

EXPLORING THE RELATION BETWEEN STRATEGIC OPENNESS,
ALIGNMENT, AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: THE CASE OF
BANK OF BEIRUT

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the Faculty of Business Administration and Economics
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of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science

by
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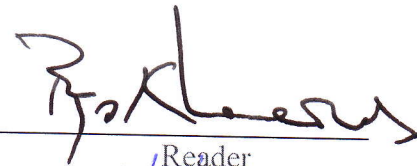
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Abstract

Purpose – This research attempts to unveil the plausible relations that may exist between internal strategic openness, perceived alignment, and engagement, as well as scrutinize how each may vary between employees of different demographic characteristics at micro levels of an organization.

Design/methodology/approach – Employing a mixture of deductive and inductive reasoning approaches, this study poses six research questions and quantitatively tests twenty four hypotheses using a sample of 216 employees working in core banking functions at Bank of Beirut.

Findings – The findings show that perceptions of openness and alignment, as well as engagement significantly vary amongst employees according to certain demographic characteristics pertaining to each. Moreover, internal strategic openness was found to affect perceived strategic alignment, and both openness and perceived alignment were found to significantly impact employee engagement.

Practical implications – The findings provide Bank of Beirut with empirical proof that openness, which can be controllably managed towards different internal stakeholders, positively contributes to employees' level of perceived alignment and employee engagement. Hence, through applying different “open” tactics, the organization can dualistically benefit from a more diversified and richer flow of strategic input, as well as improve alignment and engagement levels of its growing workforce.

Theoretical implications – This research advances the literatures on three currently popular topics, as it empirically examines the unexplored relationships between internal strategic openness on one hand, and both alignment and engagement on the other. The revealed relationships are interpreted through a unique theoretical triangulation of the legitimacy and stakeholder theories along with the foundations of SAP.

Keywords Internal openness, Strategic alignment, Employee engagement, Strategy as practice, Internal stakeholders.

1. SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

1.1 Introduction

As a result of the recent changes in organizational, societal, cultural, and technological forces, strategy work has been exhibiting more openness on both internal and/or external levels (Whittington et al. 2011). However and since the dynamics of strategizing are continuously affected by environmental and organizational contingencies, openness may differ in both direction and magnitude towards different stakeholders along its progression (Hautz et al., 2016; Appleyard and Chesbrough, 2016). Strategy as Practice (SAP) research has recently revealed how openness through its different forms has been affecting the strategic planning process holistically, as well as involved stakeholders specifically. From a SAP perspective, strategy should be studied through the actions and interactions of different stakeholders as it consists of a collective social activity. The emerging bodies of theoretical and empirical literatures on open strategy have been growing in both size and diversity. Some studies have explored how new ventures use open strategy-making with external audiences as impression management, while others scrutinized how its adoption through social media is changing the nature of organizational strategizing in both small and large organizations. Moreover, other parts of the literature have also examined the strategizing practices that are adopted by radically open organizations, while some studied aspects such as crowd-based input into decision making on internal and/or external levels. Therefore, the SAP lens offers an alternative

approach for studying strategy, of which is its social examination from different perspectives, of which is openness.

Within Lebanon, research has yet to be conducted on the topic of openness, although many organizations across different sectors may have been subject to transformations in regards to the nature of how strategy work is done. Considered to be one of the pillars of the Lebanese economy, the banking sector is characterized by its resilience in an increasingly challenging economic environment. Not only did the large sums of deposits by the Lebanese diaspora lead the banking sector into being a powerful actor in the economy, but also fueled the growth of its underlying entities. This growth has been made visible via the engagement of a large number of Lebanese financial institutions in expansionary plans on both national and multinational operations. Therefore, factors such as transnational operations, activist shareholders, and interdependent ecosystems may have incited some financial institutions to adopt more open stances towards a wider array of stakeholders. The expansion and organizational evolution of these banks also hold implications of social natures, as alongside economic resources, organizations have been investing their human capitals. In Lebanon, financial institutions are estimated to employ over 25 000 employees spread out across nearly 50 commercial banks (Association of Banks in Lebanon, 2016), hence attributing a crucial role to their human constituencies in their survival and development. The large proportion of banking employees that hold university degrees (over 19,000 employees) and possess significant amounts of knowledge, skills, and experience may therefore be perceived, or at least some parts of it as a pool of aggregate knowledge that is able to provide strategic activity with valuable input. Moreover, post-modernism has induced a shift away from the

ideologies of wisdom being exclusively at the top, and the increased turnover rates of contemporary manager have rendered the efforts of maintaining secrecy relatively obsolete. Furthermore, unidirectional advice has been losing popularity, as organizations have increasingly been reverting to seeking strategy advice through different means, of which the most obvious is consultancy. Therefore, social and cultural forces may have also affected the nature of strategy making within some organizations in the banking industry, towards being more inclusive and transparent with some internal and/or external stakeholders. Not only would such open initiatives allow access to greater pools of aggregate knowledge, but may also potentially be part of conveying compliance to the societal expectations of some stakeholders. As from a technological perspective, Banks have been increasingly integrating technology into their operations through its application within various functions and for different purposes. Consequently, the technological advancements that have taken place throughout the past decade may have also provided new strategic practices that have enabled a greater and wider degree of openness with certain internal and/or external members. In this line, it would be of high value to scrutinize how openness can be characterized within a Lebanese financial institution, as it would provide an unprecedented snapshot of its manifestation, as well as an insight on how it may affect its stakeholders. Such study would not only carry theoretical implications for the emerging literature on openness, however also practically benefit organizations by providing empirical findings based on a fresh social perspective that has re-focused strategy research on the human element.

1.2 Research aim and questions

This research attempts to unveil the plausible relations that may exist between internal strategic openness, perceived alignment, and engagement, as well as scrutinize how each may vary between employees of different demographic characteristics at micro levels of an organization. Henceforth, six research questions constitute the starting point for the study: 1- “Does internal strategic openness affect perceived strategic alignment?” 2- “Do perceptions of openness vary amongst employees with different demographic characteristics and how?” 3- “Does perceived strategic alignment affect employee engagement?” 4- “Do perceptions of strategic alignment vary amongst employees with different demographic characteristics and How?” 5- “Is employee engagement affected by internal strategic openness?” 6- “Do engagement levels vary amongst employees with different demographic characteristics and how?”. The below Table 1.1 summarizes the six research questions along with relevant hypotheses.

Research question	Hypothesis
Does internal strategic openness affect perceived strategic alignment?	H1: Internal strategic openness positively affects perceived strategic alignment
	H2: Internal strategic openness varies with respect to gender
	H3: Internal strategic openness varies with respect to age
	H4: Internal strategic openness varies with respect to years of experience at the organization
Do perceptions of openness vary amongst employees with different demographic characteristics and how?	H5: Internal strategic openness varies with respect to years of experience in current position
	H6: Internal strategic openness varies with respect to educational level
	H7: Internal strategic openness varies with respect to current position
	H8: Internal strategic openness varies with respect to the possession of a professional certificate

Does perceived strategic alignment affect employee engagement?	H9: Perceived strategic alignment positively affects employee engagement
Do perceptions of strategic alignment vary amongst employees with different demographic characteristics and How?	H10: Perceived strategic alignment varies with respect to gender H11: Perceived strategic alignment varies with respect to age H12: Perceived strategic alignment varies with respect to years of experience at the organization H13: Perceived strategic alignment varies with respect to years of experience in current position H14: Perceived strategic alignment varies with respect to educational level H15: Perceived strategic alignment varies with respect to current position H16: Perceived strategic alignment varies with respect to the possession of a professional certificate
Is employee engagement affected by internal strategic openness?	H17: Employee engagement is positively affected by internal strategic openness
Do engagement levels vary amongst employees with different demographic characteristics and how?	H18: Employee engagement varies with respect to gender H19: Employee engagement varies with respect to age H20: Employee engagement varies with respect to years of experience at the organization H21: Employee engagement varies with respect to years of experience in current position H22: Employee engagement varies with respect to educational level H23: Employee engagement varies with respect to current position H24: Employee engagement varies with respect to the possession of a professional certificate

Table 1.1: Summary of research questions and hypotheses

1.3 Bank of Beirut as a case study

In order to explore and portray how openness in strategy work may vary within a Lebanese banking institution, as well explore the effects it may have on alignment, and engagement, Bank of Beirut emerged as a highly suitable research ground for a case study. Having an alpha classification, Bank of Beirut is amongst the top ten financial institutions in Lebanon, as well as one of four listed banks on the Beirut stock exchange (Corporate Finance Institute, 2019; BlomInvestBank, 2017; BLOMBANK, 2018). The organization has received a large number of awards throughout the past recent years, of

which are five awards in the year 2018 alone. The bank earned “The fastest growing bank in Lebanon” award from Banker Middle East in 2018, hence highlighting the significance of BOB as an actor in the Lebanese banking sector (Bank of Beirut, 2019). BOB has been engaged in transnational operations through penetrating five continents, therefore highlighting the role of that peripheries and subsidiaries may have on the overall operations and performance. To add, the emergence of activist shareholders, increased merger and acquisition activity, as well as high interest in social responsibility have significantly affected the bank’s corporate governance and disclosure policies. Bank of Beirut had scored 80% (A-) in the Governance and Integrity Rating for the year 2017, hence being positioned as the second in this regards amongst the ten publically traded companies on the Beirut Stock Exchange (Bank of Beirut, 2019). Not only does such initiative reflect the compliance with the emerging shareholder rights movement, but also a serious commitment to improving the dissemination of corporate governance information to the broader range of internal and external stakeholders. Furthermore, BOB operates and exists within an interdependent network of complementary services and products that is directed and led by the central bank, hence implying a high cooperative exchange of information with other members of the system. From a technological perspective, the emergence of social software and social media has equipped Bank of Beirut with many tools that has enabled a greater interaction with a wider array of stakeholders and for several purposes. BOB has innovatively transformed it operations through their B-Smart self-service Digital Branches, Hybrid Branches, and satellite branches. The bank has even integrated technology into its mission, by promising a first class digital banking experience, as well as an ongoing process of digital innovation. In

this line, just as organizational and technological forces were found to have unavoidably affected operations, they had also affected governance practices. Likewise, societal and cultural forces may have affected openness by expanding the range of those who are involved. As per Whittington (2011), several factors of which are the wider and easier access to strategy knowledge and post-modernism have been driving organizations into promoting increased transparency and inclusion internally. Bank of Beirut has been exhibiting an ongoing expansion, which has consequently driven employee numbers to significantly grow. In 2017, they opened 4 new branches in Lebanon, as well as had their staff count increased by 146 full time employees. Moreover, and as stated in their mission statement, “Our commitment is the result of our trust in the dedication of our human capital”. Therefore, the findings of this study would prove as highly valuable for BOB, as they would empirically establish how openness may affect strategic alignment and employee engagement, especially knowing that openness can be controlled through different practices.

1.4 Thesis outline

The following research is partitioned into 5 main chapters. The first chapter is introductory in nature, and therefore provides a general overview of the study’s scope, research questions and hypothesis. The second chapter will feature a comprehensive review of the literatures on openness, alignment, and engagement, as well as the theoretical foundations upon which the research was established and initiated. The third chapter will entail the strategy and methodological approach that was adopted in order to

collect and analyze the data, along with the sampling procedures, philosophical dimensions, and reasoning methods. The fourth chapter will feature the statistical tests and models, along with the analysis of the results and testing of hypotheses. Lastly, the fifth chapter will examine validity and reliability dimensions, as well as conclude the research with both theoretical and practical implications.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Strategy research has persistently adopted a micro-economic lens that focuses on the macro level of companies, where attention is directed at the effects of strategy on performance, rather than the actual practices of strategizing (Jarzabkowski, et al., 2007). Nevertheless, viewing strategy from a different perspective, one that describes it as something people do rather than a position that organizations have, has resulted in the emergence of Strategy as Practice (SAP) (Jarzabkowski, 2005). The adoption of a SAP lens enables the scrutiny of the actual strategic practices that occur at a micro level throughout daily organizational life, by conceiving the act of strategizing as a social accomplishment of collective activity that takes place through the interactions of a wider range of practitioners (Jarzabkowski et al, 2007). Neilsen and Rao (1985) in Mantere (2005) observed that solely the strategies that are perceived as legitimate are able to succeed, hence bridging strategy as practice to the concepts of stakeholder legitimacy and corporate social responsibility. The notion of CSR is put into action within the strategic context through informal or formal stakeholder engagement practices and dialogues, which consequently enable the materialization of corporate behavior's societal expectations and strengthen legitimacy (Lindgreen and Swaen, 2010).

Throughout this chapter, the subsequent sections will respectively expand on what strategy as practice is, discuss the most popular subthemes that exist within the broader umbrella of SAP, cover the related conceptual and theoretical underpinnings, and lastly conclude the main points with a general discussion.

2.2 Defining Strategy As Practice (SAP)

Strategy As Practice is perceived as a research alternative (Golsorkhi et al., 2010) that brings back the human element, its actions, and interactions back to the center stage of strategy research (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). According to Carter et al. (2008) and Johnson et al. (2003), the SAP perspective improves on the weaknesses of the micro-economic dominated mainstream strategy research, as it incorporates the actors and their related actions that shape strategy and that have been traditionally marginalized. In this line, the definition of SAP as being an alternative to mainstream strategy research is validated and even further asserted by its adoption of a sociological eye rather than an economic one (Jarzabkowski and spee, 2009); (Whittington 2006). More specifically and as per Golsorkhi et al. (2010), strategy research from a SAP perspective is concerned with the black box of strategy work, as it diverts from examining the effects of strategies on performance, to critically analyzing the actual practices that take place throughout the strategic planning process.

The practice view that links micro activities to the macro of companies and conceptualizes strategy as something that people do focuses on three main elements: practitioners of strategic work, praxis, and practices (Whittington, 2006). Ontologically, practitioners are identified according to four criteria, either them being individual or aggregate actors (aggregate groups; functional/structural layers), or whether they are internal or external stakeholders (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). Palmer and O'kane (2007) in Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009) noted that external actors are viewed as aggregate actors due to their further distance from the organization than internal members. Hence three distinct categories of practitioners exist; those being internal

individual actors, internal aggregate actors, and extra-organizational aggregate actors (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009).

	Internal	External
Individual	Internal individual actors	External aggregate actors
Aggregate	Internal aggregate actors	

Figure 2.1: Types of strategy practitioners

From this perspective, SAP transcends the traditional top down approach that solely considers top managers as organizational strategists, by including a wider variety of actors who contribute to the creation and sustainability of competitive advantages (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009).

The second element of the view that describes strategy as an activity is “praxis”, whereby it is “an emphatic term that describes the whole of human action” (Reckwitz, 2002, p.249). Put in a social context, “praxis is where operation and action meet, a dialectic synthesis of what is going on in a society and what people are doing” (Sztompka, 1991, in Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009, p.73). From a SAP perspective, it refers to the formal or informal daily activities that may be habitual or non-routinized, and which are of a strategic nature (Dahl, Kock, and Lundgren-Henriksson, 2016; Carter, 2008). As per Jarzabkowski et al. (2007) praxis is the multi-level and inter-connective stream of activity linking micro actions to the wider organization, and which is present at three levels, the “micro”, “meso”, and “macro”. Micro studies tackle experiences of specific episodes such as meetings, discussions or workshops. Meso studies are aimed at the organizational level like patterns of strategic decisions and change. Finally, macro studies tackle praxis at an institutional level within relevant contextual industries, where

examples of behavioral patterns include strategic alliances and multi-institutional collaborations (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009).

The third element being practices, refers to shared procedures, social routines, material tools, and techniques (setting targets, forecasting methods, internal/external analyses) that practitioners draw upon to structure the daily flow of strategic work, previously defined as praxis (Mantere, 2005; Whittington, 2006). Practices are interrelated and entangled with diverse activities that are situated in different places and time, therefore perceived as bundles within spatial, temporal, and material arrangements (Schatzki, 2006). According to Whittington (2002), practices are the “done thing”, whereby they are dualistically linked to legitimacy as being socially accepted by stakeholders, and to expertise by being well practiced through repetition. Thus the existence of practices provides “behavioral, cognitive, procedural, discursive, and physical resources through which multiple actors are able to interact in order to socially accomplish collective activity” (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007, p.9). Henceforth, practices can be further associated with being enablers or disablers of activities by setting, or for that matter not setting, certain constraints (Whittington, 2002; Rouleau and Balogun, 2011; Mantere, 2005).

In this line, strategy as practice scrutinizes the multiple social interactions that occur along the process of strategizing by adopting a micro-lens that allows the identification of “who” practices strategy, in addition to the “how” and “what” of doing things (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). Henceforth, the following statement serves as a valid and novel addition to the existing pool of SAP definitions: Strategy as practice is a dualistic research tool and lens, which empowers researchers with the ability of scrutinizing micro

practices and linking them to the macro, therefore providing a holistic picture of how organizations socially do strategy.

Strategy as practice						
Praxis		Practices	Practitioners			
The inter-connective stream of activity linking micro actions to the wider organization		Behavioral, cognitive, procedural, discursive, and physical resources through which multiple actors are able to interact in order to socially accomplish collective activity	Those who do strategic work within organizations			
			<i>Organizational levels</i>	Internal individual actors	Internal aggregate actors	External aggregate actors
				Macro		
				Meso		
	Micro					
Viewing strategy as something organizations do, rather than have						

Figure 2.2: The elements of Strategy as practice

2.3 Comprehensive review of strategy as practice

Throughout the growing body of literature on strategy as practice, various sub-themes have emerged as topics of interest for researchers, and whereby each has contributed to the ongoing expansion of the SAP research agenda. Two leading SAP scholars, Seidl and Ma (2012), conducted a survey aimed at uncovering the ten hottest topics falling under the broader SAP agenda, and identified the following subthemes as being the most popular and possessive of potential for future research: open strategy, strategy practice and performativity, sociomateriality in strategy practice, time and space in strategizing, body and gender in strategic change, activities and practices underlying capabilities and

routines, emotions in strategy work, strategy workshops, institutional work and strategizing, and power, resistance and subjectivity.

OPEN STRATEGY AS A STRATEGY PRACTICE

Openness in the Strategy as practice context promises greater participation in strategic decision making, else referred to as inclusion, and increased exposure for strategizing activities to organizational stakeholders in the form of transparency (Adler and Pittz, 2016). What differentiates this unconventional open strategic lens is the fact that it encompasses a wider range of both internal and external stakeholders, as well as disseminates richer information throughout the processes of formulating and communicating strategies (Gegenhuber and Dobusch, 2016; Birkinshaw, 2017). More specifically, it does not aim at transferring strategic decision making rights, but rather refers to shared opinions, views, knowledge, and information (Whittington, Caillaud, and Douglas, 2011).

The first dimension being Inclusion, refers to the range of intra and extra-organizational actors who are involved in firm-related strategic practices, of which are the strategic conversations that shape the development of strategies through contributions of insights, propositions, and information (Mantere and Vaara, 2008; Whittington et al., 2011). Internally, it refers to the degree to which internal members of an organization are involved in the formulation and evaluation of strategies, or even as extreme as getting them to shift their attitudes and behaviors to implement a chosen way forward (Birkinshaw, 2017); (Whittington, et al., 2011). Externally, it is the solicitation of decision making information from external stakeholders via a multitude of firm-

connected tools, hence enabling the taping into greater pools of comprehensive knowledge (Power and Phillips, 2011); (Xiao, Wei, and Dong, 2015); . Therefore, the implications of both internal and external inclusion are summarized in the power of collective intelligence which mitigates biases, and allows organizations to benefit from the relevant diversity by applying the input to various decisions (Bonabeau, 2009).

The second dimension being transparency, simply describes how much information is shared with internal and external stakeholders (Birkinshaw, 2017). As per Simon (2006), transparency within a corporate environment (internally) is enhanced when internal and external information reach organizational members who take part in decision making, in order to eventually make adequate, efficient, and effective business decisions. Therefore, reaching higher levels of internal transparency is considered as an outcome of communication behaviors within an organization that reflects greater access to strategic content by employees (Street and Meister, 2004); (Birkinshaw, 2017). As for external transparency, it reflects the outcomes of externally-oriented communication behaviors that are directed and oriented differently towards diverse stakeholders, as well as according to situational and disciplinary content (Simon, 2006); (Street and Meister, 2004). Henceforth, from an open strategic point of view, transparency refers to: “the visibility of information about an organization’s strategy, potentially during the formulation process but particularly with regard to the strategy finally” (Whittington et al., 2011, p. 536).

