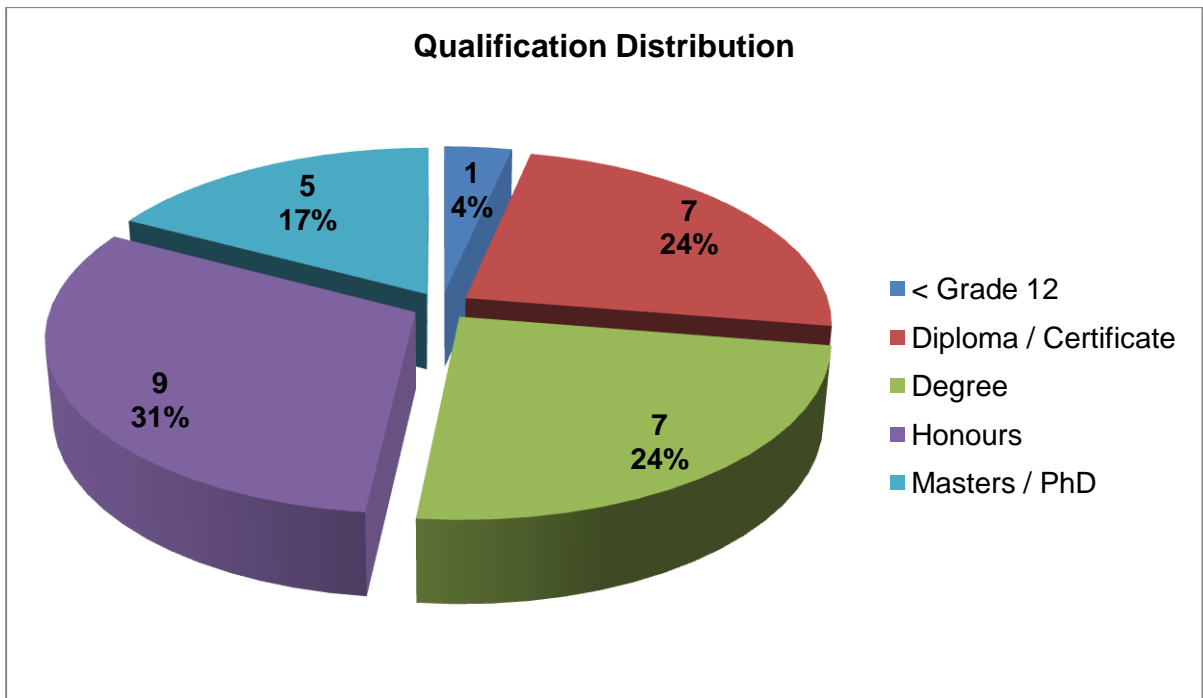


Figure 4-4: Graph indicating qualification distribution

The figure above shows that the survey participants represent a typical management structure with 96% holding some form of tertiary qualification. 48% of all the participants have a post-graduate qualification.

Length of Service

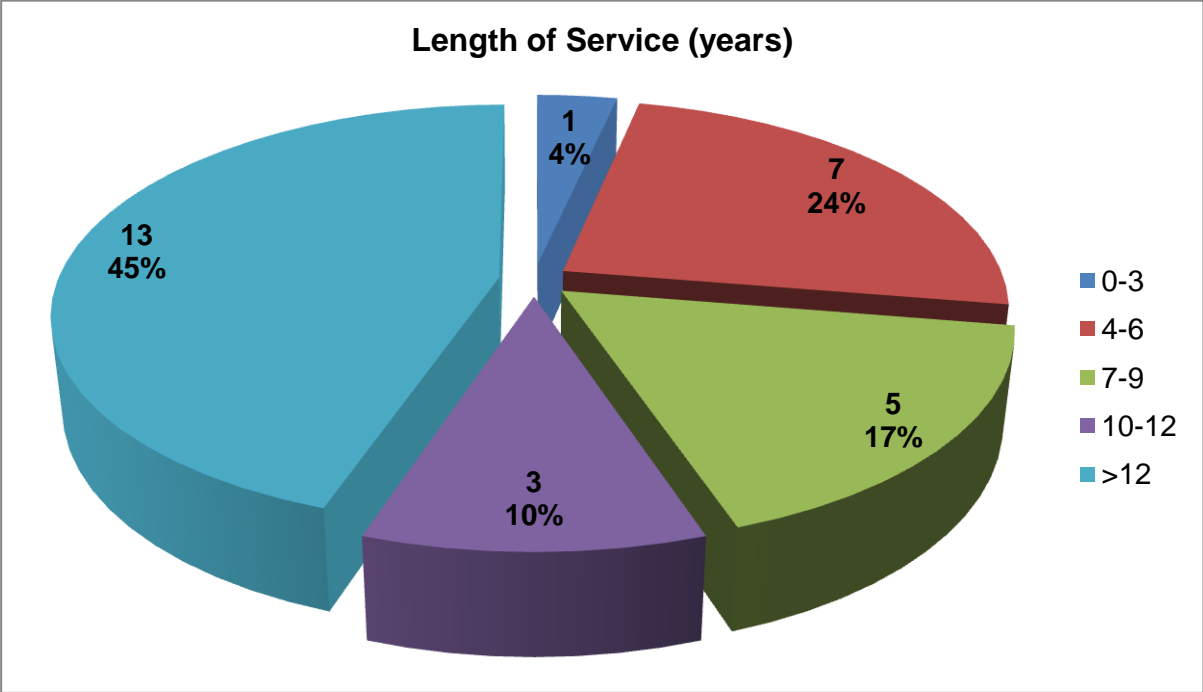


Figure 4-5: Graph indicating length of service

The figure above displays the length of service in years at the current mining company. This indicates that the sample is comprised of veteran employees as nearly half (45%) have been with the company for 12 or more years. This statistics also supports the research objectives in that a large portion of the participants has extensive experience in this specific mining company. This is essential in understanding the culture, and to give a fair account on the current status quo.

4.3 Discussion questions

Results of the discussion questions were grouped per topic and examined. These topics are structured as in the questionnaire and are as follows:

- Prevalence of organisational discrimination under the middle managers.
- Impact of organisational discrimination on both the individual's and the company's performances.
- Impact of organisational discrimination on the individual's well-being.

4.3.1 Prevalence of organisational discrimination under middle managers

Questions 1–4 focused on the participant’s personal experience of discrimination, including the perception of the overall levels of discrimination within the mining company.

4.3.1.1 Personal experience of discrimination

In question 1, a total of 21 or 72% of the participants reported that they were personally subjected to discrimination as middle managers within the organisation at some point. A total 65% of the white middle managers and 83% of the non-white middle managers reported personal experiences of discrimination. Question 2 focussed on the type of discrimination experienced by these reported cases. Results are grouped into central themes as displayed by the figure below. In some cases the respondents listed more than one theme, which was listed separately.