Open Strategy	
Inclusion	Transparency

Internal	External	Internal	External

Figure 2.3: The elements of open strategy

Author (s)	Research Statement (s)
Gegenhuber and Dobusch (2016)	How do new ventures use open strategy-making as impression management over time? /what impression management effect does openness have on external audiences?
Baptista et al. (2016)	How is the adoption of social media changing the nature of organizational strategizing?
Malhotra et al. (2016)	What actions can mitigate risks of knowledge gaps when using online ad hoc crowds for open strategy formulation?
Luedicke et al. (2017)	What strategizing practices are performed by an organization that tries to be radically open? / What are the outcomes that follow from this endeavor?
Yakis-Douglas et al. (2017)	To what extent is acquisition related communications to investors (external transparency) beneficial to protagonists?

Table 2.1: Sample empirical studies on open strategy as a strategy practice

STRATEGY PRACTICE AND PERFORMATIVITY

Austin (1962)'s "performative utterance" has been increasingly gaining popularity within the field of organizational studies, whereby speech is viewed as an action that constitutes and changes reality rather than a mere description of it (Austin, 1962; Bourdieu 1991, Wright, 2014; Huault, Kärreman, Perret, and Spicer, 2015). This has induced many scholars to start viewing strategy as an important language game that performs or "does" something (Carter, Clegg, and Kornberger, 2010), hence triggering a recent call for a "performative turn" to consider strategy as a performative practice itself (Muniesa, 2014).

According to Kornberger and Clegg (2011) “Strategy’s performative effects result from the forms of discursive structure and rationality that strategists draw upon as a resource to justify and legitimize their practice” (p.138). Hence, rational decision making as a strategizing practice might be viewed as a performative praxis that enables the realization of a theory, specifically “the rational choice theory” (Cabantous and Gond, 2011). As per Cabantous and Gond (2011), performative praxis denotes actors’ daily activities, which are supported by tools and cognitions embedded in a theory, and that consequently transform that theory into social reality. More specifically, it is the engrained theoretical assumptions in practitioners’ beliefs and procedures that allow the materialization of theory into existence as a social reality, through behaviors, discourse, and routines (Cabantous and Gond, 2011). Wright (2014) noted that the performativity of the routines that actors execute within specific temporal, spatial, and discursive contexts should not lead to undermining the material artifacts involved, as socio-materiality has proven to possess significant “agentic” qualities. Strategy discourse is therefore linked to both the physical through socio-material practices, and the psychological through the cognitive aspects of strategic sense-making (Wright, 2014). In this line, some strategic practices may be justified by the enactment theory, which focuses on the repetitive enactment of utterances and theoretical models through certain tools, and whereby skillful actors are able to get discursive forms accepted and enacted (Guerard, Langley, and Seidl, 2013). Wickert and Schaefer (2014) proposed the concept of “progressive performativity”, which involves the “resignification” of incomplete managerial acts through reinterpretation, and that consequently enables the manifestation of new practices and behaviors via the “talk into existence phenomenon”. From a Lyotardian perspective,

performativity is grounded as a pre-dominance of the performance criterion, whereby knowledge is developed and evaluated in regards to increasing efficiency rather than its truth (Lyotard, 1984). Guerard et al. (2013) established the link between Leotard's view and the field of strategy by highlighting the preoccupation of strategy work with "measuring, evaluating, and ensuring the contribution of the different parts of an organization to its overall performance" (p. 570). From another viewpoint, Carter et al. (2010) argued that a research agenda for strategy proposed itself from Mackenzie's performative forms of financial economics as follows: 1) "Generic performativity" which argues that economic aspects like theories and models shape the actions of practitioners; 2) "effective performativity" which suggests that some economic aspects are partially utilized in the essence of making change; 3) "Barnesian performativity" which proposes that economic models create the world they describe; and 4) "Counterperformativity" which indicates that the practical use of economic aspects lead processes to be less like their theoretical depiction (Mackenzie, 2006). In this line, the performative aspect or function of strategy may be summarized by three main elements, those being actors, tools and, theoretical assumptions, which ultimately aim at instilling strategic practices with both legitimacy and power (Cabantous and Gond, 2011; Kornberger and Clegg, 2011; Guerard et al., 2013; Wright, 2014).

Author (s)	Research Statement (s)
Rouleau and Balogun (2011)	How the sensemaking required as part of a strategic role is discursively put into action by middle managers/Through which activities the discursive competence is enacted by middle managers?

Kornberger and (2011)	Klegg	How is strategy practiced? / What knowledge is it based upon? / And what are its power effects in a strategy project?
Vaara et al. (2010)		The power effects of strategy texts as part of strategic planning
Denis et al. (2006)		What is it that allowed the emergence of a number system as a powerful instrument for strategic decision making? / What are its direct and indirect consequences?
Brown (2004)		How are public inquiry reports constituted as 'authoritative'? What can we learn about sensemaking from analyses of the texts of public inquiries?

SOCIOMATERIALITY IN STRATEGY PRACTICE

From a practice perspective, strategy is viewed as a continuous process of creation through socially constructed strategizing activities (Jarzabkowski, Spee, and Smets, 2013). According to Jarzabkowski et al. (2007) “strategizing comprises the actions, interactions, and negotiations of multiple actors, as well as the situated practices that they

Table 2.2: Sample empirical studies on Strategy as practice and Performativity draw upon in accomplishing that **Table 3.1:** Sample empirical studies on strategy practice and performativity activity” (p.176).

Hence, the sociomaterial practices that include tools, artifacts, as well as spatial and material arrangements of where strategizing occurs are integral parts of strategizing activities (Balogun, Jacobs, Jarzabkowski, Mantere, and Vaara, 2014).

According to Stigliani and Ravasi (2012), material artifacts and tools are “constitutive” elements of sociomaterial practices, as they are considered as the micro foundations of

strategy in organizations. The attribution of the sociomaterial terminology to strategy practices highlights the “constitutive entanglement” of the material and the social in daily organizational life (Orlikowski, 2007). Materiality is explained by Leonardi, Nardi, and Kallinikos (2012) as “the arrangement of an artifact’s physical and/or digital materials into particular forms that endure across differences in place and time and are important to users” (p.42). Amid the different types that capture the “material turn” within strategic work are strategy tools, objects and artifacts, and technologies (Dameron, Lê, and LeBaron, 2015). Strategy technology such as computer software either enables or inhibits certain strategy practices (Kaplan, 2011) due to their amalgamation with human knowledge, as well as the relevant features such as user options, language, and software compatibility (Paroutis, Franco, and Papadopoulos, 2015; Dameron et al., 2015).

Strategy tools are defined by Clark (1997) as “techniques, tools, methods, models, frameworks, approaches and methodologies which are available to support decision making within strategic management” (p.417). As per Worren, Moore, and Elliot (2002) in Jarzabkowski and Kaplan (2015), strategy tools possess the ability to integrate specific knowledge and methods that structure thinking, hence consequently affect the practice of strategy. They are formalized mechanisms and frameworks for strategic analysis such as the BCG matrix, SWOT analysis, and Porter’s five forces, and that supposedly provide valuable strategic insights to decision makers (Jarratt and Stiles, 2010; Belmondo and Sargis-Roussel, 2015). Nevertheless, strategy tools sometimes fail to provide desired and useful outputs, as managers may sometimes be inapt in utilizing them, as some actors exploit them to justify politically favorable positions especially during periods of uncertainty that induce complexity and interpersonal tradeoffs (Belmondo and Sargis-

Roussel, 2015; Jarzabkowski and Kaplan 2015; March, 2006). As per Jarzabkowski and Kaplan (2015) “the use of tools is a problematic dichotomy” (p. 538), as it diverts attention from the dynamics that pervade their usage within routinized strategic practices, as well as conceals the specificities of organizational outcomes. Other types of materials include objects and artifacts, such as computers, telephones, desks, post-its, flipcharts, graphs, tables, agendas, documents and white boards that without which daily strategy work is not possible (Jarzabkowski and Whittington, 2008; Werle and Seidl, 2015; Balogun et al., 2014). Artifacts and objects being “stuff of strategy” (Whittington, 2007, p. 1579), are regarded as the tangible, visible, or audible traces of past acts of meaning, which both shape and are shaped by strategy practices and activities (Vaara and Whittington, 2012; Dameron et al., 2015). According to the theoretical assumptions of “epistemic objects”, artifacts gain situated meanings and different interpretations through their knowledge oriented usage by strategists, hence are epistemologically transformed into strategic artifacts (Schein, 2004). As Dameron et al., (2015) concluded: “objects and artifacts are not inherently meaningful: rather, they are made meaningful through social interaction such as strategizing” (p. 3).

Author (s)	Research Statement (s)
Jarzabkowski et al. (2013)	What roles do material artifacts play in accomplishing strategy work?
Belmondo and Sargis-Roussel (2015)	How do managers collectively use strategy tools in local settings?
Werle and Seidl (2015)	What types of material artefacts are involved in the exploration of new strategic topics? / How does the interaction between different material artefacts affect the dynamics of the exploration process?

Kaplan (2011)

How is powerpoint engaged in the discursive practices that make up epistemic culture of strategy making?

Table 2.3: Sample empirical studies on sociomateriality in strategy practice**TIME AND SPACE IN STRATEGIZING**

The spatial and temporal dimensions of when and where strategizing takes place have been neglected throughout most strategy-related research agendas, as the focus has commonly been on formal strategic planning and explicit strategizing activities (Hydle, 2015). Nevertheless, practitioners have been deemed as inseparable from the spatial arrangements within which they “do” strategy (LeBaron and Whittington, 2011), and their relevant practices been conceived as being temporal work (Whittington, 2006).

Organizations have been increasingly relying on iconographies within the symbolic spaces where organizing activities take place, as this supports the legitimization of practices in the perceptions of diverse stakeholders (DeVaugny and Vaast, 2016). To add, from a “sociological eye” (Whittington 2006, p. 1577) strategic issues are settled by linking interpretations of the past, present, and future (Kaplan and Orlikowski, 2013). As per Schatzki (2012), a practice is defined as “an open ended, spatially-temporally dispersed nexus of doings and sayings” (p. 15), whereby the dimensions of time and space in human activity are crucial for social life (Schatzki, 2010). Hydle (2015) highlighted the role of spatial and temporal dimensions in non-deliberate strategizing by arguing that the relevant coping activities and practices within such strategic form are

neither essentially performed within the same spatial settings, nor time. Additionally, most strategizing activities have been deemed to be of a non-deliberate nature, as they are the result of spontaneous human actions and interactions as part of socio-organizational life (Mintzberg 1978; Mintzberg and Water, 1985 in Chia and Holt, 2006). Therefore, spatial-temporal cognition is thought to shape the process of organizational learning, which in turn is crucial for effective decision making (Rowe, 2015). Vaara and Pedersen (2014) described time and space as conditions for creating strategy narratives, by basing their assumptions on Bakhtin (1981)'s notion of "chronotope" for analyzing the spatio-temporality of narratives and discourses.

According to Haider and Mariotty (2016), temporal cognition denotes the "set of cognitive functions that support the broad range of time experiences" (p. 1816). However, Schatzki (2010) distinguished two notions of time, objective time and temporality, whereby the first refers to the succession of time and accomplishment duration, while the second denotes the coexistence of past, present, and future dimensions within human activities. As per Emirbayer and Mische (1998)'s theory of human agency, "human action is a process of social engagement" (p. 963) that is temporally informed by the past, directed towards the future, and shaped in the present through the contingencies of the moment. Spatial cognition on the other hand refers to "the acquisition, organization and utilization of knowledge about the internal and external environments" (Rowe, 2015, in Haider and Mariotty, 2016, p. 1816). According to Schatzki (2010), space can be differentiated as notions of objective space and spatiality, whereby the first refers to the three dimensional locational geographic spaces, and the second denotes the designated places for certain actions within specific contexts. Strategy work is usually

conducted within physical spaces that are denoted as “strategic spaces” (Jarzabkowski, Burke, and Spee, 2015; Cornelissen, Mantere, and Vaara 2014), and which consequently affect strategizing by inhibiting or encouraging certain strategic practices (Dameron et al., 2015). Therefore, strategizing is considered as a “spatial accomplishment” (Jarzabkowski et al., 2015) that is practiced through “temporal work” (Kaplan and Orlikowski, 2013).

Author (s)	Research Statement (s)
Haider and Mariotty (2016)	How do the decision-making processes evolve according to spatial and temporal cognition dimensions? and how does the dominant logic changes vis-à-vis those decisions?
Jarzabkowski et al. (2015)	How is strategic work accomplished through the orchestration of material, bodily and discursive resources?
Kaplan and Orlikowski (2013)	How do managers negotiate and resolve differences in interpretations of the past, present and future in order to make strategy? / Why do some interpretative linkages work and some fail?
Hydle (2015)	How is strategizing organized temporally and spatially? / How do temporality and spatiality affect the way strategizing is carried out?

Table 2.4: Sample empirical studies on time and space in strategizing

BODY AND GENDER IN STRATEGIC CHANGE

Balogun et al. (2014, p. 185) observed that “the practice of strategy is concerned with the way that socio-material aspects such as tools, locations, and spatial arrangements configure strategic interactions between bodies and things”. As per Minocha and Stonehouse (2007), strategic planning is influenced by the body of practitioners, with the latter being inseparable from strategizing practices, as it may act in neutral, negative, or positive manners throughout the process. Nonetheless, little research attention has been

directed at the bodily attributes and activities that are essential for conducting strategic work within organizations, and which may consequently shape strategizing (Jarzabkowski et al., 2015).

Ross (2004) defined the body as the physical existence that is mirrored via movements, gestures, and body language, whereas Bresler (2004) described it as the abstract representation that is manifested through the sociocultural-organizational experiences of institutional actors. Dameron et al. (2015) argued that the body can be viewed as both an intermediary as well as representative of instances for discourse and materiality, hence dualistically belonging to the worlds of things and words. In other terms, body orientations are able to trigger participative initiatives, enable the engagement in face to face conversations, and explicitly shift attention towards specific “things”, henceforth contribute to the realization of collaboration (Dameron et al., 2015). To add, throughout the interactive strategic discourse that actors engage in when strategizing, multiple gestural manifestations arise with the aim of signifying certain implications of speech (LeBaron and Streek, 2000 in Dameron, 2015), thus furthering the assertiveness of inseparability between the bodily performances of strategists and strategic work (LeBaron and Whittington, 2011, in Jarzabkowski, 2015). As per Lewis (1998) in Brundin and Melin (2006), an individual’s observable facial, bodily, and vocal changes are conceived as emotional displays that result from certain emotional states. Displayed emotions through facial expressions, cues, gestures, silences, and voice tonality that complement discourse are thought to significantly affect how words are interpreted, thus highlighting the role of the body in strategic discourse and overall strategizing activities (Liu and Maitlis, 2014). Rouleau (2005) noted that sensegiving and sensemaking are

inherently linked to the socio-cultural contexts within which strategic discourse takes place, whereby gender is one amongst other factors that influence the differing meanings that are attributed to objective facts. Barad (2000) discussed the materialization of sexed bodies, whereby gender is in itself performative, and should not be perceived as a noun or set of attributes, rather an activity and a “doing”. Therefore, the performativity of the body refers to the repeated acts and micro-movements that take place within specific meanings, and that ultimately enable the definition of gendered bodies (Gond, Cabantous, Harding, and Learmonth, 2016). According to Rouleau (2005), gender can also be associated with the division of managerial tasks, whereby in a certain organization, “men make decisions and run internal operations, while women initiate, coordinate, and are responsible for taking care of client relations” (p. 1419). To add, the concepts of masculinity and femininity extend to individual agency, whereby they take part in the constructions of gendered identities within managerial subjectivity (Thomas and Davies, 2005). In this line, the human body influences both the discursive and the material within strategic work (Dameron et al., 2015), as its own interpretive and material forces matter in the process of materialization (Barad, 2003).

Author (s)	Research Statement (s)
Minocha and Stonehouse (2007)	What non-verbal gestures, movements and overall physicality that strategists exhibit reinforce or challenge judgment and offer different interpretations? / What non-verbal resources lead to a successful persuasion?
LeBaron and Whittington (2011)	How does the multimodal orchestration of discourse, artefacts and bodies take place during a strategic conversation of a top management team?
Jarzabkowski et al. (2015)	How is strategic work accomplished through the orchestration of material, bodily and discursive resources?
Rouleau (2005)	How Middle manager interpret and sell change every day? / What is the meaning of specific actions for strategic actors and interlocutors? / What are the underlying professional and social rules of these actions?

Table 2.5: Sample empirical studies on body and gender in strategic change

ACTIVITIES AND PRACTICES UNDERLYING CAPABILITIES AND ROUTINES

Strategy research has traditionally focused on holistic views instead of evaluating the actual strategizing activities that take place at the micro levels of organizations, (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007). According to Felin, Foss, Heimeriks, and Madsen (2012), the micro foundational approach that focuses on the practices and activities of interacting individuals enables deeper understanding of organizational black boxes. “Practices refers to general and shared organizational-level routines or capabilities that actors draw on and employ, while activities here refers to particular individual-level actions; what actors actually do and work with when making strategy” (Regner, 2008, p. 567).

Feldman and Pentland (2003) described routines as “repetitive and recognizable patterns of interdependent actions, carried out by multiple actors” (p.95). Hence they are considered to be a collective rather than individual phenomenon, as the existent practices are more important than the corresponding actors (Felin et al., 2012). Nevertheless, Hansen and Vogel (2010) distinguished three different conceptualizations of routines, those pertaining to “organization theory”, “strategic management”, and “practice schools”. The elemental difference resides in understanding their relation with change, whereby the practice school conversely perceives them as being in a flexible flux that might induce change rather than constantly resist it (Feldman and Pentland, 2003; Becker, 2004; Hansen and Vogel, 2010). According to Lewin, Massini, and Peeters (2011) routines differ according to their complexity, with lower-level routines relating to daily standard operating procedures, and meta-routines referring to those that regulate changes in lower level routines according to the external environment. Therefore, lower-level routines are considered as the constituents of firm-specific capabilities, while meta-routines as the building blocks of dynamic capabilities (Dosi, Nelson, and Winter, 2000; Lewin et. al., 2011). Organizational capabilities emerge from the application of individual skills within relevant organizational roles, thus consist of a collection of routines that offer alternative decision options (Hansen and Vogel, 2010). To add, they contribute in the creation, change, or development of organizational assets, which are in turn the source for competitive advantages in organizations (Regnér, 2008). As for Dynamic capabilities, they are utilized to induce the modification and generation of existing and new routines in response to past experiences and environmental changes (Felin et al., 2012). According to Zollo and winter (2002) “a dynamic capability is a

learned and stable pattern of collective activity through which the organization systematically generates and modifies its operating routines in the pursuit of improved effectiveness'' (p. 340). Routines and capabilities may be replicated within new contexts as part of a value creating strategy, as such actions allow flexibility, extension of lifecycles, and improvement of organizational efficiencies via the transfer of best practices (Friesl and Larty, 2013). Nevertheless, Whittington (2002) proposed that social routines, as part of strategic practices, require legitimation, therefore their replication within new stakeholder-settings requires social acceptance for organizations to remain socially responsible.

Author (s)	Research Statement (s)
Regner (2003)	How do managers create and develop strategy in practice through micro processes and activities?
Salvato (2003)	What is the role of Micro-Strategies in the Engineering of Firm Evolution?
Salvato and Rerup (2011)	How do every day individual actions shape organizational routines and capabilities and, by implication, firm performance? (suggested)
Friesel and Larty (2013)	How do actors create shared understanding about how to perform orgzanizational routines across spatially dispersed units? / How do actors influence variations in the performances of routines across outlets? (suggested)

Table 2.6: Sample empirical studies on activities and practices underlying cap and routines

EMOTIONS IN STRATEGY WORK

The emotional dynamics that are generated throughout strategic conversations significantly impact strategizing activities, of which are strategy formulation and implementation practices (Liu and Maitlis, 2014). This influence stems from the spread

of emotions throughout the daily interactions between individuals from different social backgrounds, and is as well as situated within different organizational contexts (Maitlis and Ozcelik, 2004; Sinkovics, Zagelmeyer, and Kusstatscher, 2011; Sloan and Oliver 2013).

Strategy actors rely heavily on “mutually reinforced relationships” that include forces like emotions (Brunden and Melin, 2006), which in turn affect “the interpretive process through which people assign meanings to their experiences” referred to as “sensemaking” (Weick 1995, in Bartunek, Balogun, and Do, 2011, p. 13). Emotional displays can induce considerably different understandings of discourse through the facial expressions and tones that accompany speech, or even appear through written forms of communication (Liu and Maitlis, 2014). According to Brown (2004) in Liu and Maitlis (2014) even the utter absence of emotions might influence both oral and written discursive forms, as it implies higher levels of authoritativeness. External cues can induce emotions of positive or negative nature, hence trigger certain types of behaviors and attitudes (Bartunek et al., 2011). Emotions of positive valence reflect pleasant feelings such as confidence, love, pride, enthusiasm, and excitement, while those of a negative valence comprise anger, hate, frustration, fear, anxiety, and shame (Samra-Fredericks 2003; Sloan and Oliver 2011). According to Collins (2004), emotions may linger over time, hence creating emotional energy in personal and social encounters, which may in turn fluctuate between being high and involving positive emotions, or low and consisting of negative emotions. Huy (2002) underlined the possibility of individual emotions being transferred and transformed into group emotional states in times of strategic change, mainly through three mechanisms. The corporate culture that organizational members share induces

similar beliefs, thus leading to common understandings, interpretations, and ultimately emotions. Additionally, group affiliation and membership increases individuals' confidence and sense of power, and therefore eases the translation of tendencies into collective expressions. Furthermore, an emotional contagion may drive individuals to unconsciously imitate or exaggerate others' displays of emotions. Mann, Varey, and Button (2000) described emotional contagion as a strong force that may lead to either destructive or constructive outcomes, thus highlighting further the influential capability of emotions on critical strategizing activities within organizations. According to Edmondson and Smith (2006), negative emotions create relationship tensions and lead to political maneuvers that may undo the consensus that strategists may have reached at the decision making table. Therefore, strategic actors should exercise emotional literacy and intelligence throughout daily practices, be aware of what emotions may be expressed in certain settings, as well as know how emotions can be strategically utilized to achieve desired ends (Fineman, 1997 in Samra-Fredericks, 2004). As per Samra-Fredericks (2000), strategists' emotional displays produce persuasion when effectively employed throughout discourse, hence such emotional profit cannot be considered but as a key component of strategizing.

Author (s)	Research Statement (s)
Brundin and Nordqvist (2008)	What is the role of emotions when board members interact to perform the board's control and service tasks?
Liu and Maitlis (2014)	How do emotional dynamics displayed by members of a top management team during their meetings shape the strategizing process?
Lê and Jarzabkowski	What is the role of task and process conflict during

(2015)	strategy implementation, / and what impact do they have on the implementation process?
Samra-Fredericks (2004)	In what ways do decisions unfold over time as a function of the way people feel about themselves, their projects and significant others?

Table 2.7: Sample empirical studies on emotions in strategy work

STRATEGY WORKSHOPS

The “practice turn” emphasizes on analyzing the micro-activities that actors undertake in strategizing (Macintosh, MacLean, and Seidl, 2010), of which are workshops, or otherwise denominated as strategic “off-sites”, away days, and strategic retreats (Healey, Hodgkinson, Whittington, and Johnson, 2015). According to Frisch and Chandler (2006), the outcomes of “strategic retreats” are attributed with higher expectations than those of regular executive meetings, as they provide a scarce opportunity to focus on and uninterruptedly explore strategic issues.

Strategy workshops are planned occurrences that may last several days in extra-organizational spatial settings, whereby strategists analyze and review issues of long term strategic direction, as well as design and communicate new strategies (Hodgkinson, Whittington, Johnson, and Schwartz, 2006; Whittington, Molloy, Mayer, and Smith, 2006). Furthermore, workshops are a form of strategic episodes that are more or less ritualized, and aim at facilitating strategic conversations and debate (Johnson, Prashantham, Floyd, and Bourque, 2010). As per Hendry and Seidl (2003), strategic episodes have a beginning and predefined ending, time limitations, as well as are suspended from formal structures, hence serve as switching mechanisms from an

operational to a strategic focus. Johnson, et al. (2010) noted that the characteristics of ritualization are similar to those of such episodic phenomena, as both are temporally bounded, and offer a rare opportunity of removal from daily organizational processes and structures, which consequently influences conduct. According to Hamel (1996), strategic planning is a calendar driven ritual, whereby despite their description as “virtually meaningless” by Mintzberg (1994, p.108), “away days” have become integral parts of executive calendars across the globe (Healey et al., 2015). Strategy workshops rely on discourse to create alignment amongst organizational elites (Hodgkinson et al., 2006), however are of an overlapping nature as they may adopt egalitarian consensus-seeking approaches in some instances, while conversely public voicing and time pressure tactics in others. (Whittington, et al., 2006). Jarzabkowski et al., (2007) considered strategic discourse as a resource through which multiple actors are able to interact, ultimately in the aims of socially accomplishing collective activity. Throughout strategic episodes, discursive structures are modified by the separation from formal structures in the sense of “who talks to whom, why they talk, what they talk about, and when these conversations take place” (Roos and Von Krogh, 1996 in Hendry and Seidl, 2003, p.184). According to Mezias, Grinyer, and Guth (2001), workshops exploit group potential and build shared understandings that lead to re-evaluating and changing beliefs concerning the internal and external environments, hence optimizing strategizing activities. Additionally, they are “forums for meaningful cooperative interactions between managers, and can include interactions where shared understandings and interpretations emerge” (Thomas, Sargent, and Hardy, 2011, p. 36). In this line, workshops are considered as techniques that enable strategic change (Healey et al., 2015), as they enable organizational transformation

through stepping out of existing management processes (Macintosh et al., 2010; Doz and Prahalad, 1987).

Nevertheless, other viewpoints have considered workshops as being of a high-stake nature, whereby they do not guarantee positive outcomes, as some participants may suffer disengagement due to failure in reconciling differences, consequently affecting overall corporate morale (Hodgkinson and Wright, 2002 in Healey et al., 2015; Whittington et al., 2006). Therefore, the significance of strategic workshops resides in the scrutiny of participants' inherent micro interactions, which enables deeper understandings of this strategy praxis (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009).

Author (s)	Research Statement (s)
Healy et al. (2015)	What are the basic design features of workshops related to interpersonal, cognitive, and organizational outcomes
Whittington et al. (2006)	In a world of accelerating change, approaching strategy and organization as interlinked and practical activities is more effective than traditional static and detached approaches that privilege analysis.
Jarzabkowski and Seidl (2008)	How do strategy meetings contribute to stabilizing or destabilizing of strategic orientations? How do variations in characteristics of ritualization affect the dynamics of strategic episodes? / How do the practices associated with ritualized strategy workshops influence whether or not such workshops achieve their intended purpose?
Johnson et al. (2010)	How do actors visually interact with strategy tools to produce knowledge about strategic issues in workshops?
Paroutis et al. (2015)	How do actors visually interact with strategy tools to produce knowledge about strategic issues in workshops?

Table 2.8: Sample empirical studies on strategy workshops

INSTITUTIONAL WORK AND STRATEGIZING

Pillared on a bottom up approach (Zilber, 2013), “Institutional Work” is defined as individuals and collective actors’ purposive action, of both mental and physical natures, ultimately aimed at creating, maintaining, and disrupting institutions (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006; Lawrence, Subbady, and Leca, 2011). According to Seo and Creed, 2002 in Smets and Jarzabkowski (2013), it addresses embedded organizational agency by investigating the motives that drive actors to change existing norms and practices, which in turn essentially define them.

Neo-institutionalism suggests that most organizational behaviors are the result of social pressures imposed by different stakeholders from within institutional environments, rather than mere responses to economic pressures for resources (Suddaby, Seidl, and Lê, 2013). Therefore, organizations face “institutional complexity” (Greenwood, Raynard, Kodeih, Micellota, and Lounsbury, 2011), which denotes the challenge of aligning practices with incompatible yet mutually dependent logics, rules, and expectations that stem from diverse legitimating social domains (Smets, Jarzabkowski, Burke, and Spee, 2015). As per Suddaby et al. (2013) Neo-institutional theory and Strategy as Practice intersect upon three points of overlap, those being behavioral processes, cognitions and emotions, and language, as part of what organizational members actually do. Moreover, Smets et al. (2015) argued that the adoption of a SAP lens enables the understanding of how practitioners balance competing logics, by scrutinizing their lived experiences of institutional complexity throughout daily practices. Henceforth, this complexity may result in unplanned institutional changes via the inadvertent adaptation of mundane

activity, consequently enabling the creation, maintenance, and disruption of legitimate practices (Smets and Jarzabkowski, 2013; Zietsma and Lawrence, 2010). As per Seo and Creed, (2002) “the seed of institutional change is likely to grow where and when institutionalized norms and practices conflict with day-to-day functional/efficiency needs, become incompatible with and unresponsive to changing economic and institutional environments, and/or no longer serve the interests and ideas of participants who enact those norms and practices” (p. 241). Practices have shared meanings and understandings that are informed by broader cultural frameworks (Jarzabkowski, 2008; Lounsbury and Crumley, 2007 in Smets, Morris, and Greenwood, 2012), hence can be perceived as the material enactments of different institutional logics that are the bases for a “practice-driven change” (Sahlin and Wedlin, 2008, in Smets et al., 2012). According to Paroutis and Heracleous (2013), strategic change involves a shift in sense making and managerial cognitions and may be achieved via institutional adoption, which in turn enables the alignment of organizations with their corresponding external environments. Lastly, the intersection of practice and institutions is further highlighted through the concept of “institutional entrepreneurship”, which encompasses “The activities of actors who have interest in particular institutional arrangements and who leverage resources to create new institutions or to transform existing ones” (Maguire et al., 2004, p. 657).

Author (s)	Research Statement (s)
Smets and Jarzabkowski (2013)	How do individuals construct and reconstruct complex institutional environments in their practical everyday work? / What are the implications of practical work for the understanding of effort, intentionality, and agency in institutional work?
Smets et al. (2012)	

	How everyday activity can be the locus for changes to practices that are anchored in field-level institutional logics?
Paroutis and Hearcleaous (2013)	What are the different dimensions of first-order strategy discourse as perceived by strategists? / How do strategists, as institutional entrepreneurs, employ these dimensions over time in the process of institutional adoption?
Smets et al. (2015)	How do actors facing long-standing institutional complexity enact both the contradiction and the interdependence between coexisting logics in their everyday work?

Table 2.9: Sample empirical studies on institutional work and strategizing

POWER,

RESISTANCE, AND SUBJECTIVITY

From a Foucauldian perspective, power is regarded as a “productive network, which runs through the whole social body” (Foucault, 1980, p. 119), and that consequently flows through discursive processes. Strategy language cannot be deemed but as powerful one (Mantere, 2013), as discourse contributes to both the building of power and legitimacy, as well as enables or constrains what individuals can say, do, and even think (Bourdieu 1991; Dameron and Torset, 2014; Hardy and Thomas, 2014).

According to Fenton and Langley (2011), “the actual doing of strategy in organizations takes place in the form of talk, text and conversation” (p. 1172), hence a narrative approach is considered as suitable for viewing strategy as practice. Strategic discourse is concerned with strategist’s attributions of sense to themselves as subjects, strategizing activities, and strategy as a concept itself (Dameron and Torset, 2014). According to

Knights and Morgan (1991) in Laine and Vaara (2007), different kinds of power effects result from strategy discourse, amongst which are: providing rationalization of success and failure, generating a sense of security for managers, demonstrating rationality to stakeholders, legitimizing the exercise of power, and constituting the subjectivity of organizational members. As for the powerfulness of written form such as strategy texts, they aim at legitimizing or de-legitimizing certain actions and thoughts, communicating socially negotiated meanings, and producing consent (Vaara, Sorsa, and Pälli, 2010). Nevertheless as per Foucault (1980) in Hardy and Thomas (2014), power is mutually implicated with resistance, whereby both are “transversal”, “iterative”, and “adaptive” responses to each other. Resistance has been traditionally thought to be of a sole oppositional and subversive form; however in reality, it is of a dualistic nature as it also assumes a facilitative role that can lead to consensus and reconciliation (Balogun, Jarzabkowski, and Vaara, 2011; Hardy and Thomas, 2014). Hence, within the context of strategic change, discourse might facilitate and legitimize change or resist it (Hardy and Thomas, 2014). According to Thomas and Davies (2005) resistance is a process of adaptation, subversion and re-inscription of dominant discourses, which is continuously stimulated by contradictions and tensions. Tensions are defined as “elements that seem logical individually but inconsistent and even absurd when juxtaposed” (Smith and Lewis, 2011, p. 382). According to Dameron and Torset (2014), tensions are discursive resources that are utilized in the creation of subjectivity, where the latter is defined by Knights and Morgan (1991) as the social agency and identity of strategists. Throughout strategy discourse, realities and sense of meanings are tied to the participative roles of practitioners in strategizing practices and their relevant discursive processes, hence

transforming individuals into subjects that are associated with certain knowledge and power claims (Knights and Morgan, 1991; Foucault, 1980; Hardy, Palmer, and Phillips, 2000; Rhodes and Brown, 2005). Nevertheless, the subject positions and relative power of strategic actors may be redefined through new strategy discourse, whereby individuals can either accept or resist their new identities especially in situations of strategic change (Vaara et al., 2010; Jaynes, 2015). Therefore as put by Fenton and Langley (2011), “both individuals’ micro-narratives about strategy (praxis) and broader institutional discourses surrounding the notion of strategy (practices) can be analyzed to understand who is being constructed as a legitimate practitioner of strategy, and what this might mean” (p.1180).

Author (s)	Research Statement (s)
Balogun et al. (2011)	What kinds of discourses are used to make sense of and give sense to the MNE and the role of the subsidiary? / What are the implications for subjectivity and organizational power relations? / What are the dynamics of these discursive struggles?
Pälli et al. (2009)	The institutionalized aspects of strategy discourse: what strategy is as genre? / Strategizing is linked with specific kinds of decision-making traditions and societal and social politics
Laine and Vaara (2007)	How do the actors discursively make sense and give sense to strategic development? How do they construct subjectivities for themselves and others?
Hardy and Thomas (2014)	How does power circulate through discourse to shape the constitution of strategy? / How are power and resistance mutually implicated? / What is produced?
Dameron et Torset (2014)	What conceptions of strategy are constituted through strategists’ discourses about strategizing work? / How do strategists position themselves as subjects through these discursive constructions?

Table 2.10: Sample empirical studies on power, resistance, and subjectivity

2.4 Conceptual and theoretical underpinnings

2.4.1 Open strategy as a strategy practice

The unorthodox practice of “open strategy” has been gaining popularity amongst the biggest organizations worldwide throughout the past decade, as numerous top 500 companies such as Philips, Virgin, HSBC, Siemens, Ret Hat, and countless others have been exhibiting this socially-oriented and open strategic behavior (Birkinshaw, 2017). Open strategy has also captured the attention of a large cluster of strategy scholars, who have created and still are accumulating a sizable conceptual and empirical literature, ultimately positioning “open strategy” amongst the ten hottest topics under strategy as practice. Appleyard and Chesborough (2016) argued that future research on open strategy should explore whether it leads to heightened competitive payoffs or not. More specifically, “openness is simultaneously macro phenomenon and micro instantiation. As such, open Strategy deserves large-scale, quantitative study across many organizations as much as close ethnographic observation in individual cases” (Hautz et al., 2016, p.2). Birkinshaw (2017) identified four aspects of open strategy, of which the first is “commons based peer production”, and whereby knowledge is created by voluntary collaboration of extra and intra-organizational individuals like in the case of open source

software. The second aspect is “crowd based input to decision making”, which implies that employees falling between both ends of an organization’s boundaries and/or extra-organizational communities contribute with opinions and insights to firm controlled processes in generating new ideas or assessing existing ones (Birkinshaw,2016). As for the third aspect, Kellersmanns et al. (2005), argue that getting numerous actors involved in both strategizing ideas and actions is a main driver for implementing strategies effectively. Hence, Birkinshaw (2017) identified this aspect as “collective buy in and action”, within which the focus is on getting people to freely and voluntarily implement a chosen strategy, rather than requesting their input in the form of ideas and time in formulation activities. And lastly, the fourth aspect is identified as “collective sense-making of an organization’s strategy in capital markets”. The latter aspect is considered to be a larger concern for public companies, due to the far distance or “gap” between executives and shareholders that creates space for intermediaries such as media commentators when construing the information that managers disclose (Birkinshaw, 2017).

However, the dynamics of strategizing are continuously affected by environmental and organizational contingencies, thus requiring openness to be viewed as continuously fluctuating between the independent dimensions of inclusion and transparency on both internal and external levels (Hautz et al., 2016). Therefore, strategic openness may fluctuate between adoption and reversion along its progression, from being open to fewer degrees of openness, or inversely from closed to being more open (Appleyard and Chesbrough, 2016).

The below figure 3 describes how inclusion and transparency may evolve along their progression towards or away from being closed or open.

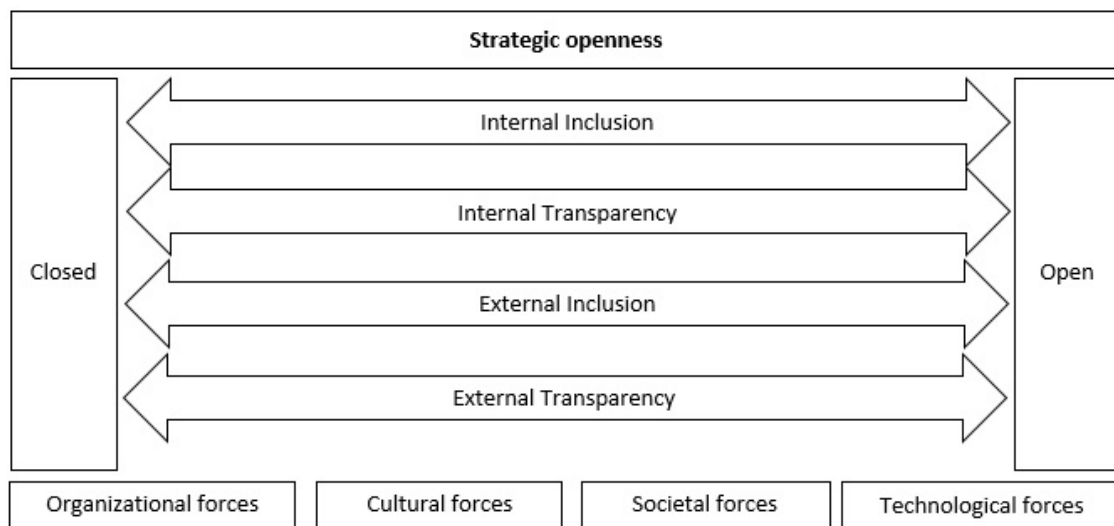


Figure 2.4: The dynamics of openness

Compiled from (Appleyard and Chesbrough, 2017); (Hautz et al., 2016); (Whittington et al., 2011)

Whittington et al., (2011) observed that the degree of strategic openness is governed by four forces, those being Organizational, Cultural, Societal, and Technological, as “strategic planning is not inherently either open or closed, but contains a set of potentialities that manifest themselves differently according to circumstances” (p.537).

Throughout the “early years of strategic planning”, mainly spanning between the 1950s and 1980s, the aforementioned forces were conceived as being oppositional or constraining to strategic openness. Organizational forces favored exclusivity in strategy, as managerial capitalism implied that ownership and control were separated. Additionally, organizations exhibited fast growth and increased diversity, with an emphasis on control, hence rendering strategic planning more elitist and exclusive. Societal forces were also of an oppositional nature, as “senior managers had mostly been formed in the command-and-control environment of the military” (p.538), in addition to a wide spread adoption of a centralized/top-down approach. Similarly, cultural forces reinforced the ideology of opacity and exclusivity, as social sciences were still mainly predominated by a “modernist faith in rationality” that favored the top-down approach. Hence, strategy formulation was exclusively separated from implementation. Lastly and due to the fact that communications technologies were still underdeveloped by modern standards, the effect of technological forces can be described as have been constraining, if not relatively absent.

Going from the 1980s, strategy work has been exhibiting more openness, due to “the crumbling of organizational boundaries and hierarchies, a societal shift towards managerial egalitarianism and mobility, a cultural popularization of strategy, and new technologies that set information free” (p.538). In regards to organizational forces, the need for more inclusion and transparency has become instrumental for the sustainability of organizations. Transnational operations have significantly increased amongst large corporations, consequently rendering exclusiveness relatively less effective in contrast to the “reverse innovation” phenomenon. To add, the emergence of activist shareholders

and the increased activity of hostile takeovers have incited organizations to proactively foster more transparency regarding their strategies. Lastly and with the development of “interdependent ecosystems of complementary products and services”, “platform leaders” have recognized the need for more transparency and cooperation with other constituents of these micro-communities, in the aims of increasing mutual trust and understanding. As for societal forces, disclosure regulations and social shifts within organizations have driven the latter into promoting increased transparency and inclusion both internally and externally. Furthermore, the increased turnover rates of contemporary managers imply that the efforts of maintaining secrecy have become relatively obsolete. With respect to cultural forces, the changes that have taken place specifically in relation to knowledge organization and legitimacy have acted as driving forces towards more openness in strategy work. Strategy knowledge has become increasingly available due to the wider and easier access to the existing body of the science, higher education, as well as easy-to-access search engines and internet sources. Moreover, post-modernism has induced a shift away from the ideologies of wisdom being exclusively at the top, to encompass the knowledge of lower-level managers. Finally, unidirectional advice has been losing popularity, as organizations have increasingly been reverting to seeking strategy advice specifically through consultancy. As for technological forces, their role in reshaping the “work of strategy” has been elemental to external and internal openness, whereby software and programs have emerged as sociomaterial tools for the creation, communication, and overall accomplishment of various strategic tasks. In addition, various applications, forums, blogs, and social media have become widely available for serving as a means of convergence both internally and externally. Technological

developments may also hold negative associations as they render strategic information vulnerable, hence implying a plausibly uncontrollable and undesirable level of transparency.