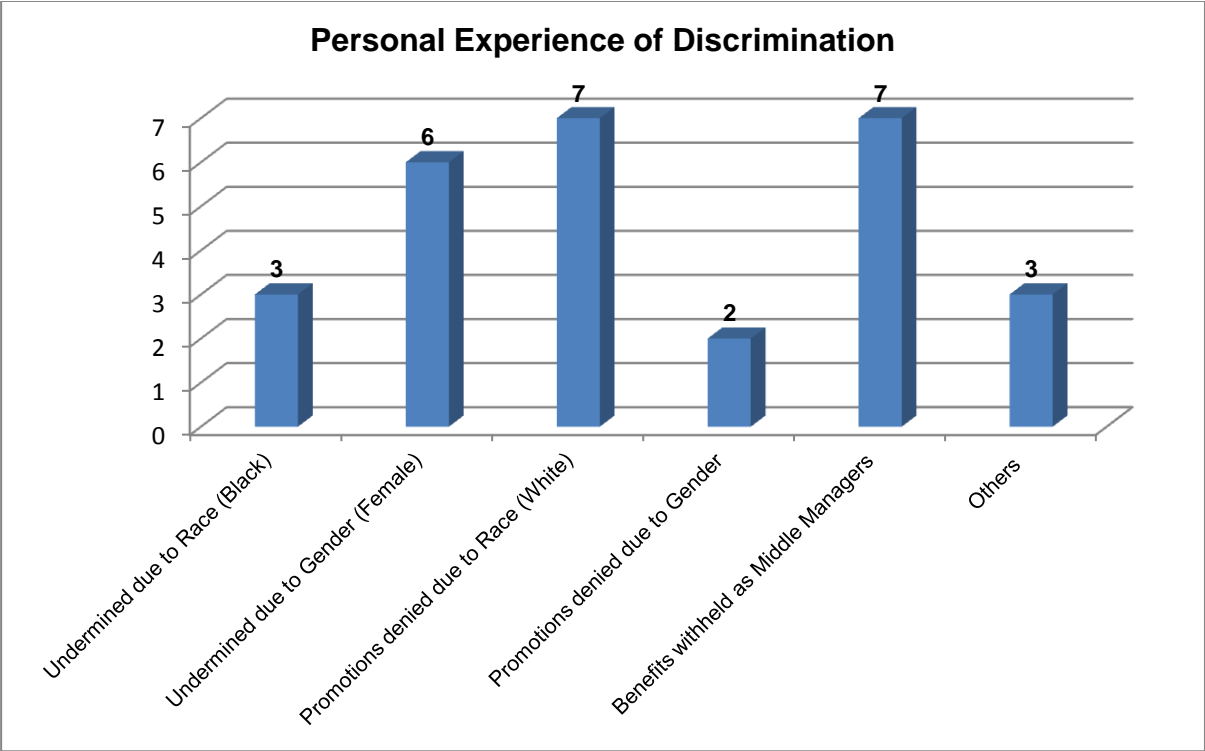


Figure 4-6: Personal experiences of organisational discrimination

As can be seen from the figure above, six (6) central themes of discrimination are identified from the responses. These are discussed individually below.

Undermined due to race

Only three (3) participants indicated that as middle managers they felt undermined due to their race. All of these were black, indicating a potential absence of white middle managers feeling undermined. Two of the three respondents were female. It was evident that certain black middle

managers do not feel respected by their white counterparts. The following quotes support this deduction:

- *“My decisions are not always respected by my white subordinates”* (Participant 1).
- *“My opinions are not valued by the white managers”* (Participant 2).

Undermined due to gender

A total of six (6) participants indicated that they felt undermined, due to their gender. All six of them were female, indicating a potential absence of gender discrimination against males within the specific mining company. The perception of gender discrimination was also not directly impacted by race, as all the race groups were equally represented within these six responses. However, the two black female responses clearly felt discriminated against due to the fact that they were black females, as supported by the following quotes:

- *“As a black female manager working in a male dominated environment I feel that I have been discriminated against in different ways”* (Participant 18).
- *“As a black female my opinion is not respected by my male colleagues”* (Participant 5).

Apart from these, no other female responses linked their perception of gender discrimination with their individual race groups. Their responses mainly indicated a cultural aspect as supported by the following quotes:

- *“I also believe that in a male dominant environment I have been discriminated against, especially when I'm in a position of authority and due to culture differences, some refuse to take instructions”* (Participant 3).
- *“...there were many instances where I felt discriminated against. Usually it's comments, or being side-lined. Work related issues being discussed in social gatherings. Work functions or team buildings inappropriate or exclusive of females”* (Participant 6).

Promotions denied due to race

One of the most prominent themes of discrimination at individual level was the refusal of promotions based on race. Interestingly, all seven (7) of the responses were from white middle managers indicating that other race groups were not necessarily affected. It is however important to note that this issue is rooted deeply and is definitely having a profound impact on the white middle managers as supported by the quotes below:

- *“I believe that promotions have been delayed due to colour; irrespective of performance”* (Participant 3).
- *“I was told face-to-face that I won't be promoted due to being a white male”* (Participant 14).
- *“My personal development (promotions, etc.) have been delayed or simply not approved due to my race and gender”* (Participant 21).
- *“Considered to be too white to be a member...”* (Participant 25).

As can be seen from some of the responses above, there also seem to be a high correlation between race and gender when it comes to refusal of promotions. Five (5) or 71% of the responses were made by males. This highlights the fact that white male middle managers currently feel deprived of any promotional prospects within the specific mining company. It is important to note that these submissions were made purely on race and not on gender.

Promotions denied due to gender

Only two (2) participants (one male, one female) indicated gender as a reason for being denied their promotions. Compared to the theme above it is obvious that gender discrimination among promotion seekers was not highly apparent within the company.

Benefits withheld due to being middle managers

A total of seven (7) or 33% of the 21 participants reported that they felt that their benefits were withheld due to them being part of middle management. This implies that if they were not part of middle management they would have received their expected benefits. As with race based discrimination, the individual responses also seemed to be deeply rooted and could be viewed as an area of concern. This statement was supported by the following quotes:

- *“I was not afforded my annual increase due to the fact that I'm a manager”* (Participant 15).
- *“Allowances for travelling expenses are not equal on middle management level”* (Participant 16).
- *“I'm not rewarded because I fall within management and it is expected from us to carry the business”* (Participant 20).
- *“As a middle manager with no formal union representation, I have been subjected to various remuneration modifications. Annual increases are withheld, where this is not applied equally across the business. Middle-management benefits (such as vehicle financing) were cancelled with no inputs from the affected parties”* (Participant 21).

Other responses

Only two (2) responses did not fall in any of the themes discussed above. These were focussed on the lack of support for middle managers and the discriminatory impact of the organisation's policies and procedures.

4.3.1.2 Perception of discrimination within the organisation

In question 3 the participants were asked to rate the level of discrimination towards middle managers according to their perception. The figure below indicates that on average, middle managers perceived the general level of discrimination towards them to be “medium”. At racial level the perception under white and non-white middle managers was similar to that of the total with both groups, on average, reporting organisational discrimination to be “medium”.