Internally, open strategizing implies larger contributions of strategy ideas from more diverse sources of information during formulation, as well as better understandings of strategies and more commitment from internal stakeholders throughout implementation (Whittington et al., 2011); (Hutter et al., 2017); (Gegenhuber and Dobush, 2016); (Lakhani et al., 2013). “Research on the process of strategy-making has often acknowledged the role of multiple actors at different levels in the firm, and the value of sharing information widely as a means of gaining buy-in and alignment”, (Birkinshaw, 2017, p.1). Alignment refers to employees’ understandings of an organization’s strategy, how their jobs contribute in its success, and what their roles in that are (Hellevig, 2012); (Stringer, 2007), and which is demonstrated explicitly by employees’ behaviors that correspond with organizational strategy (Gagnon et al., 2008). Drucker (1954) noted that for alignment to take place, employees must behave in a contributory manner that supports strategic goal. In this line, internal openness may lead to alignment (Birkinshaw, 2017), as it promises strategic understanding, strategic commitment, and contributory behavior internally (Whittington et al., 2011).

Bartels, (2006) posited that “communication about the strategy and goals of the organization, encouraging participation in decision making and supplying adequate information can contribute to a stronger identification of employees with the organization as a whole” (p. 96). Mantere and Vaara (2008) postulated that open strategizing can lead to deeper personal reflections regarding internal members’ roles, identities, and futures

within an organization. Moreover, Hutter et al. (2017) concluded that the open strategizing within organizations leads to the creation of shared feelings of organizational appreciation. In this line, practicing an open strategy may also lead to the engenderment of “organizational sense of community”, which denotes internal members’ feelings of belongingness to the organizational community, (Hutter et al., 2017).

Open strategizing also holds implications for employee engagement, as the increasing reliance on social media as a tool for opening up strategy to employees has been linked with “better decisions, better engagement, and better execution” (Birkinshaw, 2017, p.424). Birkinshaw (2017) identified the generation of collective buy in and action as one aspect of open strategizing, which requires individuals to shift their attitudes and behaviors towards implementing a chosen way forward and buying into a certain course of action . Online services such as blogging platforms, internal twitter, voting systems, and other social media features have been increasingly adopted in the aims of engaging employees in decision making as well as organizational activity (Baptista et al., 2017). However, due to the lack of empirical and theoretical evidence, the relation between openness and employee engagement remains obscure.

Externally, one outcome of open strategizing is identified as being an ability to access and locate useful input from extra-organizational stakeholders, which consequently renders strategic decisions more effective (Gegenhuber and Dobush, 2017). According to Adler and Pittz (2016), Organizations have been exhibiting a shift towards external openness forms of strategizing, as interaction with the external environment enables the acquisition of knowledge, resources, and innovation. Therefore, tapping into the power of collective knowledge through increased openness triggers more creative contributions,

hence improving the quality of an organization's strategizing activities (Luedicke, 2017). From another perspective, Whittington and Yakis-Douglas (2012) argued that strategic disclosure can be utilized in the aims of self-enhancement and reputation shaping. Openness, specifically through increased transparency of merger and acquisition strategy to shareholders, has been correlated with share-price related benefits, as it offsets negative market reactions (Yakis-Douglas et al., 2017). Henceforth, opening up strategies to the external environment may be perceived as an impression management tool that has the potential to affect the perceptions of investors and analysts, particularly during periods of high information asymmetry (Whittington et al., 2016). Impression management as defined by Schlenker (1980, p. 6) refers to "the conscious or unconscious attempt to control images that are projected in real or imagined social interactions", therefore by definition being related to the management of inbound external perceptions (Elsbach, 2003). Gegenhuber and Dobush (2017) expanded beyond the conceptualization of openness as an impression management tool that affects financial aspects of organizations to include a social perspective as well. Within a social context, open strategizing through interaction with legitimating external stakeholders such as customers, media, and investors, enables organizations to manipulate the perceptions of external audiences, which may consequently lead to favorable social judgments and legitimacy (Gegenhuber and Dobush, 2017). Lastly, open strategy can be adopted as a unifying mechanism throughout multi sector partnerships and inter-organizational collaborations, as it builds upon the notion of goal interdependence by facilitating cooperation and aligning divergent stakeholder interests (Pittz and Adler, 2016).

Empirically, studies covering open strategy as a strategy practice have been proliferating, with some covering openness solely on an internal or external level, and others addressing the topic on both dimensions simultaneously. More interestingly, the role of technology through social software specifically has granted alongside workshops, presentations, conferences, and press releases organizations the means of controlling inclusion and transparency both online and offline (Luedicke, 2017); (Yakis-Douglas, 2017); (Whittigton et al., 2016). A large body of research has acknowledged the role of technology in enabling both mass participation and involvement of internal and/or external stakeholders in strategic activities (Tavakoli et al., 2017).

Hutter et al. (2017)'s research on Siemen's company-wide online initiative concluded that open strategizing indirectly leads to the engenderment of organizational sense of community (OSOC) through what was defined as a sense of virtual community (SOVC). Having identified three virtual participatory behaviors, those being submitting ideas, commenting, and evaluating, the findings showed that solely submitting ideas without interaction had a negative impact on SOVC, while the remaining two actions had a positive effect on SOVC and consequently OSOC. Lastly, their research concluded that engaging in open strategy did contribute to the development and implementation of better strategies, as well as strengthen overall employee commitment. Tavakoli et al. (2017) analyzed seven cases covering the adoption of an open strategy on both internal and external levels through "IT" at leading organizations amongst which were Daimler, IBM, Red Hat, Wikimedia foundation, and Premium Cola. They identified three common "major open strategy practices" across the organizations under study, "transparent discourse" which denotes that practitioners can follow and react to discussions, "co-

creation “which implies collaborative idea development, and “democratic decision making” which was characterized by voting, rating, and consensus-based discussions. The documented benefits of open strategizing through social software tools were reported as being creative idea generation, better engagement, increased loyalty, higher commitment, creation of overall organizational identity, broader access to knowledge network, legitimizing strategic decisions, and better financial performance. Gegenhuber and Dobusch (2017) examined how new ventures engage in open strategy practices as an impression management tool, and uncovered three open strategy modes that reflected different impression management effects. The first mode “broadcasting” referred to transparently communicating information, the second mode “dialoguing” implied engaging in conversations with customers and seeking their opinions, and the third mode “including” denoted the involvement of external stakeholders in the decision making process. The findings of the study revealed that broadcasting produces an exemplification effect, whereby “revealing relevant strategic information conveys an image of dedication and (moral) superiority by surpassing commonly-held expectations”(p.8). In addition, the first mode was also found to have produced a supplication effect that creates an impression of neediness, through which ventures were able to obtain the help of external audiences, as well as a self-promotion effect that illustrates the organization as competent through highlighting accomplishments and innovation. As for dialoguing, it led to both self-promotion and ingratiation effects, with ingratiation implying conformity to opinion and flattery, hence increasing likeability by building relations based on collaboration with external stakeholders. In brief, the implication of their findings empirically validated that open strategizing can be viewed and utilized as an impression management tool that is

capable of shaping and re-shaping the perceptions of external stakeholders. Baptista et al. (2017) scrutinized the effect of internal openness through social media on organizational strategizing, and identified “reflexiveness” as a new organizational capability for managing the tensions that arise from different levels of feedback and participation internally. Their research concluded that open strategizing internally led to the creation of higher expectations and norms for participation, hence pushing organizations towards stewardship governance and collective strategy ownership by more engaged internal stakeholders.

The below figure 4 represents a sample extract from Baptista et al (2017), showcasing the features and effects of social software tools as part of an open strategy internally:

Social media features	Examples: strategic use	Effects on strategic activity
<p><i>Interaction with management</i> Blogs, commenting, video casting, discussion forums, online communities, real time online Q&As, social network updates, internal twitter</p>	<p>Dow Chemical, Lloyds Bank, ING, Nokia, Lloyd’s Bank, Linden Labs.</p> <p>Alcatel- Lucent, CEO at Dow Chemical was an early adopter of internal blog since 2007 called “Access Andrew”. Received 24,000 visits per blog post and up to 50 comments. Employees are encouraged to leave comments, which are moderated but the CEO personally authors the blog and deals with hot topics himself. At Deutsche Bank some managers host “Ask Me Anything” sessions online where questions on</p>	<p>Active use of social media to make the vision of senior management more transparent and gather support and feedback from employees. In some cases, this is used to define new strategic initiatives and support decision making. It also provides a view on employee sentiment for senior management.</p>

	any topic can be freely asked by any employee in the company.	
<p><i>Extension of closed management meetings</i> Real-time and post commenting on topics from management meetings, live updates on social networks, event blogs</p>	<p>Philips, Unilever, PwC, Dollar Financial, Grant Thornton</p> <p>Dollar Financial, the UK operations of US-based DFC Global Corp, a diversified financial services company, regularly film board meetings and post the videos on the intranet for employees to view. At Grant Thornton there is live blogging of senior management meetings.</p>	Strategy meetings which were previously closed become more open, allowing more employees to engage and discuss strategic issues.
<p><i>Employee listening program</i> Community groups, online portal for sharing feedback, custom built forms for input of data, voting systems</p>	<p>HSBC, Virgin Media</p> <p>HSBC has a structured Employee Listening program for employees to talk about anything; these sessions are facilitated by managers. Managers then use a custom portal to record issues raised which is then analyzed to capture ideas and suggestions to improve the business.</p>	Employees' concerns and issues are listened to and recorded, acting as a data input into strategic decision making
<p><i>Ideation programs, managed input and consultation on specific initiatives</i> Innovation Jam, ideation platforms, Wikis, voting systems, community groups, discussion forum, social network updates,</p>	<p>Avery Dennison, HCT Technologies, IBM, Grant Thornton, Red Hat, Luxottica Sanofi Aventis, ATOS, BNP Paribas, Virgin Media</p> <p>Within Sanofi Pasteur, Yammer was used as a community site for its "Women in Sanofi Pasteur"</p>	Specific initiatives which ask for input into a strategic level campaign or objective such as a values program. Gradual formation of incentives and measurement to recognize contributions from employee and management. Structured approaches to facilitate

<p>micro-blogging and instant messaging</p>	<p>(WiSP) network. The network helps to promote gender balance in a company where women were originally only 20% of the workforce. Pressure from the group helped to change company policy and also meant the company won the Apec (French executive employment association) Gender Parity prize.</p>	<p>innovation.</p>
<p><i>Open HR-related processes including peer recognition</i> Badges and recognition, ratings, peer recognition systems, gamification</p>	<p>HCL Technologies, Xchanging At HCL Technologies the appraisal system is open so that management appraisal feedback is visible to all. Employees give feedback on managers. This helps to establish an open culture, which has resulted in further structured approaches to crowdsourcing strategy among employees.</p>	<p>Peer to peer recognition on employees and managers can identify issues, influence behaviors and also guide strategy as feedback cascades upwards</p>
<p><i>Analysis of employee sentiment and social dynamics</i> Polls and surveys; Analysis of community groups; Discussion groups; Social networks</p>	<p>HSBC, Nationwide Insurance, Philips Nationwide Insurance (USA) experimented with an app to identify employee sentiment on its Yammer social network, which was then used to help management make decisions. At Philips KPIs show strategic contribution of ESN to interaction between different groups.</p>	<p>Analysis of employee sentiment and relative identification of trends to inform and feed into strategy</p>

Figure 2.5: Openness through social media

2.4.2 Strategic alignment

The literature on strategic alignment has adopted a multitude of terminologies that revolve around a central and common concept, as it has been referred to as “alignment” (Hellevig, 2012), “strategic alignment” (Stringer, 2007), and “employee strategic alignment” (Gagnon and Michael, 2003). According to Hellevig (2012), alignment denotes the effort of ensuring employees’ understanding of their roles in the accomplishment of an organization’s strategy. Stringer (2007) defined strategic alignment as employees’ knowledge of the organization’s strategic goals, in addition to their understanding of their job responsibilities, as well as how they can contribute to the achievement of organizational goals. Boswell (2000) introduced “line of sight” as a measure for internal alignment, and which denotes employees’ understanding of the organization’s goals and how to effectively contribute in the accomplishment of these organizational goals. As per Boswell and Boudreau (2001) “Employees must not only understand the organizations’ strategy, they must accurately understand the actions aligned with the strategy (p.851). More specifically, Boswell (2000) argued that line of sight is concerned with objectives and actions, and is of both actual and perceptive natures, hence consisting of “line of sight-objectives”, “line of sight-actions”, “perceived line of sight-objectives”, and “perceived line of sight-actions”. Gagnon and Michael (2003) characterized employee alignment as being the understanding and ability to enact an organization’s strategy. In this line, strategic alignment is linked to both knowledge and action, as employee knowledge/awareness directs efforts towards organizational goals, consequently being an important determinant of behavior (Colvin and Boswell,

2007). For the purpose of this study, alignment is defined as employees' perceived understandings of an organization's goals, how their job contributes in the accomplishment of these objectives, in addition to their perceived understanding of aligned actions (Boswell, 2000); (Stringer, 2007); (Hellevig, 2012). As per Weiser (2000), "Alignment is heading in the same direction" (p.90).

Boswell (2000) developed the measurement for alignment by first engaging in an exploratory qualitative research, through which consensus regarding the definition of alignment as well as the relevant components was reached. Following the results generated by focus groups from several organizations, the constituents of line of sight were identified as being understanding of the organization's objectives or line of sight-objectives (LOS-O) and understanding how to contribute or line of sight-actions (LOS-O), and respectively perceived line of sight of each objectives and actions. The measurement items for LOS-objectives were compiled from the existent literature and then refined following the employment of a focus group including the top management team of the organization to be later involved in the quantitative study (offer low prices, provide standardized service, growth into new markets...). Similarly, members of the focus group identified items relating to LOS-actions, by listing several actions consistent with the previously identified strategies. Then, the top management team of the participating organization was asked to rank both strategies and actions in order of importance, to be then compared with the rankings submitted by employees. As for the perceptual variables (perceived LOS-objectives and perceived LOS-actions), they were both measured using a five point likert scale.

Understanding the bigger picture provides meaning and a sense of purpose, which enables employees to interpret and identify with the organization's present and future courses of action (Hellevig, 2012); (Alagaraja and Shuck, 2015). More specifically, meaningfulness increases with individuals' understanding of why their contributions matter and how they affect the accomplishment of organizational goals (Boswell, 2000). Boswell and Boudreau (2001) postulated that previous research on job meaningfulness and role clarity suggests that employees want to know what their role is in the organizational strategy, and how they contribute in the accomplishment of objectives. In this line, Colving and boswell (2007) argued that if employees perceive their contributions as valuable to the accomplishment of the organization's objectives, then to the extent to which they see that these contribution are valuable, their interests and consequently their actions will be aligned with that of the organization. Algaraja and Shuck (2015) postulated that the development of meaning and understanding of an organization's goals and strategy spur the idea of engagement. Hellevig (2012) argued that alignment is one of many engagement drivers, whereby it is a fundamental basis for engaging employees by giving meaning to individual efforts. "Alignment is about ensuring employees know what to do, while the rest of the engagement efforts are about ensuring they want to do it" (Hellevig, 2012, p.65). According to Gallup (2017), clarity about employees' job roles provides them with direction as well as creates a condition for engagement. Research on alignment has uncovered several effects on employees specifically and on organizations as a whole. Gagnon and Michael (2003) explored the relation between alignment and employee-level outcomes and found that strategic alignment results in increased competitiveness. Their findings indicated that employees

who understand both strategy and job responsibilities exhibit higher performance and desired attitudes like commitment, trust, and job satisfaction. Additionally, they study concluded that strategic knowledge and aligned actions are negatively correlated with employee cynicism, as alignment results in a deeper understanding for employees on how their work contributes to the overall strategy. Empirical studies have also scrutinized the relation between alignment and engagement. Mackoff and Triolo (2008) and Hyvönen et al. (2009) respectively concluded that employees with knowledge of their organization's mission and those whose goals are aligned with the organization tended to exhibit the highest levels of engagement. Stringer (2007) examined the relation between strategic alignment, meaningfulness, and employee engagement through the use of questionnaires. The construct of measurement for strategic alignment consisted of five point likert scale questions regarding the members' understanding of the organization's purpose, strategic goals, and execution strategy, in addition to their understanding of their business unit's goals, how the latter goal contribute to the broader organizational objectives, and how they personally take part in the accomplishment of the business unit goals via their jobs. In brief, Stringer (2007)'s questionnaire measured employee's understanding of their role in the accomplishment of the organization's strategy and attainment of desired objectives. Both alignment and meaningfulness were found to be significantly and positively affect engagement, and whereby the correlation is even more significant when both variables co-exist. In this line, the study concluded that "organizations may be able to foster employee engagement through strategic alignment" (Stringer, 2007, p.11). Likewise Biggs et al. (2014) suggested that alignment enhances engagement for several reasons. They argued that a clear line of sight of the corporate strategy and needed actions would

provide employees with meaning, as well as increase performance, limit lack of role clarity, as well as incent employees to be more invested in their tasks. Both alignment and engagement were measured through seven point quasi-metric scales based respectively on Boswell (2006) and Schaufeli, et al. (2006). Their longitudinal study concluded that perceived alignment did positively affect engagement levels over time.

2.4.3 Employee engagement

Organizations have been increasingly relying on their intellectual capital through fostering employee engagement, as it enables them to create and sustain competitive advantage (Stringer, 2007). Hellevig (2012) noted that engagement refers to the creation of conditions that allow human resources to thrive, and whereby internal members “eagerly deliver their best effort in the best interest of the business” (p.25). More specifically, employee engagement is defined as an employee’s direction of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral energy towards doing his best at a given task, which is operationalized by a positive state of motivation and manifested through enthusiasm and ownership of the task (Kahn, 1990); (Shuck and Wollard, 2010); (Parker and Griffin, 2011); (Hellevig, 2012). Alagaraja and Shuck (2015) argued that cognitive engagement is shaped by an employee’s perceptions of work being meaningful, safe on all physical, emotional, and psychological levels, as well as available in regards to accessing needed resources. Moreover, they stated that emotional engagement takes place when individuals “identify emotionally with a particular task, goal, or project” by exhibiting pride, belief,

or excitement. Lastly, they posited that behavioral engagement is conceptualized as the overt manifestation of both cognitive and emotional engagement, hence is “the ultimate practice of organizational alignment in the form of an intention to act” (p.24). Gallup (2017) stated that engaged employees are “psychological owners” “who are highly involved in and enthusiastic about their work and workplace”, however organizational members may also be either “not engaged” or “actively disengaged” (p.63). Employees who are not engaged are psychologically unattached from their work and organization due to the un-fulfillment of their engagement needs, hence do not apply any energy or passion to their work. Actively dis-engaged members act out their resulting resentment from the un-fulfillment of their engagement needs by being unhappy at work and by undermining the accomplishments of their engaged colleagues.

Empirically, Rich et al. (2010) uncovered two significant positive linear relations between engagement and respectively each of organizational citizenship behavior and task performance. Nazir and Islam (2017) tested the relation between engagement and both employee performance and organizational commitment in higher educational institutions in India and uncovered that employee engagement mediated the influence of perceived organizational support on affective commitment and employee performance. Albdour and Altarawneh (2014) demonstrated that employee job engagement in the Jordanian banking sector affects continuance commitment, while job and organizational engagement lead to normative and affective commitment. Anitha (2014) argued that employee engagement is driven by many factors such as work environment, team relationship, wellbeing, and compensation. A limited number of empirical studies have also explored the relationship between engagement and demographic characteristics such

as age, gender, educational level, and job level, however have resulted in contrasting findings regarding the existence of a relation and its nature. According to Gallup (2017), engagement levels may vary according to factors such as job category, gender, age, geography, company size and education. Volkov (2016) investigated the possible variations that gender, job level, and level of education can cause in engagement levels and found no significant differences. James et al. (2007) concluded that engagement levels did differ according to age, as their findings unveiled that older employees aged fifty five and above tended to be more engaged than their younger counterparts. Likewise, Zhang et al. (2014) concluded that older employees exhibited higher levels of engagement, and Pitt-Catsouphes and Matz-Costa (2008) uncovered that employees aged forty five and above were significantly more engaged than those from the opposing category. Conversely, Robinson et al (2004) unveiled that engagement was inversely related to age, whereby their results demonstrated their engagement levels seemed to drop as age increased. Zhang et al. (2014) demonstrated that gender and tenure did not affect engagement, while Mishra (2015) established that neither age nor tenure had any significant effect. A study that was conducted by Dale Carnegie on 1500 employees in 2012 showed that characteristics such as gender and work status had no impact on engagement, however discovered that factors like position, educational level, and age did. Lastly, Kordbacheh et al. (2014) attributed a moderating nature to age in the relationship between intrinsic motivation and engagement, and whereby older employees exhibited higher levels of engagement when motivation was either low or high.

One measure for engagement consists of the employee engagement scorecard, which taps into the existent levels of employee satisfaction, identification, commitment, loyalty, and

performance (Kumar and Pansari, 2015). Schaufeli and Bakker (2003) also developed the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale, and whereby the questionnaire quantitatively measures engagement through the dimensions of vigor, dedication and absorption. Another measurement tool was introduced by Gallup, who developed the “Q¹² questionnaire”, and which is targeted at measuring engagement through questions regarding four different types or levels of employee’s performance development needs. The first type is identified as basic needs, and is represented by employees’ knowledge of what is expected of them and having the required material tools to accomplish their work. Statistically, six in ten strongly agreed that they have knowledge of what is expected of them at work. By moving that ration to 8/10, organizations can reduce turnover and safety incidents respectively by 14% and 20%, while increasing productivity by 7%. Moreover, only three in ten U.S. employees strongly agreed that they have the needed materials and tools to conduct their jobs. Increasing this ratio to 6/10 would consequently increase profitability by 11%, improve quality by 27%, and reduce safety incidents by 32%. The second type is denoted as individual needs and is illustrated in encouraging personal development, personal caring, receiving recognition, and having the opportunity to perform. Only four in ten U.S. employees strongly agreed that they have the opportunity to do what they do best every day at work. Moving this ratio to 8/10, companies may be able to increase customer engagement and profitability respectively by 8% and 14%, as well as reduce safety incidents by 46%. Additionally, only three in ten U.S. workers strongly agreed that they had received acknowledgment or praise for doing good work within a period of one week. By increasing this ratio to 6/10, organizations can foster a 24% increase in quality, while reducing absenteeism by 27%. Furthermore, four in ten American employees

strongly concur that someone at work seems to care about them. If the ratio is increased 8/10, companies may be able to reduce safety incidents and absenteeism respectively by 32% and 41%. Lastly, only three in ten U.S. employees strongly agreed that someone at work encourages their development. If the ratio increases to 6/10, companies may exhibit a 28% decrease in absenteeism, a 6% increase in customer engagement, and consequently an 11% increase in profitability. The third being teamwork needs is denoted by the value of personal opinion at work, seeing the job as important in light of the company's mission, perceiving fellow employees as committed to doing quality work, and having a best friend. Three of ten employees strongly agreed that their opinion seems to count at work. If the ratio doubles to reach 6/10, turnover and safety incidents may be respectively reduced by 27% and 40%, while productivity may rise by 12%. To add, four in ten U.S. employees strongly agreed that the company's vision makes them feel that their job is important. By increasing the ratio to 8/10, organizations may be able to reduce absenteeism by 41%, and improve quality by 33%. Furthermore, only three in ten U.S. employees strongly agreed that their colleagues are committed to doing quality work. If the ratio is moved to reach 6/10, then organizations may exhibit a 29% reduction in turnover, and an 11% increase in profits. In addition, two in ten American employees strongly agreed that they have a best friend at work. By moving the ratio to 6/10, organizations may be able to increase their profitability by 12%. The fourth type of employee's performance development needs is growth needs, which is represented by discussions regarding progress at work and having the opportunity to learn and grow. Only three in ten U.S. employees strongly agreed that someone had talked to them about their progress in the preceding six months. By moving the ratio to 6/10, companies may

realize a 26% decrease in absenteeism and an 11% increase in profitability. Additionally, four in ten U.S. workers strongly agreed that they have had the opportunity to learn and grow in the preceding year. By moving this ratio to 8/10, organizations may exhibit 44% less absenteeism, as well as 16% more productivity. The importance of engagement lies in that it leads to improved business outcomes, as engaged employees have a stronger bond with the organization's purpose, better relations with customers, and are less likely to leave their jobs. In brief, higher engagement levels lead to reductions in absenteeism, employee turnover, and safety incidents, while conversely increasing productivity, quality, customer satisfaction, and consequently profitability (Gallup, 2017).

2.4.4 Theoretical framework

Strategy as practice intersects with Neo-institutionalism in regards to behavioral processes, whereby the latter's perspective confers that they are mostly driven by the diverse social pressures of legitimating institutional stakeholders (Suddaby, et al., 2013). In open strategizing, strategy is formulated via a "collaborative engagement of a variety of stakeholders such that suggestions for the organizations derive from a melding of the multiple perspectives represented among the diverse stakeholders" (Malhotra et al., 2017, p.397). The shift towards greater transparency and inclusion in strategy work has challenged the traditional ideologies of secrecy and exclusivity to top echelons of organizations and has consequently created new social expectations for how strategy is

done within organizations (Whittington et al., 2011). Baptista et al. (2017) argued that stakeholder participation or ownership of strategy content may be problematic due to established hierarchies, as well as conventional beliefs regarding who should be included and how, in addition to what should be shared. Nevertheless, the departure from closed ideologies has triggered a change in the normative conceptions of strategy work (in particular regarding formal and informal participation), consequently contributing to the democratization of strategy within more “agile, responsive and capable organizations” (p.2).

Cultural changes particularly with regards to knowledge organization and legitimacy have served as driving forces towards more openness in strategy work, as localized knowledge has gained respect following the rise of post-modernism, and wisdom is no longer expected to be monopolized by top management (Whittington et al., 2011). Additionally and from a SAP perspective, the success of a strategy does not solely depend on stakeholders’ perceptions of legitimacy regarding the strategy itself (Nielsen and Rao, 1985), but also concerning related practices (Whittington, 2002). The legitimacy theory postulates that organizations seek legitimacy from a multitude of stakeholders by adopting legitimation tools that convey compliance with societal expectations, and that consequently lead to the fulfillment of these organizations’ social contracts (Schiopoiu Burlia and Popa, 2013). Suchman (1995) stated that “legitimacy is a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions”(p.574). Internally, it is defined as the consensus and acceptance of an organizational strategy by internal members, which mobilizes them around a common

strategic vision and reinforces organizational practices (Drori and Honig, 2013). Consequently, internal legitimacy relies upon emergent bottom-up practices that result from “spatially dispersed, heterogeneous activity by actors with varying kinds and levels of resources” (Lounsbury and Crumley, 2007, p. 994). According to Tost (2011), three dimensions of content underlie legitimacy judgments, those being instrumental, relational, and moral. Instrumental or pragmatic legitimacy relates to perceptions of responsiveness to individual or constituents of an entity’s interests (Tost, 2011), and is by definition embedded within the self-interested calculations of individuals and groups (Suchman, 1995). As for relational legitimacy, it emerges from the affirmation of social identities and self-worth by a social entity, in addition to the communication of social status and group membership (Tost, 2011). Lastly, moral legitimacy results from the consistency between the moral standards, norms, and ethical values of individuals and groups with those of an entity, hence inherently being related to an entity’s promotion of social welfare (Tost, 2011).

Similarly, the stakeholder theory posits that organizations focus on maximizing value for diverse stakeholders in the aims of obtaining their support and approval, hence providing meaningful explanation for some organizational features and behaviors (Sage encyclopedia of corporate reputation). Freeman (1984)’s contributions to the theory, and consequently stakeholder management, suggest that organizations can adopt different tools and processes to interact with and manage stakeholders at three levels, those being rational, process, and transactional. At the rational level, stakeholders are identified along with the extent to which they affect or are affected by the organization. At the process level, organizations must examine the fit between their strategies and activities with the

broader stakeholder map and demands. Lastly at the transactional level, companies should define how to relate to and manage relationships with the multitude of existing stakeholders. According to Bucholz and Rosenthal (2015), “Stakeholder management involves taking the interests and concerns of these various groups and individuals into account in arriving at a management decision, so that they are all satisfied at least to some extent, or at least that the most important stakeholders with regard to any given issue, are satisfied” (pp.138).

2.5 Discussion

Strategy as practice through its emphasis on the elements of practitioners, practices, and praxis has re-shaped and broadened strategy research, by enabling new capabilities that extend beyond those of conventional streams, which have long excluded the human element, its actions, and interactions. Openness in strategy work has converted the nature of a large number of stakeholders into becoming strategy practitioners on both internal and external organizational levels. Such shift in the conceptualization of “who” does strategy work in addition to the manner in which it is conducted has resulted in many effects within and outside relevant organizations. Moreover, open strategy has multiple aspects, and whereby within each, the degrees of inclusion and transparency vary independently along both internal and external organizational dimensions, well as in respect to different stakeholders.

From an external viewpoint, openness to external stakeholders has been empirically identified as a tool for impression management that is able to affect the perceptions of key audiences such as customers and the public in general. In addition, external inclusion

and transparency with key stakeholders play an important role in aligning different interests such as in the case of multi-sector partnerships. Hence, external openness in the form of increased collaboration with external stakeholders may prove to be beneficial for fostering external legitimacy, specifically through impression management and/or an interest alignment properties. Future research in this area may prove to offer breakthroughs in the field of stakeholder management, as this would offer organizations the ability to effectively manage relationships with the expanding array of extra-organizational stakeholders.

Internally, inclusion and transparency have been proven to increase employees' contributions to strategic work, as well as improve their understandings and commitment to strategies. Therefore, the resulting effects from internal strategic openness form the basis for strategic alignment, which requires both a multi-level understanding of strategies and goals, as well as a contributory behavior. The main implication of alignment consists of a holistic understanding of the big picture as well as the individual's relevant contribution. Previous research on meaningfulness, role clarity, and significance suggest that individuals seek meaning and want to know how their work contributes to the bigger picture, hence grounding such value in their self-interested calculations (Boswell and Boudreau, 2001). Likewise, internal openness may also create value through its participatory and inclusive nature, which may hold certain intrinsic implications for those who are involved. As per Mann and Harter (2016), in order to foster employee engagement, organizations should not "feed the bear", or just cater to employees' needs, however they should treat them like stakeholders of both the company's and their own futures. In addition, it can also act as a response to the social

expectations of a certain group of internal members regarding strategy work, hence creating even more value. As postulated by Whittington (2011), the socio-cultural change that has attributed more respect to localized knowledge and less emphasis on the monopoly of wisdom at the top of organizations has created new social expectations for strategy work internally by implying a higher need for more openness. In this line, openness may directly create value, or derive it by increasing strategic alignment levels. The creation of such combined value can hence affect employee engagement levels, through one or multiple levels of employees' performance development needs. Examples of such would be illustrated by increases in knowledge of what is expected of employees at work, having the opportunity to perform, higher value for personal opinion at work, seeing the job as important in light of the company's mission, and having the opportunity to grow. Within the existing body of literature, several studies have demonstrated how alignment may lead to employee engagement, however the relationship between internal strategic openness, and any of alignment or engagement remains obscure, as no previous empirical test has been yet conducted. Henceforth, the exploration of plausible relations is crucial for advancing the literatures on all three topics. Internal openness may be able to convey compliance with certain employee's societal expectations, deliver value, and partially fulfill an organization's social contract. Openness and alignment along with their value creating and stakeholder responsive properties may hence not only affect engagement, but also the pragmatic dimension of legitimacy judgments, and consequently internal legitimacy. In this line, organizations may control internal strategic openness with differing degrees relative to its stakeholder classification, and consequently contribute to the creation of internal legitimacy. As per Lounsbury and

Crumley (2007), internal legitimacy relies upon emergent bottom-up practices that result from “spatially dispersed, heterogeneous activity by actors with varying kinds and levels of resources” (p. 994). Research on open strategy has also recognized its contribution in the creation of shared feelings of organizational appreciation and personal identification with the organization, which are the basis for the manifestation of an organizational sense of community. From a social psychology perspective, the communication of group membership and status, bolstering self-worth, and affirming social identities, may all lead to the manifestation of “relational legitimacy”, thus further contributing to the manifestation of internal legitimacy.

The below conceptual framework (**Figure 6**) has been compiled from the existing body of knowledge and literature, in the aims of illustrating how strategic openness may lead to alignment, create engagement, and foster perceptions of legitimacy within organizations.

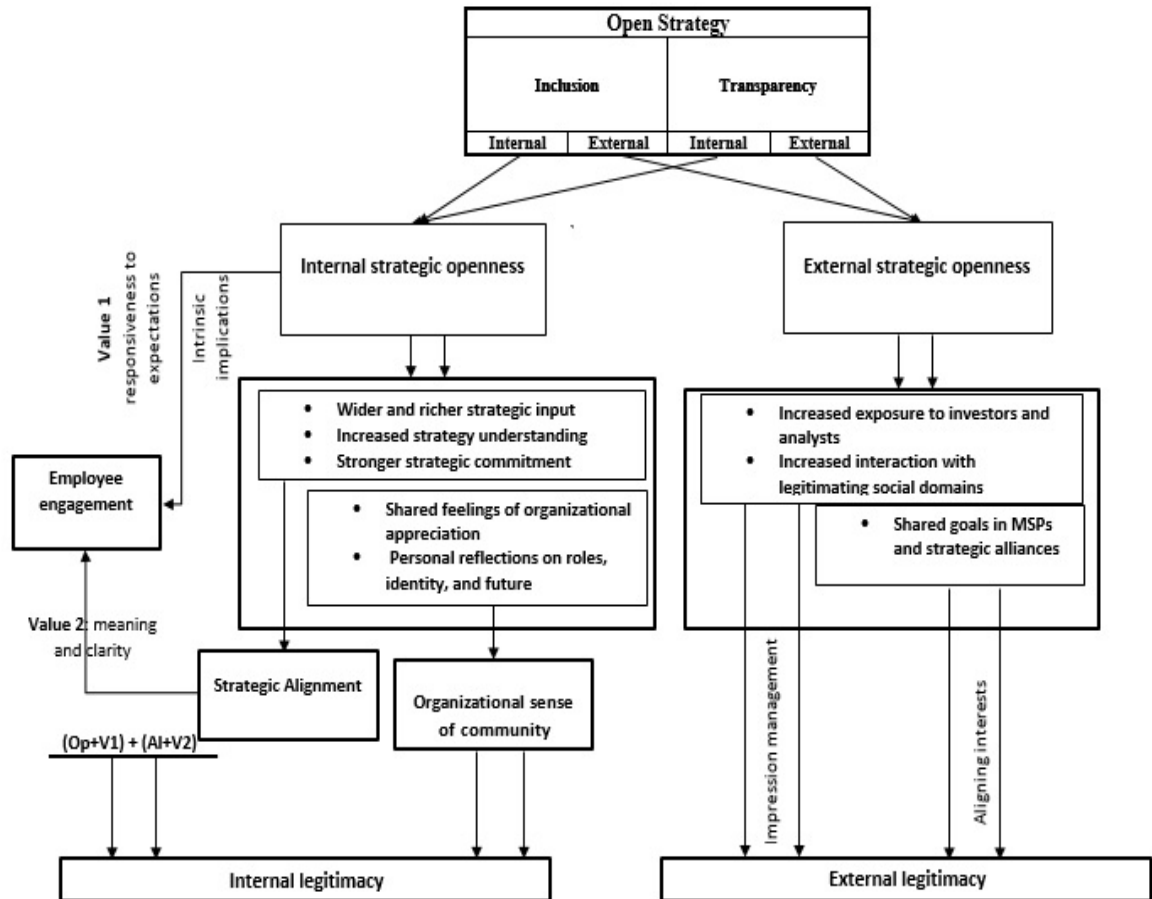


Figure 2.6: Conceptual framework on strategic openness

For the purpose of narrowing down the scope of the research, and in the aim of filling the gaps in the existing literature, this herein study will attempt to scrutinize and unveil any plausible relations that may exist between the three elements of internal strategic openness, strategic alignment and employee engagement. The theoretical implications that the literature holds, and that consequently enabled the creation of the conceptual framework, incite the need for empirical contributions. In this line, the conduction of an empirical study within a well-defined spatial and temporal context would constitute the foundation for a stream of research that will contribute in the understanding of what strategic openness holds for organizations if adopted.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This research attempts to unveil the plausible relations that may exist between internal strategic openness, perceived alignment, and engagement, along with scrutinizing the variations in each according to some demographic characteristics. Accordingly, this chapter will first introduce the reasoning approach, then discuss the adopted philosophical dimension, population and sampling procedures, as well as feature the adopted strategy, data collection tool, and hypotheses statements.

3.2 Reasoning approach

Within social research, two main logical cognitive patterns of reasoning exist, those being inductive and deductive. Inductive reasoning or else referred to as the bottom up approach, moves from specific observations and established data patterns or trends towards the general. In this mode of reasoning researchers formulate hypotheses based upon their initial observations, in the aims of eventually establishing a specific theory. Conversely, deductive reasoning is directed from the general towards the specific, where it utilizes theories and existing literature to formulate hypotheses upon which data is collected, and then hypotheses are tested, and are consequently either validated or rejected.

In this study, the bodies of literature covering open strategy, strategic alignment, and employee engagement were deductively constructed through the reliance on existing theories and empirical research. Likewise, the relation between alignment and engagement was set based on what the theoretical and empirical literatures offer, hence following a deductive reasoning approach. However and due to the absence of established theories or empirical studies on the relation between internal strategic openness, and each of alignment and engagement, the said relations were inductively formulated based on the intersections that were found in the existing literatures. In addition, the stakeholder and legitimacy theories were utilized in the inductive construction of the proposed relationships. The below figure 3.1 highlights the use of inductive (in blue) and deductive (in red) reasoning approaches within the conceptual model.

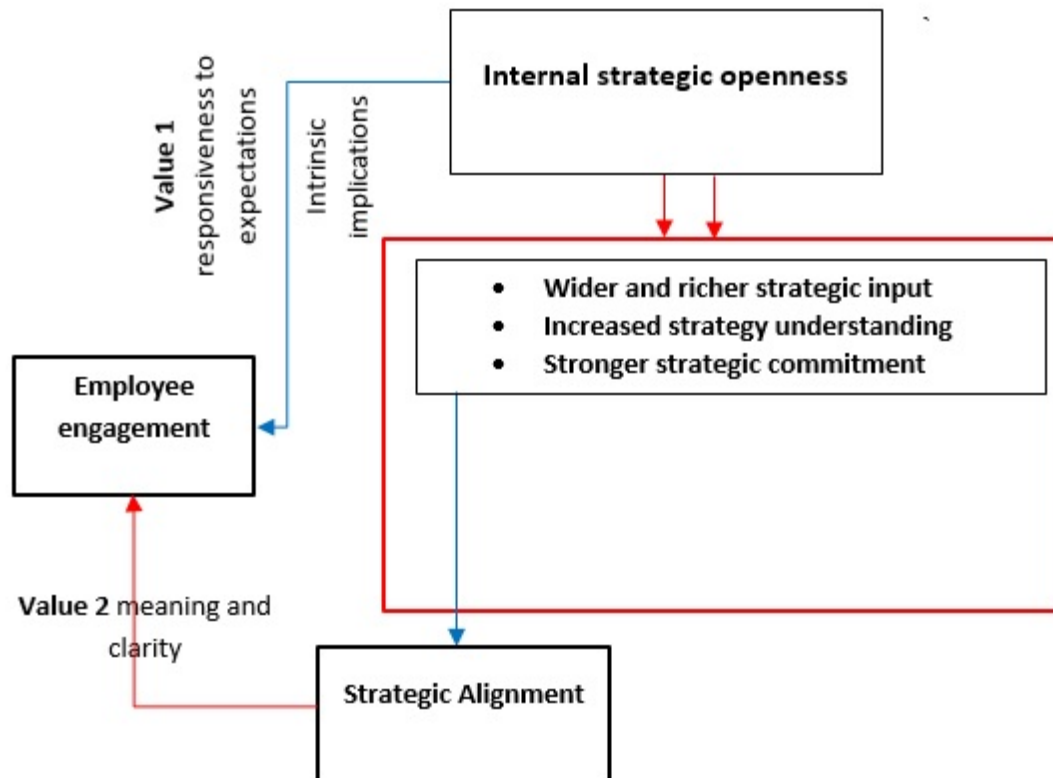


Figure 3.1: Deductive vs inductive approaches

3.3 Philosophical dimensions

Amongst the various philosophical positions that researchers may advocate in human studies, two pillars, positivism and phenomenology, lie on the extremities of viewing and practicing social research. According to Donnelly and Trochim (2006), positivism refers to a philosophical position whereby meaningful inferences are those based on empiricism via experimentation and direct observation, be it in hard or human sciences. Positivist researchers assume full objectivity through their separation from the research, believe in a tangible reality that is separated from them, and consider this reality to be too big to be

studied holistically. Additionally and from a positivist standpoint, reality should be broken down into smaller pieces, therefore, ontology which is the existence of objects and their relationships is considered to be dualistic in nature (Webber, 2004). Furthermore, positivists mostly adopt a deductive reasoning approach through basing their research on an educated and informed guess referred to as a hypothesis (Creswell, 2014). Moreover, such researchers also usually rely on quantitative studies where data is gathered and recorded in numerical form. Finally, the majority of positivists believe in causality and linear relationships, brandishing their view of the universe as deterministic, where cause and effect ideologies serve as pillars for their future predictions (Donnelly and Trochim, 2006).