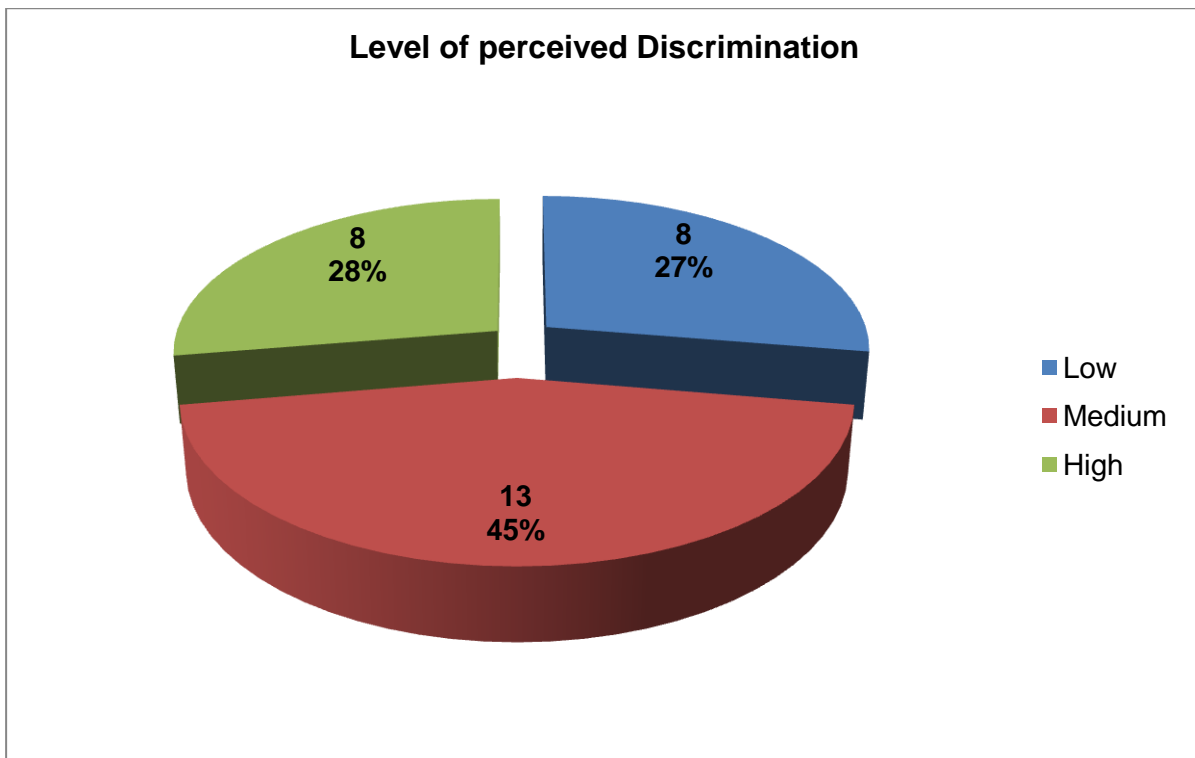


Figure 4-7: Perception of discrimination within the organisation

In question 4 there were identified six themes. These originated from the responses that indicated a medium or high level of discrimination. They are individually discussed and displayed in the figure below.

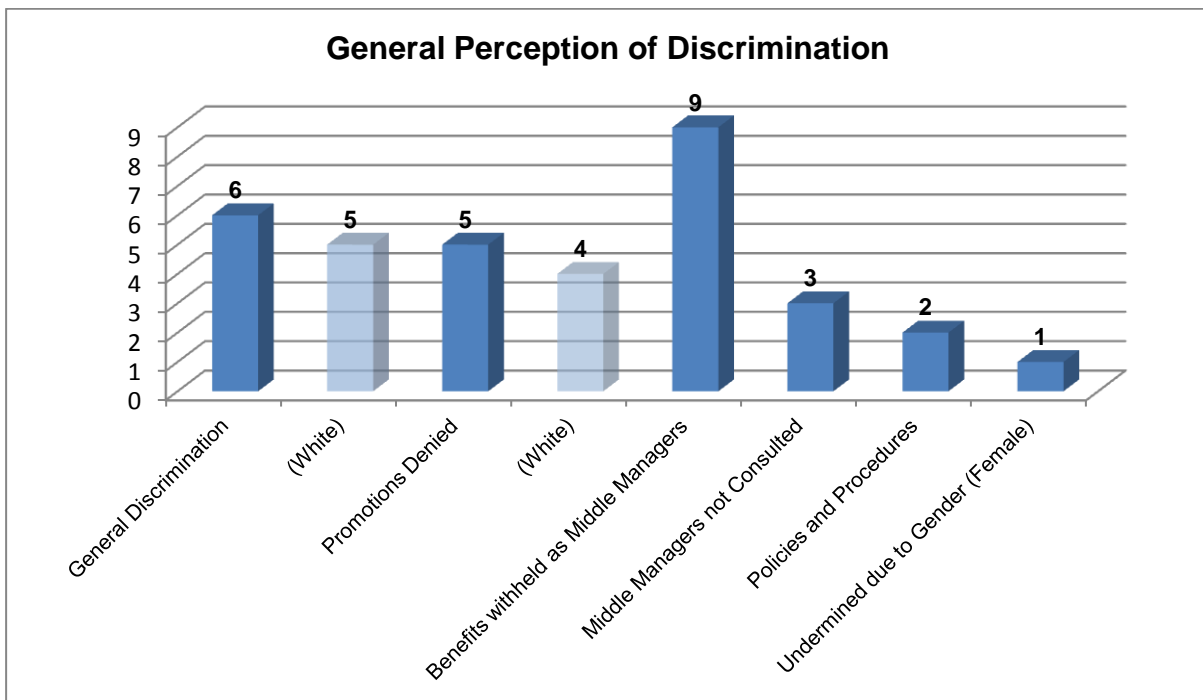


Figure 4-8: General perception of discrimination towards middle managers in the organisation

General discrimination

Six (6) participants indicated general discrimination as the main theme of their perceived discrimination towards middle managers within the company. The majority of these (5) were characterised as racial discrimination towards white employees. These results were supported by the following quotes:

- “*Explosive situation. Black managers are undermined. White managers feel they have no future in the company*” (Participant 2).
- “*There is now race discrimination against white people with "legal" excuses*” (Participant 12).
- “*Preferential treatment of HDSA's, often disregarding qualifications, experience or personality of selected persons*” (Participant 27).

Promotions denied

Another important discriminatory element highlighted, was that of middle managers being denied their promotions. A total of five (5) participants indicated this as being the key element of discrimination within the organisation. Four of these identified this issue to be most prevalent under white employees. Although these could also be included under the racial discrimination towards white employees as highlighted above, they were kept separate, as they were specific in nature. These results were based on some of the following answers:

- “*Explosive situation. Black managers are undermined. White managers feel they have no future in the company*” (Participant 2).
- “*Best candidates continuously bypassed to chase numbers*” (Participant 17).
- “*Middle managers are not being rewarded for their performance; rather on skin colour*” (Participant 23).
- “*Racial targets need to be met by the organisation, leading to discrimination*” (Participant 25).

Middle managers' benefits withheld

As was the case at individual level, the responses indicated a high perception that middle managers' benefits being withheld, was the leading criteria of organisational discrimination. A total of nine (9) participants supported this notion. The responses indicated a high level of frustration among middle managers as supported by the following quotes:

- “*Middle management seems to always loose out when it comes to benefits and increases*” (Participant 3).
- “*We always have to forfeit our annual increases because of the impact of the strike*” (Participant 5).
- “*All middle managers are complaining about not being recognised and not being rewarded*” (Participant 7).

- *“Currently it's high. No increases and fewer benefits”* (Participant 15).
- *“Middle management are targeted when company performance is low i.e. no increases”* (Participant 16).
- *“Managers are not rewarded and are still expected to carry the business”* (Participant 20).

Middle managers not consulted

Three (3) participants indicated that the company's inability or ineffectiveness to consult with middle managers as the leading cause of discrimination within the organisation. It clearly created a sense of vulnerability as supported by the following responses:

- *“Middle managers would be affected by decisions that would be taken without their involvement and would only know of the decision after the fact”* (Participant 18).
- *“Management can be shifted to any place on the mine or be retrenched without being consulted. Sometimes when you see this happens you ask yourself who is next”* (Participant 22).

Policies and procedures

Only two (2) participants indicated that the company's policies and procedures were the main contributor towards organisational discrimination under middle managers. These were not listed separately, but formed part of the theme of middle managers not being consulted. The researcher could therefore assume that the manner in which middle managers were engaged, was primarily dictated by internal protocols.

Undermined due to gender

In stark contrast with the responses on individual discrimination, only one participant indicated that certain gender groups were being undermined by the organisation. In this specific case it was reported as discrimination towards females. We can therefore assume that although there was a higher level of experienced gender discrimination, the perception among middle managers is still that this type of discrimination is not very prevalent. Even those who personally experienced and reported on gender discrimination under question 2, had felt that it did not necessarily represent the leading cause of organisational discrimination as reported under question 4.

4.3.2 Impact of discrimination on individual and organisational performance

4.3.2.1 Impacts on the individual’s productivity

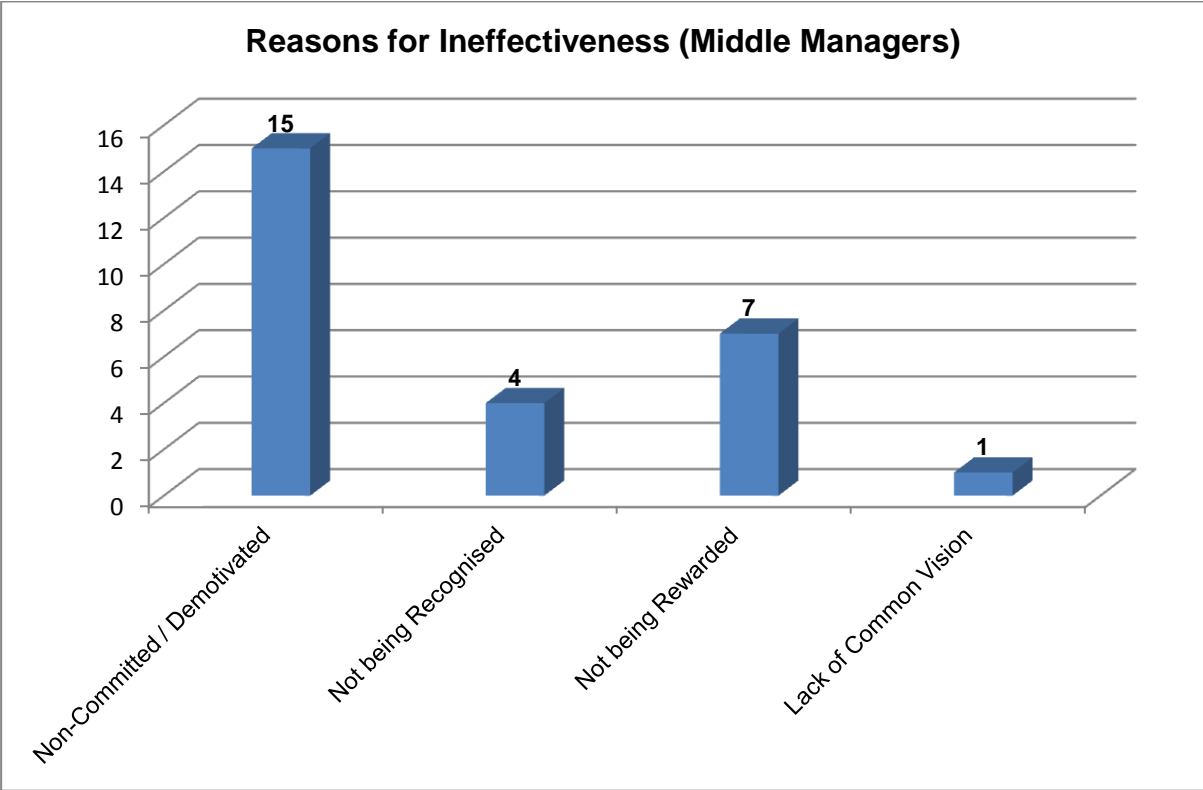


Figure 4-9: Reported reasons why middle managers are less productive.

In question 5 a total of 15 or 52% of the participants reported that at some point their personal experience of organisational discrimination had affected their work performance. In contrast to this evenly divided impact of discrimination on personal work performance, the survey, by means of question 6, revealed that a total of 23 or 79% of the respondents felt that middle managers within the company were less productive or ineffective due to continued organisation discrimination towards them. Thus, at a personal level the work performance of 52% of the respondents were affected by discrimination, compared to the perceived 79% on their fellow middle managers. This highlighted the fact that the perceived impact of organisational discrimination within this company was actually higher than the actual experienced impact of discrimination. Figure 4-9 details the main themes of this perceived discrimination as noted under question 7. These themes are discussed individually below:

Non-committed/Demotivated

The highest agreement on any theme among the surveyed middle managers were their perception that middle managers were less productive due to them feeling demotivated, and as such displayed a sense of non-commitment towards their jobs. A total of 15 responses

supported this notion. The quotes below emphasized the tone and importance of this key theme.

- *“I do believe that after years of discrimination that people get demotivated and loose the passion and drive for work”* (Participant 3).
- *“...eventually just give up and end up doing the bare minimum, or leave”* (Participant 6).
- *“People are negative and emotional, that causes less productive employees”* (Participant 9).
- *“Employees are feeling demotivated and overworked”* (Participant 16).
- *“At times people feel negative and this contributes to lower productivity”* (Participant 17).
- *“Although not very common, any person will be less productive if being subjected to discrimination”* (Participant 24).

Not being recognised

Although similar in nature as the previous theme, four (4) responses made specific mention of not being recognised. Although this study was not intended to quantify any numbers, but merely to highlight the perception of discrimination, it remains important to note that a certain portion of the participants felt that they were not being recognised and thus being less productive. Some of the responses below highlighted the importance of this issue within any organisation.

- *“All efforts focussed on lower levels”* (Participant 2).
- *“People that are continuously being side-lined, even when they have value to add...”* (Participant 6).
- *“Middle managers are not appreciated”* (Participant 15).

Not being rewarded

The general perception of discrimination within this company was largely based on middle managers feeling that they were not receiving their promotions or benefits as highlighted in question 4. This theme again repeated itself in that seven (7) of the participants felt that this was directly impacting on middle managers' productivity. The quotes below substantiated this response:

- *“A number of people work less because the outcome is the same”* (Participant 4).
- *“If you don't get rewarded (even just your annual salary increase) then you don't feel like doing much”* (Participant 5).
- *“I think in the same instances people tend to become complacent as prospects for promotions are already limited”* (Participant 8).
- *“Why will you do more than what is required if it will not contribute to your own promotion”* (Participant 12).

- “They are frustrated with the current situation of constantly being denied their benefits” (Participant 29).

Lack of common vision

Only one (1) response did not align with the three key themes as discussed above as can be seen from the quote below:

- “Employees struggle to share common values, which in turn affects the organisation's policies, procedures and daily work output standard. It also adds to less effective interpersonal work relationships” (Participant 19).

4.3.2.2 Impacts on company performance

In question 10, a total of 20 or 69% of the participants reported that they felt that the organisation’s performance was being affected due to the current levels of discrimination against middle managers. This is less than the 79% who reported that organisational discrimination impacted individual work performance. The researcher could therefore assume that some of the middle managers felt that a company of this size might demonstrate some resilience towards this impact, affecting the organisation as a whole. However, even with a reduced perception, 69% still remains significant. The three (3) main themes of discrimination impacting the company’s performance were highlighted in the figure below. Each of these was discussed individually.