On the opposing philosophical periphery resides “Phenomenology”, else referred to as “Interpretivism” or “constructivism”. As defined by Langdridge (2008), it is a position that tends to describe things in their appearances through reliance on lived experiences, taking into consideration that the researcher is an active agent that interacts with the observed. As per Webber (2004), phenomenologists believe that the reality being observed and the person observing it cannot be separated. In other terms, those of Manen (1990), “Interpretivism” refers to how people subjectively interpret the meaning of a phenomenon rather aiming at uncovering its actual absolute existence. Knowing that constructivists tend to be interactive with subjects and understand people’s constructions of a phenomenon, they cannot but view reality in a holistic manner. Most phenomenologists tend to adopt inductive and exploratory approaches, where the aim is to formulate new theories based on the findings of a research (Pascal, 2010), (Donnelly and Trochim, 2006). Furthermore, Lester (1999) stated that phenomenological researches

are more likely to adopt qualitative approaches, as data is recorded in non-numerical or descriptive form, and is usually followed by interpretation and reflections. Finally, methods such as interviews and direct observations are most commonly used, in the ultimate aims of constructing findings based on interactions and observations.

One alternative philosophical dimension that has emerged as a shift away from positivism is post-positivism. According to Donnelly and Trochim (2016), post-positivists seek objectivity, however are aware that within the context of social sciences it cannot be completely achieved. Being a common form of post-positivism, critical realism states that all observations may contain error, and all theories are prone to be revised. One aspect of this position is the use of triangulation, through which multiple research methods, data sources or theories are used to validate the outcomes of a research. Wynn and Williams (2012) identified four triangulation ways that post-positivist critical realists may utilize to limit the influences of various biases within the research process and results, those being data, theoretical, investigator, and methods triangulation. One of the main motives for methodological triangulation is identified as the ability to examine phenomena through wider perspectives. Moreover, a multi-methodological approach may sometimes stem from complementarity or facilitation, but may also be utilized in order to reach as much objectivity as possible (Donnelly and Trochim, 2006). Nevertheless, the combination of methods may prove to be problematic due to cultural, psychological feasibility, and practical reasons, consequently implying a need for weighing the plausible benefits of richness against the potential costs of complexity.

Within the context of this herein research, the adopted position is Post positivism-critical realism, as the researcher is aware that full objectivity cannot be attained, yet the study

should strive for the attainment of its highest levels. The model to be constructed and tested does not and cannot account for every possible causal variable. Additionally, a standard error will be included in the model to account for any unexplained variations in the dependent variable of choice. As for triangulation, the value of including alternative methodologies and data collection tools proved to be cumbersome due to the constraints imposed by the research, those mainly being the access to data, as well as time constraints. The research did not necessitate any use for data or investigator triangulation, however theoretical triangulation was used by employing both the stakeholder and legitimacy theories to back up the proposed relations in the conceptual model. Both inductive and deductive reasoning approaches were utilized, nevertheless the literature which represents the starting point of the research was deductively constructed, and therefore conforming with the majority of post positivism practices.

3.4 Population and Sampling Procedures

In order to empirically test the conceptual model, several organizations were initially identified as being suitable for the study, based on the sector they belong to, workforce size, significance and rank in the relative industry, as well as responsiveness to research. Having narrowed down the alternatives, a consultancy company along with four banks were contacted and provided with a research proposal that details the purpose of the study, as well as the adopted data collection tool. The consultancy firm initially agreed and showed interest in the proposed study, however failed to get the approval of the international group to access the required data on alignment and employee engagement.

As within the banking industry, three out of four banks did not show any interest or willingness to collaborate in the research, while one bank did. Not only did Bank of Beirut prove to fit the research requirements but also showed readiness and willingness for participation. Following the first contact with the human resources department, the willingness to collaborate was shown by setting a preliminary meeting with the HR director to introduce the study. Then, several discussions took place with several managerial and non-managerial members from the compliance, HR, and operations departments in order to explain the purpose of the study, pilot the data collection tool, as well as assist in the data collection process. In order to serve the purposes of the research, the chosen population consisted of employees from core business functions of the bank's retail and corporate divisions. More specifically, the employees of interest were identified as those working in non-managerial, as well as lower and middle management positions in compliance, operations, middle market, and corporate banking departments within Lebanon. Up until 2017, their numbers had grown to reach 453 employees (28%) out of the total 1615. As for the remaining 1162, they are distributed throughout supporting functions (IT, HR, marketing...), senior and top managerial positions, BOB Finance S.A.L (Includes Western union business division), Bank of Beirut Invest S.A.L., or non-banking entities such as Beirut Brokers S.A.R.L. and Beirut Life Co. To add, further incentives for choosing these members as the population for the study are the common praxis and practices that they may share, as socially accomplishing strategy may significantly vary throughout different business divisions or functions. Practices are associated with being enablers or disablers of activities by setting, or for that matter not setting certain constraints. In this line, such considerations imply that that the study

should be micro in nature, in order to allow a more accurate interpretation of the results. The below Table 3.1 showcases the numbers of the chosen population as provided by the human resources department:

Department	Number of employees
Compliance	26
Operations	352
Middle market	35
Corporate banking	40
Total population	453
Total group employees	1615
Population as a percentage of total group	28%
Total sample (observations)	216
Sample as a percentage of total population	61.3%

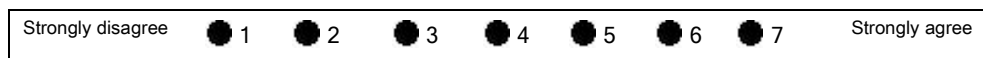
Table 3.1: BOB employee figures

3.5 Research strategy and data collection tool

Due to the absence of any similar precedent empirical studies, no predefined methods or data collection tools were identified by the literature to extract the needed data from the chosen sample. Therefore and in order to reach out to three hundred and nineteen employees at the bank, while considering the research constraints of time and access to data, the most suitable strategy was deemed as being a survey. Moreover and more specifically, the adopted method consisted of a questionnaire that quantitatively measures openness, alignment, and engagement through quasi-metric scales (Appendix 1). Having introduced the study, the first section was dedicated to collecting demographic data as well as criteria related to employee's status at the organization. This background information included gender, age, country, years of experience at the bank, department,

current position, years of experience in current position, education and professional certification.

In order to allow for the later conduction statistical tests, the data to be gathered throughout sections 2, 3, and 4 of the questionnaire was quantified through the use of quasi-metric scales. The scales ranged from one to seven with the lower extremity denoting strongly disagree, and the upper signifying periphery strongly agree as shown below:



Throughout the construction the questionnaire's second section, the dimensions of inclusion and transparency constituted the starting point for formulating the questions on openness. This section also necessitated the need to eliminate any confusion that may occur between strategic and operational activities, hence included a brief introductory definition of each. As identified by the literature, internal inclusion refers to the contribution of ideas within the strategy formulation and/or the evaluation processes. Henceforth, the following questions were constructed in the aims of scrutinizing employees' perceptions on the existent level of participatory behavior in strategic activity.

2.01. I contribute with insights when BANK OF BEIRUT is formulating new strategies

2.02. I contribute with insights when BANK OF BEIRUT is evaluating an existing strategy

2.03. Management asks for our input into strategic level campaigns

2.04. I feel included in the strategy formulation process

Moreover and to highlight the significance that technology may have in the process of opening up strategy internally within both the formulation and evaluation processes, the following questions were formulated:

2.05. Technology makes it easier for me to contribute my insights when BANK OF BEIRUT is formulating new strategies

2.06. Technology makes it easier for me to contribute my insights when BANK OF BEIRUT is evaluating an existing strategy

Transparency within an open strategy framework is defined as the extent to which information is shared with internal and external stakeholders (Birkinshaw, 2017). Therefore internally, it may be characterized by a voluntary sharing of information by management, and an access to strategic content by employees. In this line, the following questions were included in order to extract data on the existent level of internal strategic transparency according to the sampled employees.

2.07. I can access information related to BANK OF BEIRUT's strategies

2.08. I can freely ask questions to management regarding any topic

2.09. Management voluntarily shares information regarding BANK OF BEIRUT's strategic matters

2.10. I can access information related to BANK OF BEIRUT's regular operations

For the purpose of this study, alignment was defined as employees' perceived understandings of an organization's goals and strategy, how their job contributes in the

accomplishment of these objectives, in addition to their perceived understanding of aligned actions (Boswell, 2000); (Stringer, 2007); (Hellevig, 2012). Within the third section, questions were formulated based on the definition of alignment, the questionnaire items on alignment adopted by Stringer (2007), and in accordance with the concepts of perceived line of sight objectives and perceived line of sight actions as introduced by Boswell (2000). Even though Boswell (2000) had introduced two other components, line of sight objectives and line of sight actions, the research constraints ruled out the possibility of using the full framework to measure alignment, as it implied the need for a different methodological approach of an exploratory nature. In this line, each question related to either of the two perceptual variables while mainly targeting different components of what defines alignment as shown below:

3.01. I can identify BANK OF BEIRUT's purpose

3.02. I understand BANK OF BEIRUT's strategic objectives

3.03. I understand what BANK OF BEIRUT aims to do for its stakeholders

3.05. I understand how my job contributes to BANK OF BEIRUT's achievement of its strategic objectives

3.06. I am clear on the strategic directions of BANK OF BEIRUT

3.07. My work behaviors are consistent with BANK OF BEIRUT's strategy

Throughout the last section covering employee engagement, the questions were extracted from Gallup's "Q¹² questionnaire" hence being based on one of the four categories of basic, individual, teamwork, and performance needs. The questions aimed at exploring employees' knowledge of what is expected of them, their perceptions on personal

development and receiving recognition, as well as insights on having the opportunity to perform. Moreover, they also targeted employees' perceptions on the significance of their opinion at work, their evaluations of how their job's importance in light of the company's mission, and their insights regarding the ability to learn and grow. Henceforth, the chosen constituents for the fourth and final section are as below:

- 4.01.** I know what is expected of me at work.
- 4.02.** I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right.
- 4.03.** At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day
- 4.04.** There is someone at work who encourages my development.
- 4.05.** At work, my opinions seem to count.
- 4.06.** The mission or purpose of my company makes me feel my job is important.
- 4.07.** My associates or fellow employees are committed to doing quality work
- 4.08.** This last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow.

Having constructed the questionnaire and received IRB approval, it was then piloted by a group of employees from different banking institutions in Lebanon and Qatar to ensure the clarity of the questions, and to identify any needed amendments before its distribution to the actual sample. Following the pilot study, all participants expressed their ability to complete the questionnaire without facing any ethical or content issues, with the majority claiming to have completed the survey at an estimated time of 5 minutes. Questionnaires were then distributed amongst Bank of Beirut employees through the human resources department, who compiled completed versions in either soft or hard copy forms to ensure

secrecy of the data. The end of the collection period was estimated at about two months after its initiation, and all received data was entered into SPSS for later processing.

3.6 Operationalization and hypotheses statement

3.6.1 Internal strategic openness

Greater strategic openness within an organization's internal environment promises increased exposure to strategic activity through different praxis and practices, and therefore may lead to better understandings of strategies and more commitment from internal stakeholders (Whittington et al., 2011); (Hutter et al., 2017); (Gegenhuber and Dobush, 2016); (Lakhani et al., 2013). According to Birkinshaw (2017), strategy research has identified the role of multiple actors at different levels in an organization, and sharing information as means for alignment. Hence, the dimensions of inclusion and transparency may significantly impact the process of strategically aligning employees with the organization's mission and overall strategy. In this line, internal openness may lead to strategic alignment, as it fosters high levels of information sharing and contributory behavior internally, as well as produces strategic understanding and commitment. Since only the two perceptual variables of perceived line of sight objectives and perceived line of sight actions (Boswell, 2000) were adopted for the measurement of alignment, therefore the first hypothesis covers the relation between openness and perceived alignment, and is inductively formulated as below:

H1: Internal strategic openness positively affects perceived strategic alignment

In order to explore any existing variations in the existent level of strategic openness towards employees within the organization, the below hypotheses were inductively formulated in relation to gender, age, years of experience at the bank, years of experience in current position, education, position, and professional certification:

H2: Internal strategic openness varies with respect to gender

H3: Internal strategic openness varies with respect to age

H4: Internal strategic openness varies with respect to years of experience at the organization

H5: Internal strategic openness varies with respect to years of experience in current position

H6: Internal strategic openness varies with respect to educational level

H7: Internal strategic openness varies with respect to current position

H8: Internal strategic openness varies with respect to the possession of a professional certificate

3.6.2 Strategic alignment

Hellevig (2012) identified alignment as being one of multiple drivers for employee engagement, as it provides meaning to individual efforts. According to Algaraja and Shuck (2015), the development of meaning and understanding of an organization's goals and strategy spurs the idea of engagement. Moreover, Gallup (2017) argued that clarity about employees' job roles provides them with direction as well as creates a condition for engagement. Boswell and Boudreau (2001) stated that previous research on role clarity suggests that employees want to know what their role is in the organizational strategy,

and how they contribute in the accomplishment of objectives. Stringer (2007) concluded that strategic alignment and job meaningfulness were significantly and positively related to engagement, hence implying that organizations may be able to foster employee engagement through strategic alignment. Likewise, Mackoff and Triolo (2008), Hyvönen et al. (2009), and Biggs et al. (2014) have empirically uncovered that alignment does in fact affect engagement positively. Following the adoption of perceived line of sight objectives and perceived line of sight actions (Boswell, 2000) as measures for strategic alignment, the second hypothesis covers the relation between perceived alignment and employee engagement and is deductively stated as below:

H9: Perceived strategic alignment positively affects employee engagement

In order to explore any existing variations in the existent level of perceived strategic alignment amongst employees, the below hypotheses were inductively formulated in relation to gender, age, years of experience at the bank, years of experience in current position, education, position, and professional certification:

H10: Perceived strategic alignment varies with respect to gender

H11: Perceived strategic alignment varies with respect to age

H12: Perceived strategic alignment varies with respect to years of experience at the organization

H13: Perceived strategic alignment varies with respect to years of experience in current position

H14: Perceived strategic alignment varies with respect to educational level

H15: Perceived strategic alignment varies with respect to current position

H16: Perceived strategic alignment varies with respect to the possession of a professional certificate

3.6.3 Employee engagement

Although the existing literatures on both open strategy and employee engagement have yet to empirically establish any well-defined relation between both concepts, research has suggested that opening up strategy to employees may result in higher engagement levels (Birkinshaw, 2017). Moreover, Mann and Harter (2016) argued that in order to foster employee engagement, organizations should not just cater to employees' needs, however they should treat them like stakeholders of both the company's and their own futures, and which openness may enable. Furthermore and with reference to the stakeholder and legitimacy theories, openness may be viewed as an organizational feature that directly and/or indirectly maximizes value for those included, and that may also convey compliance to certain social expectations. Additionally, the theoretical bridging of openness to alignment, coupled with the theoretical and empirical causal relation that exists between alignment and engagement highlights even more the possibility that openness may affect engagement. In this line the following hypothesis covers the effect of internal strategic openness on employee engagement and is inductively stated as below:

H17: Employee engagement is positively affected by internal strategic openness

In order to explore any existing variations in employee engagement, the below hypotheses were formulated in relation to gender, age, years of experience at the bank, years of experience in current position, education, position, and professional certification:

H18: Employee engagement varies with respect to gender

H19: Employee engagement varies with respect to age

H20: Employee engagement varies with respect to years of experience at the organization

H21: Employee engagement varies with respect to years of experience in current position

H22: Employee engagement varies with respect to educational level

H23: Employee engagement varies with respect to current position

H24: Employee engagement varies with respect to the possession of a professional certificate

3.7 Conclusion

In summary, this research employs a mixture of inductive and deductive reasoning approaches within and throughout its different parts. Since the study is conducted from a post positivism-critical realism standpoint, it is aimed at seeking the highest levels of objectivity while assuming the inability to obtain its fullest version. The models to be constructed and tested do not and cannot account for every possible causal variable and take into account standard errors. Data, investigator and methodological triangulations were excluded as their benefit would not outweigh the costs that the research constraints would impose. However, theoretical triangulation was used by employing both the stakeholder and legitimacy theories to back up the proposed relations in the conceptual model. As for the organization under study, Bank of Beirut proved to fit the research requirements, in addition to its willingness to collaborate in the research. The population

consisted of employees working in core banking functions, and the adopted method consisted of a questionnaire that measures openness, perceived alignment, and engagement through quasi-metric scales. Lastly, 21 hypotheses regarding the possible variations in openness, alignment and engagement in respect to background information were formulated, in addition to 3 hypotheses aimed at investigating the possible links between the three 3 main concepts.

4. ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

Throughout this chapter, the next section will feature the analysis framework that was used for processing and analyzing the data. Sections 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, and 4.6, will present the results of the statistical tests, and will then be followed by section 4.7 which is dedicated to discussing the findings. Lastly, the final section 4.8 will end the chapter with a conclusion.

4.2 Analysis framework

Since the data was collected through quantitative questionnaires, the first step following the data entered into SPSS was checking internal consistency reliability through measuring Cronbach Alpha. According to the UCLA institute for digital research and education, a coefficient of 0.7 or higher is considered to be an acceptable value within social sciences research. The second step consisted of producing descriptive statistics that measure central tendency and dispersion, as well as enable normality checks. This phase included the creation of three categories under “Years of experience at Bank” (Three years and below, between 3 years and 6 years, above six years), two categories under “Years of experience in current position” (below or equal to 3 years of experience, above three years of experience), and two groups under “Position” (Staff position, Supervisory position). Moreover, “Gender” included two groups “Male” and “Female”, Education entailed three groups “Technical”, “Bachelor”, and “Master”, and

“Certification” included two groups “Certified” and “Not certified”. Summative score was created for each of the “Internal openness”, “Alignment” and “Engagement” variables. The variations in openness, alignment, and engagement with respect to “Age ordinal”, “Years position ordinal” were assessed using T-test, and variations by “Years of experience at Bank ordinal” were analyzed via ANOVA and T-test. Moreover, the variations with respect to non-metric variables were analyzed through Kruskal-Wallis and Mann-Whitney tests for “Education”, and Mann-Whitney/“U-test” for “Gender” and “certification”. The last and most significant statistical test consisted of the conduction of a Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). The PLS-SEM is considered as the optimal alternative amongst other SEM approaches for exploratory researches, as well as situations where the sample size is small, applications have little available theory, predictive accuracy is paramount, and correct model specification cannot be ensured (Wong, 2013). According to Hoyle (1995) in Wong (2013), “a sample size of 100 to 200 is usually a good starting point for carrying out path modelling (p.5)”. Wong (2013) postulated that a structural equation model includes 2 sub-models. “The inner model specifies the relationships between the independent and dependent latent variables, whereas the outer model specifies the relationships between the latent variables and their observed indicators” (p.1). Within the internal model, variables with path arrows pointing outwards and none inwards are denominated as exogenous, while variables with at least one inward pointing arrow are defined as endogenous. In regards to the external model, if indicators are not interchangeable between themselves and cause the latent variable, then they are formative. Conversely, if indicators are highly correlated and make up the latent variable, then they are identified as reflective, and their reliability

and validity should be examined and reported (Haenlein and Kaplan, 2004; Hair et al., 2013; Petter et al., 2017) in (Wong, 2013). To check “Item reliability”, Hulland (1999) stated that it is preferred to accept loadings of 0.7 or higher, with 0.4 or 0.5 being the thresholds for dropping out items. Moreover, Hair et al. (2013) argued that all indicators with loadings less than 0.4 should be dropped, while keeping those who have values between 0.4 and 0.7, only if their removal does not ameliorate composite reliability or AVE numbers. Wong (2013) added that indicator reliability is measured by squaring the value of each loading, which is also preferred to be 0.7 or higher, however may still be acceptable if between 0.4 and 0.7 for an exploratory research. In order to examine “Internal consistency reliability”, Bagozzi and Yi, (1988) suggested that composite reliability should be 0.7 or higher, with 0.6 being deemed as acceptable for exploratory studies. To check “Convergent validity”, Bagozzi and Yi, (1988) argued that average variance extracted (AVE) numbers should be 0.5 or greater. And lastly, to examine and confirm “Discriminant validity”, Fornell and Larcker (1981) in (Wong, 2013) postulated that “the square root of the AVE numbers of each latent variable should be greater than the correlations among the latent variables” (p.23). In this study, the inner model within this study holds that openness (exogenous variable) leads to engagement (endogenous) and alignment (endogenous), and alignment leads to engagement. Therefore, the PLS-SEM will allow the testing of the hypothesized relations between the three variables of internal strategic openness, alignment, and engagement. Furthermore, the outer model holds that each latent variable is made up of reflective indicators, and hence require reliability and validity checks. In this line, the first stage in the PLS-SEM consisted of constructing the model using “SmartPLS (v.3.2.8)”. Having ran the PLS algorithm, outer

loadings, coefficients of determinations, path coefficient sizes and significance were obtained, and consequently validity as well as reliability were assessed. The model was then optimized twice by removing all indicators that had loadings less than 0.7, hence resulting in more reliable metrics for measuring the effect of internal strategic openness and strategic alignment on employee engagement. Lastly, both reliability and validity were checked using the aforementioned measures as denoted by Wong (2013).