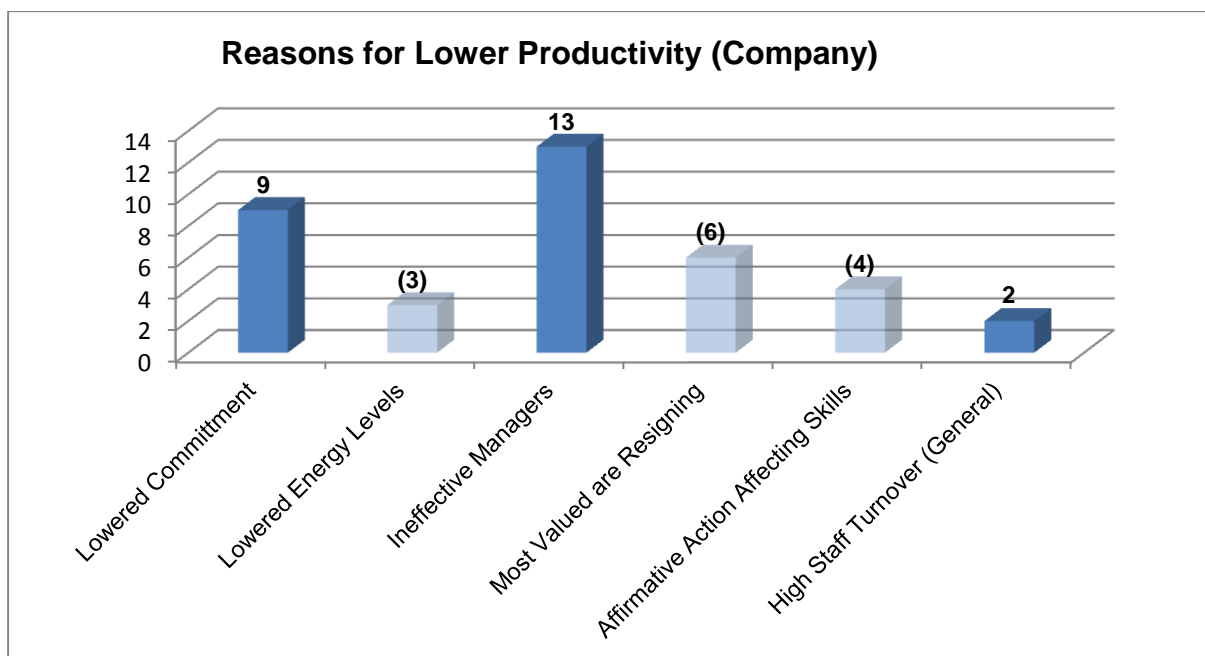


Figure 4-10: Perceived reasons why the company is less productive.

Lowered commitment

A total of nine (9) participants indicated that a lowered commitment under middle managers was impacting the company's overall performance. Three of these specifically made reference to lower energy levels. These already alluded to the potential impact on well-being. This was however discussed in greater detail in the following section. The following quotes supported this finding:

- *"Without the managers being fully committed, the company will suffer at the end"* (Participant 2).
- *"We are supposed to be a lean machine but we carry around people who ride along and with all the negative energy they feel, drag everyone around them down as well"* (Participant 4).
- *"Managers are not prepared to go the extra mile"* (Participant 5).
- *"With less commitment from your management team you will definitely experience an impact in the overall company performance"* (Participant 7).
- *"The less affective the management team, the less affective the company"* (Participant 20).

Ineffective managers

The survey results indicated that ineffective managers were perceived as the highest contributor towards the company's lowered performance. A total of 13 participants confirmed this notion. One of the reasons for managers being ineffective was the fact that the most valued middle managers were resigning; implying that they were not replaced with someone equal in value. Four (4) of the 13 respondents specifically blamed affirmative action for lowering the overall skill set of middle managers within the company. From these results it could be deduced that there was a general feeling that valued managers who resigned, were replaced with affirmative action candidates not presenting the same skill set. Some of the quotes below substantiated this statement:

- *"I think that in some cases a sub-standard manager is appointed because of his/her ethnicity instead of merit. Thereby I don't mean to say that certain race groups are better or worse managers, but merely that that first candidate that fulfils the ethnic criteria has an advantage irrespective of skill"* (Participant 8).
- *"Inexperience black people are not doing a good enough job"* (Participant 12).
- *"Resources are not properly utilised, people are demotivated. Leadership very poor as leaders are not appointed on their abilities and skills but rather their race"* (Participant 27).

High staff turnover

Two respondents specifically mentioned the general trend of high staff turnover in the company as the leading cause of poor company performance. In the light of this study, it could be

assumed that these participants blamed organisational discrimination towards middle managers for the high staff turnover. The following quote supported this statement:

- *“There is a high turnover in skills. The company regularly loses people with a lot of experience due to discrimination which causes sections to progress slower than it should due to inexperience of new candidates. I also believe that discrimination filters down and if middle management is discriminated against it can only produce discrimination at lower levels as well”* (Participant 3).

4.3.3 Impact of organisation discrimination on individual’s well-being

In question 8 a total of 12 or 41% of the participants reported that their personal experience of organisational discrimination had affected their personal well-being; either physically or mentally. This clearly highlighted that discrimination at organisational level had a greater impact on an employee’s performance compared to his/her personal well-being than assumed. Six (6) key physical or mental symptoms/impacts were identified from the 12 responses. These are represented in the figure below and individually discussed.

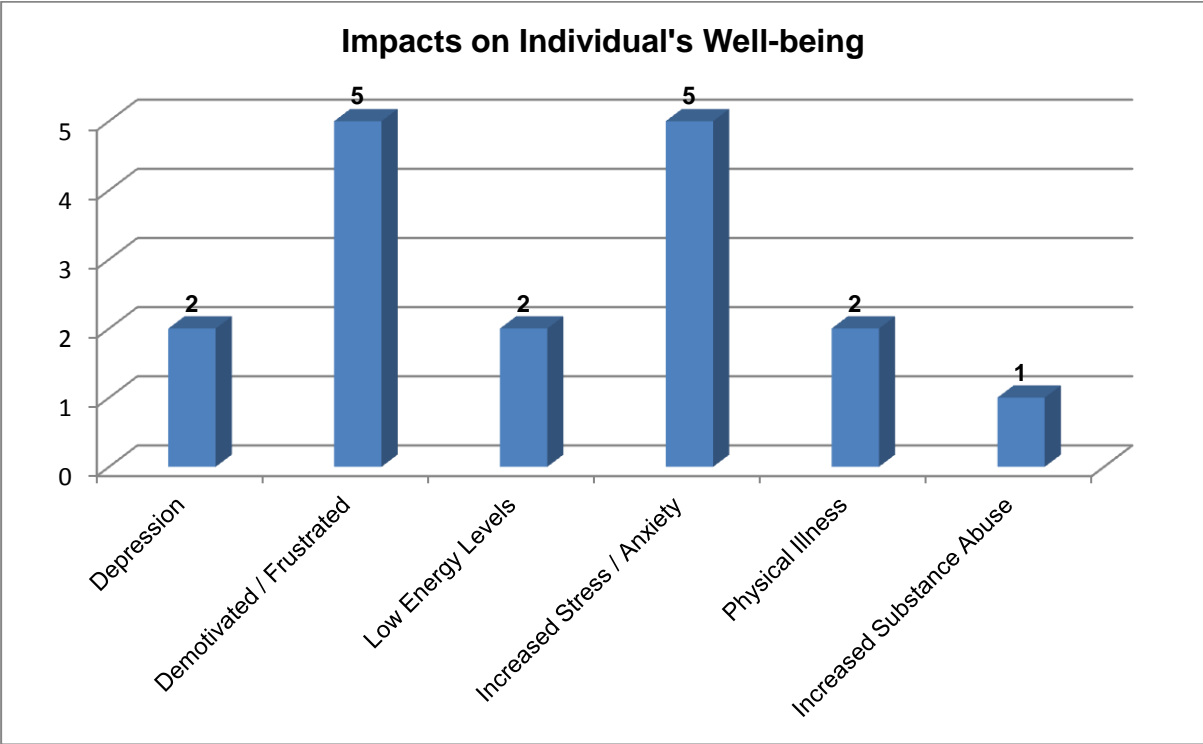


Figure 4-11: Reported impacts of discrimination on the individual’s well-being.

Depression

Only two (2) participants reported feelings of depression. It is however unclear whether these participants actually experienced signs of depression or were merely reporting on depression as a possible effect of discrimination. As these questionnaires were not completed by means of an

interview, this issue could not be clarified. Given the responses below, the researcher treated these as potential impacts and not actual reported impacts. This reduced the overall reported impact of discrimination on personal well-being to only 34%.

- *“It creates an environment where people are not valued for their performance and work ethic. It could lead to depression or reckless behaviour”* (Participant 3).
- *“It contributed to..., significant drop in tolerance as well as depression”* (Participant 19).

Demotivated or frustrated

Feeling demotivated or frustrated was reported as one of the highest impacts on personal well-being. A total of five (5) participants indicated that they felt demotivated or frustrated due to their exposure to discrimination within the mining company. Some of the responses were quoted below:

- *“You don’t feel positive coming to work, nor when you do the work required from you”* (Participant 9).
- *“Frustration, aggravated stress levels”* (Participant 4).
- *“Less motivated to wake-up in the morning to go to work”* (Participant 22).

Low energy levels

There were two (2) responses of low energy levels. Generally the reported lower energy levels goes hand-in-hand with other issues such as decreased motivation as could be seen from the quote below:

- *“It left me feeling demotivated. I felt tired with very little energy”* (Participant 21).

Increased stress and anxiety

Again, many of the responses were spread over more than one of the defined themes. The researcher however decided to separate these in order to clearly highlight the variation in impacts. Five (5) participants reported an increased stress and anxiety levels. The quote below emphasized the impact discrimination had on this individual:

- *“My mental health was affect to an extent that I had a lot of stress to a point where I needed professional help. Even though I consulted a company approved centre, no action was taken to understand whether my situation got better or worse”* (Participant 18).

Physical illness

Although depression, stress, and anxiety can manifest as physical illness, these illnesses were however not included hereunder. The two reported cases were based on self-confessed physical illnesses as demonstrated by the responses below:

- *“... and physical health complaints such as migraines”* (Participant 9).
- *“High blood pressure”* (Participant 25).

Substance abuse

Only one (1) participant reported an increase in substance abuse, namely alcohol consumption. Whether this was truly the only case and other participants were merely oblivious to their problem, was unclear. However, it still demonstrates the potential impact of organisational discrimination on a person's well-being and the potential to extend beyond the individual and impact their direct family or support structures.

4.4 Chapter summary

Chapter 4 focussed on the results obtained from the research study and presented by means of the demographic information as well as the discussion questions. The results of the discussion questions were reported per topic as outlined in the open-ended questionnaire and the research objectives. These topics and key findings were summarised below:

Prevalence of organisational discrimination under the middle managers

72% of the participants reported that at some stage they were personally subjected to some form of discrimination within the organisation. The most prominent form of discrimination was reported as promotions being denied as well as their benefits being withheld. The participants also rated the general perception of discrimination among middle managers as "medium"; again stating that the withholding of benefits was the highest form of perceived discrimination. This was followed by a perception of general discrimination towards white middle managers within the organisation.

Impact of organisational discrimination on individual and company performance

52% of the participants reported that their personal work performance had been impaired due to their exposure to discrimination. They cited non-commitment and feeling demotivated as the main reasons for being less productive. A total of 69% also felt that the continued level of discrimination towards middle managers within the organisation was actually impacting on the company's overall performance. The main reason for this was based on their perception that many of the appointed managers were ineffective in their duties. This was followed by a perception of a lowered commitment by middle managers toward the company.

Impact of organisational discrimination on the individual's well-being

A total of 34% of the participants reported that their personal well-being had been impacted on due to their experience of discrimination within the company. The main impacts were reported as feeling demotivated and frustrated as well as increased levels of anxiety and stress.

In Chapter 5 the researcher will interpret these results and make conclusions and recommendations with consideration to the findings.

Chapter 5 – Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the key results of the questionnaire administered on the middle management participants. The purpose of this chapter was to interpret these results and explain the implications of the findings. The main function of this chapter was to answer the research questions as posed in the research objectives by explaining how the results supported the answer and how it fitted in with the existing knowledge on the topic.

5.2 Discussion

This research study aimed at exploring the perceived levels of organisational discrimination among the middle management team at a South African mine. The research objectives could be grouped in three central themes: 1) the general prevalence and types of organisational discrimination; 2) the impact of this discrimination on employee and company performance; and 3) the impact of this discrimination on the individual's well-being.

5.2.1 Prevalence of organisational discrimination under the middle managers

The results indicate an above average (72%) personal experience of organisational discrimination by middle managers within this specific mining company. However, at racial level the experiences were somewhat different with 65% of Whites and 83% of non-Whites experiencing discrimination to some extent. The perception of discrimination towards all middle managers within the company was reported to be “medium”; confirming a definite dilemma concerning discrimination among middle managers. At group level, this perception was echoed by both the White- and non-White middle managers. It was therefore quite clear that the personal experience of discrimination within this specific mining company influenced the general perception of discrimination among all middle managers. Figure 4-6 detailed the reported cases of discrimination per centralised themes. These findings indicated that more than half was either race or gender based. The highest reported levels of discrimination were as that of white middle managers not being promoted due to their race, and the company withholding the benefits of the middle management team in general. This was closely followed by females of all races feeling undermined by their male counterparts. The results further showed that only a few cases of racial discrimination towards Blacks were reported.

From an overall perspective, the results were strongly aligned with national and international trends. The level of discrimination within this target group remained high with gender and racial related issues being one of the leading indicators. Both Shih *et al.* (2013:146) and Chao and

Willaby (2007:679) placed gender-based harassment and racial/ethnicity discrimination on the top of their lists of discrimination within organisations. The results also corroborated with those of Jackson *et al.* (2011:385), when they stated that it seemed very optimistic given South Africa's history that huge strides had been made in the eradication of separatism, racism and discrimination. There was also a strong suggestion that the results were under-pinned by the concept of stereotyping (Kolb, 2013:246). It was stated that discrimination was explained in part by the different stereotypes and actions associated with them. It was therefore argued that middle managers in this organisation were in a way "branded" and by default expected to perform beyond their scope, with no or very little reward. This was confirmed by an overwhelming feeling of non-appreciation among this group. Not being rewarded, by means of benefits and promotions, was highlighted as a key aspect at both personal and group level. This issue was the primary reason why middle managers perceived discrimination among their peers to be above average. It was further suggested that this stereotyping was created in part by a very specific work culture within this organisation. Green (2005:648) stated that work culture was useful in understanding anti-discriminatory practices and that a discriminatory work culture had a strong structural dimension associated with it. The participants in this study on average were represented by a "middle manager" between the ages of 36–45. Further to this, 45% of all participants had more than 12 years working experience within the specific mining company. Apart from the issue of promotions being withheld from white middle managers, none of the responses indicated that not being rewarded was a recent development within the company. The impression was created that this inability of the company to reward individuals for their performance was a historic issue and not a recent phenomenon. This confirmed that this culture of non-rewarding had been around for some time. We can further assume that this culture is centred around the notion that managers were expected to perform over and beyond their actual responsibilities. Although assumed a historic cultural aspect within this company, it was clearly aggravated by the current economic situation within the South African mining industry. Companies were expected to perform beyond their means translating into added pressures on the management team.