4.3 Reliability analysis

In order to test the degree to which the items of measurement are in agreement or internal consistency reliability, Cronbach alpha was calculated through the use of SPSS. Table 4.1 shows that Cronbach alpha is 0.949, therefore implying that the measures have an acceptable level of reliability as the obtained coefficient well exceeds the threshold of 0.7.

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.949	23

Table 4.1: Reliability of scales

4.4 Descriptive statistics

In order to obtain the frequencies, measure the central tendency and dispersion, as well as check for normality of the sample, descriptive statistics were respectively generated of non-metric and metric variables. The non-metric variables consisted of

Gender, Position, Education, and Certification, while the metric variables entailed Age, Years of experience at the bank, and Years of experience in current position.

Frequencies of non-metric variables

As shown in table 4.2, 115 out of the 216 respondents were males (53.2%) and the remaining 101 were females (46.8%).

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	115	53.2	53.2	53.2
	Female	101	46.8	46.8	100.0
	Total	216	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.2: Frequencies of the “Gender” variable

The variable “Position” was segmented into categories, “Staff position” and “Supervisory position”, of which the first included tellers and officers across departments and the second contained senior positions and heads of departments. As shown in the below table 4.3, staff positions accounted for 69.9% of the total 216 observations, while employees with supervisory positions filled the remaining 30.1%.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Staff position	151	69.9	69.9	69.9
	Supervisory position	65	30.1	30.1	100.0
	Total	216	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.3: Frequencies of the “Position” variable

The variable “Education” entailed three categories, “Technical”, “Bachelor”, and “Master”. The below Table 4.4 shows that the majority of respondents had bachelors (69%), then followed by Master (23%) and Technical degree holders (3.7%)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Technical	8	3.7	3.7	3.7
	Bachelor	149	69.0	69.0	72.7
	Master	59	27.3	27.3	100.0
	Total	216	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.4: Frequencies of the “Education” variable

The variable “Certification” included two groups, “Certified”, and “No certification”. As shown in Table 4.5 certified employees accounted for 24.5%, while those who had no certification accounted for 75.5% of the total observations.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No certification	163	75.5	75.5	75.5
	Certified	53	24.5	24.5	100.0
	Total	216	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.5: Frequencies of the “Certification” variable

Frequencies of metric variables

The frequencies for the variable “Age” were ranked according to one of two categories, “Under 30 years of age” and “30 years of age and above. As show in the below table 4.6, the number of employees pertaining to each group was equal and consisted 50% of the total observations.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Under 30 years of age	108	50.0	50.0	50.0
	30 years of age and above	108	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	216	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.6: Frequencies of the “Age” variable

The variable “Years of experience at the bank” was categorized into three groups, “3years and below”, “Above 3 and below 6”, and “Above 6 years”. As shown in Table 4.7, employees who have 3 years of experience or less accounted for 41.2% of the total observations, followed by those who had more than 6 years of experience (31.9%), and lastly those with experience above 3 years and below 6 (26.9%).

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3 years and below	89	41.2	41.2	41.2
	Above 3 and below 6 years	58	26.9	26.9	68.1
	Above 6 years	69	31.9	31.9	100.0
	Total	216	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.6: Frequencies of the “Years of experience at the bank” variable

The variable “Years of experience in current position” included 2 sub-categories, those being “Below or equal to 3years” and “Above three years”. As displayed in Table 4.8, 136 employees had 3 years of experience or below in their current position (63%), while 80 respondents had more than 3 years.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Below or equal to 3 years of experience in position	136	63.0	63.0	63.0

	Above 3 years of experience in position	80	37.0	37.0	100.0
	Total	216	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.7: Frequencies of the “Years in position” variable

Table 4.8 display the central tendency, dispersion, and Kurtosis values of all metric variables under openness, alignment and engagement, and table 4.9 features he same for their summative scores. All individual items as well as their summative scores had acceptable Kurtosis values ranging between -3 and 3, ($-3 < 0.03 < 3$; $-3 < -0.29 < 3$; $-3 < 1.047 < 3$). The overall mean for openness was 5.11, while those of the sums of alignment and engagement respectively were 5.8 and 5.6.

	N		Mean	Std. Deviation	Kurtosis	Std. Error of Kurtosis	Minimum	Maximum
	Valid	Missing						
I contribute with insights when BOB is formulating new strategies	216	0	4.50	1.659	-.369	.330	1	7
I contribute with insights when BOB is evaluating existing strategies	216	0	4.64	1.645	-.223	.330	1	7
Management asks for our input into strategic level campaigns	216	0	4.85	1.735	-.245	.330	1	7
I feel included in the strategy formulation process	216	0	4.38	1.780	-.554	.330	1	7

Technology makes it easier for me to contribute my insights when BOB is formulating new strategies	216	0	5.70	1.191	.914	.330	1	7
Technology makes it easier for me to contribute my insights when BOB is evaluating new strategies	216	0	5.81	1.220	1.160	.330	2	7
I can access information related to BOB's strategies	216	0	5.41	1.108	.089	.330	2	7
I can freely ask management regarding any topic	216	0	5.45	1.427	1.870	.330	1	7
Management voluntarily shares information regarding strategic matters	216	0	5.20	1.255	1.469	.330	1	7
I can identify BOB's purpose	216	0	6.10	.849	-.050	.330	3	7
I understand BOB's strategic objectives	216	0	5.84	1.027	-.373	.330	3	7
I understand what BOB aims to do for its	216	0	5.78	1.024	.466	.330	2	7

stakeholders

I understand how BOB aims to accomplish its goals	216	0	5.60	1.133	-.318	.330	2	7
I understand how my job contributes to BOB's achievement of strategic objectives	216	0	5.65	1.180	.172	.330	2	7
I am clear on BOB's strategic direction	216	0	5.64	1.157	.744	.330	1	7
My work behaviors are consistent with BOB's strategy	216	0	6.06	.963	1.489	.330	2	7
I know what is expected of me at work	216	0	6.22	.833	.016	.330	3	7
I have the material and equipment I need to do my work right	216	0	5.94	1.176	2.472	.330	1	7
At work I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day	216	0	5.70	1.299	2.315	.330	1	7
At work, my opinion seems to count	216	0	5.11	1.682	.067	.330	1	7

The mission or purpose of company makes me feel my job is important	216	0	5.47	1.137	.857	.330	2	7
My associates are committed to doing quality work	216	0	5.66	1.071	-.104	.330	2	7
This last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow	216	0	5.28	1.506	.552	.330	1	7

Table 4.8: Descriptive statistics for metric variables

		Sum of Openness	Sum of Alignment	Sum of Engagement
N	Valid	216	216	216
	Missing	0	0	0
Mean		5.1044	5.8089	5.6257
Std. Deviation		1.11148	0.84859	0.96482
Kurtosis		.072	-0.29	1.047
Std. Error of Kurtosis		.330	0.33	0.33
Minimum		1.78	3.57	2
Maximum		7.00	7	7

Table 4.9: Descriptive statistics for sums

4.5 Variation analysis

In order to analyze variations according to metric variables, ANOVA was used for those that included more than 2 categories, and was then followed by T-tests to scrutinize the variations between each two categories. Each of “Age ranked” and “Years of

experience in position” included two groups, therefore T-test was used to analyze the variations in all three variables of “Openness”, “Alignment”, and “Engagement”. Variations by “Years of experience at the bank ranked” were analyzed via ANOVA as the latter variable entailed 3 categories, “3 years and below”, “Above 3 and below 6 years”, and “Above 6 years”. Then, variations between each two sub-groups were analyzed using T-tests. Lastly, “Years of experience in position ranked” included 2 categories, “Below or equal to three years” and “3 years and above”, thus t-tests were used for testing the variations between the 2 groups.

Variation by age groups

As shown in Table 4.10, employee’s perceptions regarding the existent level of openness significantly varied between individuals who are under 30 years of age and those who are 30 years and above at the 5% level, with the mean of openness (5.29) being higher for the second group than that of the first (4.92). Employees from the older category seemed to be more involved in strategic activity particularly in evaluating existing strategies, as well as perceived management to be more interactive and transparent with them than the younger category.

	Under 30 years of age	30 years of age and above
Sum of Openness	4.92*	5.29*
I contribute with insights when BOB is evaluating existing strategies	4.36*	4.92*
Management asks for our input into strategic level campaigns	4.4**	5.31**
I can access information related to BOB's strategies	5.21**	5.6**

Management voluntarily shares information regarding strategic matters	4.9**	5.5**
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**Significant at the 0.01 level *Significant at the 0.05 level

Table 4.10: T-test for variation in “Openness” by “Age ranked”

Employees’ perceived alignment significantly varied between the two age categories at the 0.01 level, with those who are 30 years of age and above reporting higher means (6) than the younger category (5.62). As shown in table 4.11, individuals from the older group displayed a higher understanding of the organization’s mission, goals, strategy, as well as their role in the accomplishment of objectives.

	Under 30 years of age	30 years of age and above
Sum of Alignment	5.62**	6**
I can identify BOB's purpose	5.88**	6.31**
I understand BOB's strategic objectives	5.62**	6.06**
I understand what BOB aims to do for its stakeholders	5.53**	6.03**
I understand how BOB aims to accomplish its goals	5.42*	5.79*
I understand how my job contributes to BOB's achievement of strategic objectives	5.49*	5.81*
I am clear on BOB's strategic direction	5.41**	5.87**

**Significant at the 0.01 level *Significant at the 0.05 level

Table 4. 11: T-test for variation in “Alignment” by “Age ranked”

Likewise, there was a significant variation in engagement between the two age categories at the 1% level, and whereby the mean of the older category (5.86) exceeded that of the younger group (5.39). As shown in the below table 4.12, employees who are 30 years of age and above displayed higher means than those pertaining to the under 30 years of age category throughout three types of employee’s performance development needs, those being individual, teamwork, and performance development. In this line, employees from

the older age group were found to display higher levels of engagement than their younger counterparts.

	Under 30 years of age	30 years of age and above
Sum of Engagement	5.39**	5.86**
At work I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day	5.44**	5.96**
At work, my opinion seems to count	4.68**	5.54**
The mission or purpose of company makes me feel my job is important	5.25**	5.69**
My associates are committed to doing quality work	5.42**	5.9**
This last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow	4.97**	5.59**

**Significant at the 0.01 level *Significant at the 0.05 level

Table 4.12: T-test for variation in “Engagement” by “Age ranked”

Variation by years of experience at the bank categories

The results of the ANOVA test showed that there was a significant variation at the 0.01 level in “Openness” between the three categories under “Years of experience at the bank ranked” as shown in table 4.13. There was a significant variation in 6 openness items at the 1% and 1 item at the 5% level out of 9 amongst the three categories of “3 years and below”, “Above 3 and below 6 years”, and “Above 6 years”. More specifically, the results indicated a significant variation between the three groups regarding inclusion in strategy formulation and evaluation, as well as concerning management’s levels of inclusive behavior and transparency.

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
I contribute with insights when BOB is formulating new strategies	Between Groups	29.701	2	14.850	5.625	.004
	Within Groups	562.299	213	2.640		
	Total	592.000	215			
I contribute with insights when BOB is evaluating existing strategies	Between Groups	47.555	2	23.777	9.479	.000
	Within Groups	534.279	213	2.508		
	Total	581.833	215			
Management asks for our input into strategic level campaigns	Between Groups	83.602	2	41.801	15.796	.000
	Within Groups	563.658	213	2.646		
	Total	647.259	215			
I feel included in the strategy formulation process	Between Groups	40.104	2	20.052	6.666	.002
	Within Groups	640.766	213	3.008		
	Total	680.870	215			
Technology makes it easier for me to contribute my insights when BOB is formulating new strategies	Between Groups	.786	2	.393	.275	.760
	Within Groups	304.251	213	1.428		
	Total	305.037	215			
Technology makes it easier for me to contribute my insights when BOB is evaluating new strategies	Between Groups	.876	2	.438	.292	.747
	Within Groups	318.958	213	1.497		
	Total	319.833	215			
I can access information related to BOB's strategies	Between Groups	17.875	2	8.937	7.730	.001
	Within Groups	246.273	213	1.156		
	Total	264.148	215			
I can freely ask management regarding any topic	Between Groups	15.971	2	7.986	4.035	.019
	Within Groups	421.566	213	1.979		
	Total	437.537	215			
Management voluntarily shares information regarding strategic matters	Between Groups	22.502	2	11.251	7.585	.001
	Within Groups	315.938	213	1.483		
	Total	338.440	215			
Sum of Openness	Between Groups	22.218	2	11.109	9.722	.000
	Within Groups	243.390	213	1.143		
	Total	265.608	215			

**Significant at the 0.01 level *Significant at the 0.05 level

Table 4.13: ANOVA for variation in “Openness” by “Years of experience at the bank ranked”

As shown in the below table 4.14, there was a significant variation at the 0.01 level in “Openness” between employees with 3 years of experience at the bank and below and those who have above 3 and below 6 years. Those belonging to the upper category had a greater openness mean (5.25) than those who had less experience (4.73), and thus perceiving higher levels of internal strategic openness. More particularly, employees who had more than 3 and less than 6 years of experience reported greater involvement in both strategy formulation and evaluation, felt more included in strategic activity, as well as perceived higher levels of internal transparency.

	3 years and below	Above 3 and below 6 years
Sum of Openness	4.73**	5.25**
I contribute with insights when BOB is formulating new strategies	4.07*	4.69*
I contribute with insights when BOB is evaluating existing strategies	4.1*	4.83*
Management asks for our input into strategic level campaigns	4.17**	4.98**
I feel included in the strategy formulation process	3.88*	4.6*
I can access information related to BOB's strategies	5.07**	5.59**
Management voluntarily shares information regarding strategic matters	4.82**	5.38**

**Significant at the 0.01 level *Significant at the 0.05 level

Table 4.14: T-test for variation in “Openness” by “Years of experience at the bank ranked” between categories “3 years and below”, and “Above 3 years and below 6 years”

Moreover, the results uncovered a significant variation at the 0.01 level in internal strategic openness between employees who had 3 years of experience and below, and those having more than 6 years. As shown in table 4.15, the group “Above 6 years” displayed a higher mean for openness (5.46) than “3 years and below” (4.73), hence implying that employees from the greater experience category perceived more openness than their less experienced counterparts. Employees who had more than 6 years of

experience reported greater involvement in both strategy formulation and evaluation, felt more included in strategic activity, as well as perceived higher levels of internal transparency. No significant variation in “Openness” was found between the categories “Above 3 years and below 6 years” and “Above 6 years”.

	3 years and below	Above 6 years
Sum of Openness	4.73**	5.46**
I contribute with insights when BOB is formulating new strategies	4.07**	4.9**
I contribute with insights when BOB is evaluating existing strategies	4.1**	5.17**
Management asks for our input into strategic level campaigns	4.17**	5.62**
I feel included in the strategy formulation process	3.88**	4.84**
I can access information related to BOB’s strategies	5.07**	5.7**
I can freely ask management regarding any topic	5.13*	5.74*
Management voluntarily shares information regarding strategic matters	4.82**	5.54**

**Significant at the 0.01 level *Significant at the 0.05 level

Table 4.15: T-test for variation in “Openness” by “Years of experience at the bank ranked” between categories “3 years and below”, and “Above 6 years”

As for Alignment, there was a significant variation between the three groups under “Years of experience at the bank ranked” at the 1% level as shown by the results of the ANOVA test in the below Table 4.16. There was a significant variation in 5 alignment items at the 1% and 2 items at the 5% level amongst the three categories of “3 years and below”, “Above 3 and below 6 years”, and “Above 6 years”. More specifically, the results indicated that there was a significant variation between the three categories in both perceived line of sights objectives, and perceived line of sight actions.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	11.661	2	5.831	8.667	.000
Within Groups	143.297	213	.673		

	Total	154.958	215			
I understand BOB's strategic objectives	Between Groups	18.900	2	9.450	9.689	.000
	Within Groups	207.748	213	.975		
	Total	226.648	215			
I understand what BOB aims to do for its stakeholders	Between Groups	20.873	2	10.437	10.873	.000
	Within Groups	204.460	213	.960		
	Total	225.333	215			
I understand how BOB aims to accomplish its goals	Between Groups	12.023	2	6.012	4.855	.009
	Within Groups	263.736	213	1.238		
	Total	275.759	215			
I understand how my job contributes to BOB's achievement of strategic objectives	Between Groups	11.848	2	5.924	4.390	.014
	Within Groups	287.411	213	1.349		
	Total	299.259	215			
I am clear on BOB's strategic direction	Between Groups	23.243	2	11.621	9.355	.000
	Within Groups	264.591	213	1.242		
	Total	287.833	215			
My work behaviors are consistent with BOB's strategy	Between Groups	6.538	2	3.269	3.612	.029
	Within Groups	192.795	213	.905		
	Total	199.333	215			
Sum of Alignment	Between Groups	13.417	2	6.709	10.105	.000
	Within Groups	141.406	213	.664		
	Total	154.823	215			

**Significant at the 0.01 level *Significant at the 0.05 level

Table 4.16: ANOVA for variation in “Alignment” according to “Years of experience at the bank ranked”

The results of the t-tests indicated a significant variation in alignment at the 0.01 level between the categories of “3 years and below” and “Above 6 years”. As shown in the below table 4.17, the group “Above 6 years” was found to have a higher mean (6.15) than “3 years and below” (5.56), hence signifying a higher level of perceived alignment. More specifically, employees who had more than 6 years of experience at the bank reported on

average higher understandings of what the organizations' goals and strategy are, as well as their roles in the accomplishment of these objectives.

	3 years and below	Above 6 years
Sum of Alignment	5.56**	6.15**
I can identify BOB's purpose	5.88**	6.42**
I understand BOB's strategic objectives	5.55**	6.25**
I understand what BOB aims to do for its stakeholders	5.47**	6.2**
I understand how BOB aims to accomplish its goals	5.34**	5.88**
I understand how my job contributes to BOB's achievement of strategic objectives	5.4**	5.96**
I am clear on BOB's strategic direction	5.27**	6.03**

**Significant at the 0.01 level

*Significant at the 0.05 level

Table 4.17: T-test for variation in "Alignment" by "Years of experience at the bank ranked" between categories "3 years and below", and "Above 6 years"

Moreover, alignment was found to significantly vary at the 1% level between the groups "Above 3 and below 6 years" and "Above 6 years", and whereby the mean of the more experienced group (6.15) exceeded that of its lower counterpart (5.79). As shown in the below table 4.18, employees who had more than 6 years of experience at the bank reported on average higher understandings of the organization's objectives as well as desired work behaviors, and consequently perceived higher levels of alignment with the organization. No significant variation in "Alignment" was found between the categories of "3 years and below" and "Above 3 and below 6 years".