As stated above, the issue of certain middle managers not being promoted, surfaced as a contentious issue within the company. As expected, the majority of these complaints were from white managers. Unfortunately this should not be seen in the light of the cultural aspects raised above, but should be regarded as a consequence of the current South African socio-political climate. There were clear targets imposed on specifically mining companies and these should be met within a set timeframes. These would in part aggravate the issue of promotions under white managers. It was however important to note that refusing to reward performance based on this criteria, might be risky. The responses indicated a highly frustrated and demotivated middle management team, and with a substantial portion of these still being white, may impact

on the company in a significant manner. This would however be discussed in more detail later on. Literature also provided other reasons for this inability of the organisation to reward, and specifically promote their middle management team. Gelfand *et al.* (2007:8) referred to the proverbial “glass ceilings” within organisations leading to wide spread discrimination under certain groups. Although these groups were generally racial or gender based, it could also be applied to structural groups such as the middle management team. They mentioned that there are various aspects of organisational structures which related to discrimination within companies. Larger companies, such as this mining company, sometimes had stable and unchanging employment conditions, and had fewer opportunities than smaller companies to reshape their demographic composition and promote certain deserving individuals. It was however important to note that Gelfand *et al.* (2007:20) stated that disproportionate opportunities or biased treatment in one area of an organisation, could have a ripple effect on other functioning areas within the same organisation. In this case, as there seemed to be a real concern of reward under middle managers, this issue could very easily flow into other areas, such as senior management. This would be devastating to an organisation of this type where leadership is essential in steering and directing the company.

As previously referred to, the results indicated a strong association between personal experience and the general perception of organisational discrimination among the middle managers. The personal experiences reported were centred around discrimination towards Whites based on promotions being withheld, that females and Blacks felt undermined within the organisation, and an overall strong feeling by all that middle managers were not rewarded for their performances. These personal experiences of discrimination were reported by 72% of the respondents, and culminated into a general perception of organisational discrimination against middle managers. This general perception was centred on discrimination towards Whites and a very strong perception that middle managers were not being rewarded nor consulted. Interestingly, only one (1) participant reported a gender based discriminatory perception. This was significant in that although numerous responses indicated personal discrimination based on gender, none of these, except one, translated into a perception of gender based discrimination at an overall group level. This highlighted the fact that being rewarded, or a sense of feeling recognised, was of far greater importance to the middle management team than many of the dominant discriminatory aspects reported and experienced within the workplace. It highlighted the fact that this company would need to focus its attentions on involving this key organisational grouping and ensuring that performances were clearly measured and rewarded. The use of balance scorecards and/or key performance indicators (KPI's) should realistically form the base for annual increases or any other reward systems. From the responses, it was not observed that the middle managers were expecting any reward beyond what they deserved. It was therefore

evident that performance management, by means of an open and transparent process, should form the base of the middle manager's working agreements.

Finally, the results did not indicate an expected high occurrence of discrimination towards Blacks. The researcher expected the current high levels of dissatisfaction among many of the lower level black mining employees throughout the country to cross over into the middle management structures. Only three (3) cases were reported at a personal level, with none transferred onto the general perception of discrimination within this mining company. Various reasons could be presented in support of this finding. Moolmal *et al.* (2009:387) suggested that the years of discrimination towards black people, in a way could have desensitised them. The researcher did not support this notion, as discrimination among Blacks within the mining industry was widely reported. The low frequency within this study was believed to go beyond being desensitised and should be linked to the level of education as well as other personal attributes. Balser (2002:140) supported this notion by stating that the individual's characteristics were responsible for the extent to which individuals experienced inequality and discrimination. The researcher also needed to highlight another potential reason for this result. Given the focus of redressing the past inequalities, most policies and procedures had been amended to ensure the correct employment representation, especially at management level. It was argued that apart from the few instances where black middle managers still felt undermined by their white counterparts, the programme of addressing previous imbalances, were actually effective and starting to bear fruit. Thus, it is the researcher's view that at least at middle management level, and specific to this organisation, the historic issue of black employees not being recognised, have adequately been addressed. The fact that black middle managers did not perceive discrimination to be centred on racial disparities, but rather on general practices possibly proves that their integration over the years into the management structures, had been very successful. However, this accelerated programme had resulted in a high level of perceived discrimination among white middle managers. Given the results, and in support of a stable and effective management structure, it made perfect business sense to start addressing these concerns, specifically within the middle management group.

5.2.2 Impact of discrimination on individual and company performance

Another key objective of this study was to establish the link between the personal experience of discrimination and the perceived impact thereof on individual as well as company performance. A total of 15 participants reported that their work performance was affected due to their experience of discrimination within the organisation. Given that only 21 cases of discrimination was reported, 72% of all cases of discrimination resulted in the individual's performance being affected. However, when asked what the participants perceived the impact of discrimination

would be on a middle manager's overall performance, 23 reported that it would impact negatively on productivity. This was an extremely interesting finding as it indicated that the perceived impacts of discrimination sometimes outweigh the actual events itself. In support of this reported perceived impact of discrimination, the participants overwhelmingly indicated "non-commitment" or "demotivation" as the main reasons for the middle managers being unproductive. This was followed by them not feeling rewarded as well as not being recognised. At an organisational level, the perceived discrimination towards middle managers was reported by 20 (69%) of the participants to impact on the overall company performance. Although some of the factors impacting middle managers' performance were also listed as impacting on company performance, i.e. non-commitment, the main reasons were not defined as being emotional or psychological as was the case with non-commitment. A total 45% of the participants perceived "ineffective managers" as the principal reason for an underperforming company. The link back to discrimination was that there was a perception that managers within this organisation were not appointed based on their ability, but rather on other factors, such as race or gender. This notion was also supported by a few responses which indicated affirmative action as affecting skill within the organisation. There was also a general feeling that due to the continued levels of discrimination, many of the valued managers were resigning and not replaced with someone of equal standing.

With the view that not rewarding or supporting employees would result in unpleasant working conditions (Bar-Haim, 2007:206), the results confirmed the findings of Mafini and Pooe (2013:7) who reported that they found a positive correlation between employee satisfaction and productivity. The results were further aligned as the reported reasons why middle management was perceived to be less productive, was fully included in the range of factors influencing employee satisfaction as described by them. The results also indicated that a personal experience of discrimination did not necessarily translate into reduced work performance by the individual itself. This was corroborated by the fact that of the 72% reported cases of personal discrimination only 52% reported that this actually impacted on their work performance. However, this personal experience of discrimination created the impression that the impact on the middle management's performance would remain high. This was confirmed by the 79% of the respondents reporting that they felt the middle management team's overall performance would be affected. This clearly highlighted the fact that perception plays an important part in managing impacts of organisational discrimination.

Finally, the findings of this study aligned with those of Gelfand *et al.* (2007:24), in that discrimination could seriously impact on the organisation's effectiveness and reputation. This was demonstrated by the 69% of the respondents reporting that discrimination among middle managers would ultimately impact on the company's performance. What was important to note

here, was that this was merely a perceived impact. This study did not measure company performance or attempted to link company performance with the level of reported cases of discrimination. The intent was merely to establish the perceived impact of discrimination on performance. The results therefore confirmed the perceived impacts to be high.

5.2.3 Impact of discrimination on the individual's well-being

The final objective of the research study was to establish the impact of discrimination on the individual's well-being. A total of 10 responses indicated that their personal experience of organisational discrimination impacted on their personal well-being. This meant that of the 21 reported cases of discrimination within this sample, 47% had directly impacted on the individual's well-being. Six physical or mental impact themes were identified; the majority of the results falling within the mentally related impacts. The most prominent were reports of feeling demotivated and frustrated as well as an increase in stress and anxiety. Only two participants referred to depression with another two quoting physical illness as a cause of discrimination. Interestingly, only one report of increased substance abuse was received.

These results supported the findings of Jackson *et al.* (2001:387), where a vast majority of studies examined by them indicated that discrimination was associated with an increased risk of mental and physical health. They also reported that negative mental health outcomes were preceded by self-reported experiences of racism. Although they specifically referred to racism, this research study specifically showed that mental health impacts were not only a result of racial discrimination, but can be linked to most forms of organisational discrimination. More importantly, this study echoed the findings of Moolman *et al.* (2009:383), where they stated that the generic perception of discrimination was adversely affecting health. Their finding that non-racial discrimination was more strongly linked to mental health risks, than racial discrimination, could explain the concentration of mental impacts as found in this study. Although most of the previous studies did not quantify the relationship between well-being and discrimination, Moolman *et al.* (2009) referred to a duplicate study to theirs in the United States, where it was noted that stressful events have a more negative impact on the mental health aspects of the socio-economically advantaged individuals. With 47% of the reported cases of discrimination impacting on the individuals' well-being in this study, and with the majority of these being mental health related, there seemed to be a link with the US study, as all the participants in this study were from the middle management team and can thus be regarded as socio-economically advantaged.

5.3 Conclusion

The focus of this research study was specifically aimed at exploring the perceived levels of discrimination among the middle management team within a specific South African mine. It resulted from the notion that this middle management team was continuously exposed to organisational discrimination. It is the opinion of the researcher that the defined study objectives were fully addressed.

The study indicated a significant occurrence of organisational discrimination among middle managers within this mining company. It also confirmed that the prevalence of discrimination among middle managers was similar to those reported at both national and international level across the entire spectrum of employees. Any assumption that perceived discrimination as less prevalent among managers compared to lower level employees could be refuted following this study. The types of discrimination reported were very specific and believed to be unique to the company itself. Given the socio-political environment as well as very explicit employment targets imposed onto the mining companies, it confirmed the frustration of white middle managers of not being afforded promotions. What was of concern was the high level of dissatisfaction among the middle managers due to their expected benefits being withheld by the company. Apart from policies and procedures, no literature findings could substantiate this form of discrimination, and therefore it should be viewed in isolation and specific to this mining company itself. The study also highlighted that the general perception of discrimination towards middle managers, was primarily centred around the issue of benefits being withheld.

Although the findings as detailed above can in all likelihood be justified by the company, the implication of this to the business should be fully understood. The results showed that more than half of all the middle managers had admitted that their personal work performance had been affected due to their exposure to discrimination. Again, it was important to note that this discrimination was centred on the issue of benefits and promotions and should not be misinterpreted as being predominantly racial- or gender-based discrimination. What should be of even greater concern to the company, but of interest to the research community, was the fact that the results indicated that the perceived impact on work performance due to discrimination is significantly higher than the actual reported impact. The study therefore suggested that the management of perception at organisational level should form an integral part of any programme aimed at eradicating discrimination and the impact thereof. This suggestion was further supported by the significantly high perception among the middle managers that this reported discrimination was ultimately impacting on the company's performance.

The study also provided clarity on the impact of discrimination on the individual's well-being. As was the case with work performance, any impact to the employee's mental or physical well-

being would impact on the company in some manner. The results indicated that more than 40% of all cases of discrimination would end up impacting on that individual's mental or physical health. In general these were more inclined to be mentally related, rather than physically. Stress, anxiety, demotivation and frustration were the leading indicators of mental health impacts, and if not effectively managed, would impact on the business' performance in the long run.

This study therefore concluded by confirming the presence of significant levels of discrimination towards middle managers within this South African mining company. The consequence of this discrimination was wide spread, but at its core it was currently impacting on the performances of both individuals as well as the company.

5.4 Recommendations

The following recommendations are made in respect of future research studies as well as company specific interventions:

- This study merely focussed on the perceived impacts of discrimination on the company. Further research should aim at actually quantifying these impacts. The consulted literature merely included open-ended statements on the actual impact of discrimination on the company. Future research is definitely required to explicitly quantify the impact on for example, monetary terms. This research could consider absenteeism and the extent of unproductiveness and poor decision making at management level, as the base of the study. This researcher is of the opinion that the only manner in which companies will fully commit to the complete abolishment of discrimination within their organisations, will be if the value thereof is presented as a business case.
- This limited study indicated a definite problem regarding the experiences and perception of organisational discrimination among the middle management team of this mining company. It is recommended that the company implement an annual survey of management employees to track the changes in the level of their experience and perception of organisational discrimination. Not only will this inform them on the effectiveness of current programmes, but it will also suggest areas for consideration as to ensure that the company proactively manage their core human capital.

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Annexure A – Survey Questionnaire



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Organisational Discrimination: a middle-management perspective in a South African mine (Research Questionnaire)

Dear Participant,

As a member of the middle-management team of your organisation, you are requested to participate in this research study conducted by the North West University's Business School. Please note that your name and/or industry number is not required and therefore all participants will remain anonymous.

Overview

Even after 20 years of democracy, the South African mining industry is still plagued with accusations of organisational discrimination. Although various research studies have focussed on discrimination at the lower levels of an organisation, no clear research could be established that investigated the perceived levels of discrimination experienced by middle-management within the South African mining industry. This, as well the impacts thereof on the individuals and the organisation, is therefore largely unknown. Your participation will not only benefit your organisation directly, but will also add value to the field of organisational development and possibly direct future studies.

Technical Aspects

Literature refers to *organisational discrimination* as discrimination in the workplace, and can generally be defined as treating an individual or group unequally with respects to recruiting or hiring, or any other terms and conditions of employment due to the person's or group's race, colour, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, or veteran's status. These are typically endorsed through company specific policies, practices, and strategies that may be biased towards certain individuals or groups. This research study is primarily focussed on the unfair treatment of middle managers; either individually or as a group.

Your participation is highly appreciated!!

Demographic Information

Gender	Male				Female
Age	18 - 25	26 - 35	36 - 45	46 - 55	56 - 65
Race	White	Black	Coloured	Indian	Other
Qualifications	Grade 12 or less	Diploma / Cert	Degree	Hons Degree	Masters / PhD
Years of service at current organisation	0 - 3	4 - 6	7 - 9	10 - 12	>12

Questions for Discussion

Instruction: Please answer or respond to the following questions or statements as accurately and truthfully as possible.

1. As a middle manager in your current organisation, were you ever personally subjected to some form of organisational discrimination?	Yes	No	
2. If yes, please elaborate briefly.			
3. Apart from your personal experience, what do you perceive the level of organisational discrimination towards middle management to be in your organisation?	High	Medium	Low
4. Briefly elaborate on your answer above?			
5. Has your personal experience of organisational discrimination ever affected your work performance?	Yes	No	
6. Do you think that middle managers in your organisation are currently less productive or ineffective due to continued organisational discrimination towards them?	Yes	No	
7. Please clarify your answer above.			
8. Has your personal experience of organisational discrimination ever affected your personal well-being (physical or mental health)?	Yes	No	
9. Please provide examples to your answer above? (List any symptoms)			
10. Do you think that the current level of organisational discrimination among middle managers is affecting your organisation's performance? Please elaborate.			