	Above 3 and below 6 years	Above 6 years
Sum of Alignment	5.79**	6.15**
I can identify BOB's purpose	6.05*	6.42*
I understand BOB's strategic objectives	5.81**	6.25**
I understand what BOB aims to do for its stakeholders	5.74**	6.2**

My work behaviors are consistent with BOB's strategy	6.84**	6.29**
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**Significant at the 0.01 level *Significant at the 0.05 level

Table 4.18: T-test for variation in “Alignment” according to “Years of experience at the bank ranked” categories “Above 3 and below 6 years”, and “Above 6 years”

As for employee engagement, the results of the ANOVA test displayed a significant variation at the 1% level between the three categories under years of experience at the bank. As shown in the below table 4.19, there was a significant variation in 5 engagement items at the 1% level amongst the three categories of “3 years and below”, “Above 3 and below 6 years”, and “Above 6 years”. More specifically, the results indicated that there was a significant variation between the three categories regarding three types of performance development needs, those being individual, teamwork, and growth.

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
I know what is expected of me at work	Between Groups	3.543	2	1.772	2.588	.077
	Within Groups	145.790	213	.684		
	Total	149.333	215			
I have the material and equipment I need to do my work right	Between Groups	6.362	2	3.181	2.331	.100
	Within Groups	290.730	213	1.365		
	Total	297.093	215			
At work I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day	Between Groups	23.130	2	11.565	7.247	.001
	Within Groups	339.907	213	1.596		
	Total	363.037	215			
At work, my opinion seems to count	Between Groups	51.393	2	25.697	9.824	.000
	Within Groups	557.158	213	2.616		
	Total	608.551	215			
The mission or purpose of company makes me feel my job is important	Between Groups	22.786	2	11.393	9.515	.000
	Within Groups	255.047	213	1.197		
	Total	277.833	215			

My associates are committed to doing quality work	Between Groups	35.193	2	17.597	17.725	.000
	Within Groups	211.455	213	.993		
	Total	246.648	215			
This last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow	Between Groups	24.345	2	12.172	5.595	.004
	Within Groups	463.428	213	2.176		
	Total	487.773	215			
Sum of Engagement	Between Groups	19.433	2	9.717	11.453	.000
	Within Groups	180.707	213	.848		
	Total	200.140	215			

**Significant at the 0.01 level *Significant at the 0.05 level

Table 4.19: Table 4 19: ANOVA for variation in “Engagement” according to “Years of experience at the bank ranked”

As shown in the below table 4.20, there was a significant variation in employee engagement between the groups “3 years and below” and “Above 3 and below 6 years” at the 5% level, with the mean of the second group (5.66) exceeding that of the first (5.31). Employees who had more than 3 yet less than 6 years of experience reported higher levels of engagement than those who had 3 years and less, specifically within one element of each teamwork and growth needs.

	3 years and below	Above 3 and below 6 years
Sum of Engagement	5.31*	5.66*
At work, my opinion seems to count	4.54**	5.34**
The mission or purpose of company makes me feel my job is important	5.11*	5.55*

**Significant at the 0.01 level *Significant at the 0.05 level

Table 4 20: T-test for variation in “Engagement” by “Years of experience at the bank ranked” between categories “3 years and below” and “Above 3 and below 6 years”

Additionally, engagement was found to significantly vary between the categories of “3 years and below” and “Above 6 years” at the 1 % level, and whereby the mean of the higher group (6.01) exceeded that of the lower category (5.31) as shown in the below table 4.21. Employees who had more than 6 years of experience at the bank reported higher levels of engagement than those who only had 3 years or less, specifically regarding personal, teamwork, and growth needs.

	3 years and below	Above 6 years
Sum of Engagement	5.31**	6.01**
I know what is expected of me at work	6.11*	6.41*
At work I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day	5.36**	6.13**
At work, my opinion seems to count	4.54**	5.64**
The mission or purpose of company makes me feel my job is important	5.11**	5.87**
My associates are committed to doing quality work	5.37**	6.25**
This last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow	4.92**	5.71**

**Significant at the 0.01 level *Significant at the 0.05 level

Table 4.21: T-test for variation in “Engagement” by “Years of experience at the bank ranked” between categories “3 years and below” and “Above 6 years”

Lastly, engagement was found to significantly vary at the 5% level between the categories “Above 3 and below 6 years” and “Above 6 years”, with the mean of the higher group (6.25) exceeding that of its lower counterpart (5.66). As shown in table 4.22, the variation between the two groups originated from the difference in perceptions regarding the work quality of other internal members, and whereby employees who have more than 6 years of experience held on average higher perceptions than those who had less tenure.

	Above 3 and below 6 years	Above 6 years
Sum of Engagement	5.66*	6.25*
My associates are committed to doing quality work	5.4**	6.25**

**Significant at the 0.01 level *Significant at the 0.05 level

Table 4 22: T-test for variation in “Engagement” by “Years of experience at the bank ranked” between categories “Above 3 and below 6 years” and “Above 6 years”

Variation by years of experience at position categories

Following the results of the t-tests, no significant variations in internal strategic openness or alignment were found between the two categories under “Years of experience at position ranked”. However, there was a significant variation in engagement at the 5% level between the categories “Below or equal to 3 years of experience in position” and “Above 3 years of experience in position”. As shown in the below table 4.23, employees from the upper category had a higher mean (5.8) than those who had less experience (5.52), and therefore displayed on average higher engagement levels. More specifically, these employees held on average higher perceptions throughout two performance development needs, those being individual and teamwork.

	Below or equal to 3 years of experience in position	Above 3 years of experience in position
Sum of Engagement	5.52*	5.8*
I know what is expected of me at work	6.12*	6.4*
At work, my opinion seems to count	4.92*	5.43*
The mission or purpose of company makes me feel my job is important	5.33*	5.71*
My associates are committed to doing quality work	5.54*	5.86*

**Significant at the 0.01 level *Significant at the 0.05 level

Table 4.23: T-test for variation in “Engagement” according to “Years of experience at position ranked”

In order to analyze variations according to non-metric variables, Kruskal Wallis test was used for those that included more than 2 categories, and was then followed by Mann-Whitney U-test to scrutinize the variations between each two groups. “Education” included three groups “Technical”, “Bachelor”, and “Master”, therefore both Kruskal Wallis and Mann-Whitney tests were used to analyze the variations in all three variables of “Openness”, “Alignment”, and “Engagement”. Each of “Gender”, “Position” and “Certification” included 2 categories, hence U-tests were conducted and utilized for the variations analyses. There were no significant variations according to “Gender” in any of the three variables.

Variations by Education

There were no significant variations in “Openness” and “Engagement” between the three groups of “Education”, however there was a significant variation at the 5% level in “Alignment” as shown in the below table 4.24.

	Chi-Square	df	Asymp. Sig.
I can identify BOB's purpose	1.816	2	.403
I understand BOB's strategic objectives	2.175	2	.337
I understand what BOB aims to do for its stakeholders	10.122	2	.006
I understand how BOB aims to accomplish its goals	12.507	2	.002
I understand how my job contributes to BOB's achievement of strategic objectives	8.357	2	.015
I am clear on BOB's strategic direction	5.693	2	.058
My work behaviors are consistent with BOB's strategy	.049	2	.976
Sum of Alignment	7.156	2	.028

**Significant at the 0.01 level *Significant at the 0.05 level

Table 4.24: Kruskal-Wallis test for variation in “Alignment” between categories of “Education”

Following the conduction of U-tests, there was no significant variation in Alignment between the categories “Technical” and “Bachelor”, while there was a significant variation at the 5% level between the groups “Technical” and “Master”, as well as “Bachelor” and “Master” as shown in Table 4.25. The mean rank for Master exceed that of the Technical (35.93>19.75) and Bachelor (117.58>99.32) groups. Therefore, those holding a master degree were found to have reported on average higher levels of perceived alignment than those with bachelor or technical degrees, while no significant variation occurred between the latter two categories. More specifically, the variation emerged from greater knowledge of what and how the organization intends to accomplish its goals, as well as what their roles in the process are.

	Technical- Master	Bachelor- Master
Sum of Alignment	-2.21*	-1.98*
I understand what BOB aims to do for its stakeholders		-3.03**
I understand how BOB aims to accomplish its goals	-2.99**	-2.6**
I understand how my job contributes to BOB's achievement of strategic objectives	-2.86**	

**Significant at the 0.01 level *Significant at the 0.05 level

Table 4.25: Mann-Whitney test for variation in “Alignment” by “Education” between categories “Technical and Master”, and “Bachelor and Master”

Variation by position

As shown in the below table 4.26, there was a significant variation at the 1% level in perceptions of internal strategic openness between the groups “Supervisory” and “Staff” position. Employees belonging to the upper position category had a higher mean rank (134.07) than their lower-ranking counterparts (97.49). They reported on average higher

levels of openness, specifically concerning inclusion in both formulation and evaluation activities, management's strategic interactivity, as well as transparency in regards to strategic matters.

	Supervisory-Staff position
Sum of Openness	-3.95**
I contribute with insights when BOB is formulating new strategies	-2.91**
I contribute with insights when BOB is evaluating existing strategies	-3.64**
Management asks for our input into strategic level campaigns	-4.96**
I feel included in the strategy formulation process	-3.02**
I can access information related to BOB's strategies	-3.19**
I can freely ask management regarding any topic	-3.85**
Management voluntarily shares information regarding strategic matters	-5.21**

**Significant at the 0.01 level *Significant at the 0.05 level

Table 4.26: Mann-Whitney test for variation in "Openness" between "Supervisory position" and "Staff position"

Strategic alignment was also found to vary between the categories of "Supervisory" and "Staff" position at the 0.01 level as shown in the below table 4.27, with the mean rank of the first group (135.59) exceeding that of the second (96.84). Employees from the higher hierarchical group reported on average higher levels of perceived alignment than those from the lower-ranking category throughout both aspects of perceived line of sight objectives and perceived line of sight actions.

	Supervisory-Staff position
Sum of Alignment	-4.19**
I can identify BOB's purpose	-5.15**
I understand BOB's strategic objectives	-4.21**
I understand what BOB aims to do for its stakeholders	-3.97**
I understand how BOB aims to accomplish its goals	-4.17**
I understand how my job contributes to BOB's achievement of strategic objectives	-2.92**

I am clear on BOB's strategic direction

-3.16**

**Significant at the 0.01 level *Significant at the 0.05 level

Table 4.27: Mann-Whitney test for variation in “Alignment” between “Supervisory position” and “Staff position”

As for engagement, there was a significant variation at the 1% level between the groups of “Supervisory” and “Staff” position as shown in Table 4.28, with the mean rank of the supervisory group (136.19) exceeding that of the staff category (96.58). Employees who held supervisory positions displayed on average higher levels of engagement than those who occupied staff positions, specifically regarding personal, teamwork, and growth needs.

	Supervisory-Staff position
Sum of Engagement	-4.28**
At work I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day	-3.62**
At work, my opinion seems to count	-4.43**
The mission or purpose of company makes me feel my job is important	-4.65**
My associates are committed to doing quality work	-4.04**
This last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow	-3.4**

**Significant at the 0.01 level *Significant at the 0.05 level

Table 4.28: Mann-Whitney test for variation in “Engagement” between “Supervisory position” and “Staff position”

Variation by certification

As shown in the below table 4.29, there was a significant variation in internal strategic openness at the 1% level between the groups “Certified” and “Not certified” with respective mean ranks of 130.56 and 101.33. Employees who held certifications perceived higher degrees of strategic openness than those who were not certified, more

specifically in regards to inclusion in both formulation and evaluation activities, as well as transparency and access to strategic info.

	Certified-Not certified
Sum of Openness	-2.96**
I contribute with insights when BOB is formulating new strategies	-2.39*
I contribute with insights when BOB is evaluating existing strategies	-2.41*
I feel included in the strategy formulation process	-2.02*
Technology makes it easier for me to contribute my insights when BOB is formulating new strategies	-3.73**
Technology makes it easier for me to contribute my insights when BOB is evaluating new strategies	-2.10*
I can access information related to BOB's strategies	-2.44*
I can freely ask management regarding any topic	-3.20**
Management voluntarily shares information regarding strategic matters	-2.56*

**Significant at the 0.01 level *Significant at the 0.05 level

Table 4.29: Mann-Whitney test for variation in “Openness” between “Certified” and “Not certified”

As for strategic alignment, there was a significant variation at the 5% level between employees with certifications and those who did not possess any as shown in the below table 4.30, with the certified group having a higher mean rank than the not certified category (129.77>101.58). Certified employees and were therefore found to have displayed higher levels of perceived alignment than their non-certified counterparts, specifically concerning their perceived knowledge of objectives, strategy, and how their job contributed in the accomplishment of goals.

	Certified-Not certified
Sum of Alignment	-2.86**
I understand BOB's strategic objectives	-2.44*
I understand what BOB aims to do for its stakeholders	-2.72**
I understand how BOB aims to accomplish its goals	-3.3**
I understand how my job contributes to BOB's achievement of strategic objectives	-2.58**
I am clear on BOB's strategic direction	-2.67**

**Significant at the 0.01 level *Significant at the 0.05 level

Table 4.30: Mann-Whitney test for variation in “Alignment” between “Certified” and “Not certified”

Lastly, there was a significant variation in employee engagement at the 1 % level between the categories of “Certified” and “Not certified” as shown in the below Table 4.31, with the certified group having a higher mean rank than the not certified category (132.35>100.75). Certified employees recorded higher engagement levels than those who are not certified, particularly regarding individual, teamwork, and growth needs.

	Certified-Not certified
Sum of Engagement	-3.2**
I know what is expected of me at work	-3.71**
At work, my opinion seems to count	-2.05*
My associates are committed to doing quality work	-2.42*
This last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow	-3.23**

**Significant at the 0.01 level *Significant at the 0.05 level

Table 4.31: Mann-Whitney test for variation in “Engagement” between “Certified” and “Not certified”

4.6 Partial least squares-Structural equation modelling

The path model was constructed using “SmartPLS” (v.3.2.8). The inner model included the three latent variables, with internal strategic openness being exogenous, and

strategic alignment as well as employee engagement being endogenous. The outer model included all indicators relevant to each of the latent variables, with the indicators being of a reflective nature.

Model 1

Having all indicators included in the first model, the obtained coefficient of determination (R^2) for strategic alignment was 0.457, and therefore implying that internal strategic openness explained 45.7% of the variance in alignment. Moreover, the R^2 for engagement was 0.673, and therefore signifying that the latent variables internal strategic openness, and strategic alignment explained 67.3% of the variance in employee engagement. As shown in figure 4.1, the inner path model suggested that all three path relationships were statistically significant, as their respective standardized path coefficients exceeded the value of 0.1 ($0.676 > 0.1$; $0.525 > 0.1$; $0.368 > 0.1$). Moreover, the inner model also indicated that internal strategic openness was a stronger predictor for alignment (0.676) than it was for engagement (0.368), and that strategic alignment had a stronger effect on employee engagement (0.525) than internal strategic openness (0.368). As per Wong (2013), "SmartPLS" stops estimation when it has reached the maximum number of iterations of 300, or when it has reached the stop criterion of the algorithm. For the first model, the software converged after 6 iterations, and therefore signifying that the estimation is acceptably good.

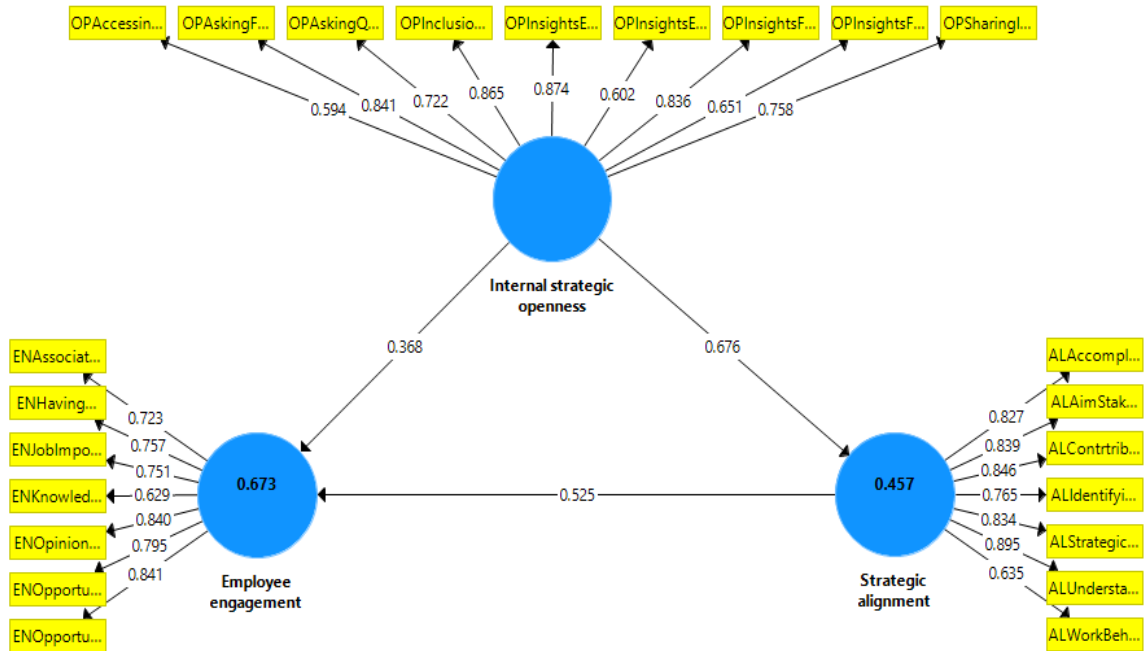


Figure 4.1: PLS-SEM model 1

In order to further test the significance of the structural paths of both the inner and outer models, a bootstrap procedure was used in order to produce t-statistics. Having executed the two-tailed t-tests with a significance level of 5%, all linkages in both the inner and outer models were found to be significant as their relevant path coefficients exceeded 1.96 as shown in the below figure 4.2.

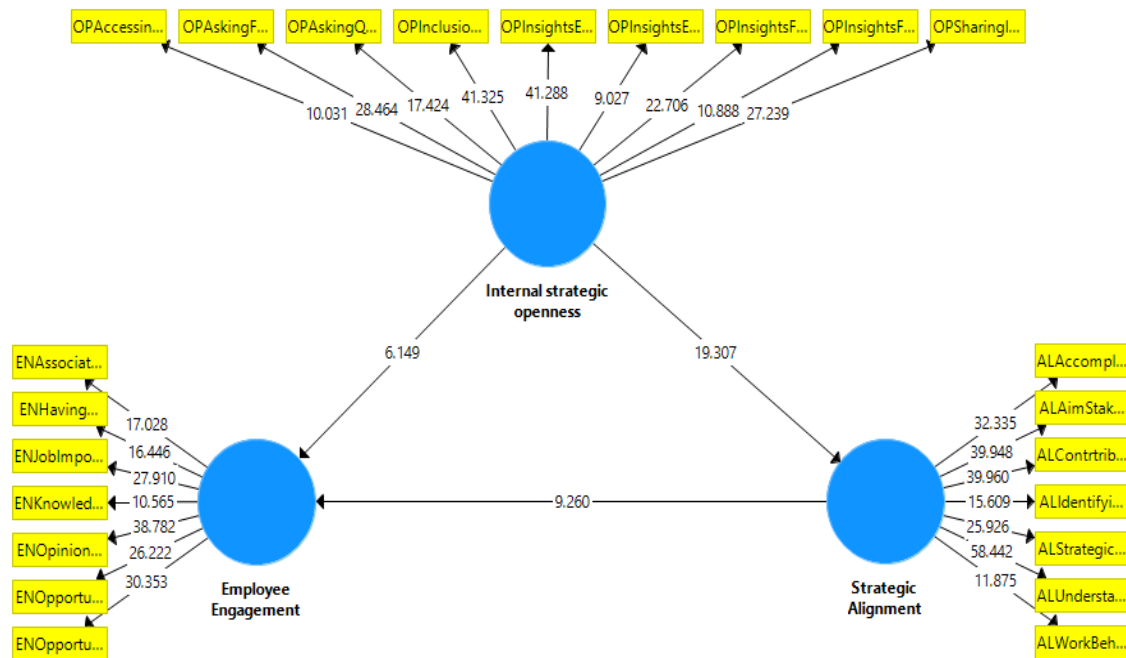


Figure 4.2: Bootstrap procedure for model 1

Within the first model, one indicator belonging to each of strategic alignment and employee engagement, and three indicators related to internal strategic openness had outer loadings below 0.7. Even though all the above indicators had values that exceeded 0.4, their inclusion or removal depended on whether their removal increased average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability numbers. As shown in the below table 4.32, all the latent variables had composite reliability values that exceeded the preferred threshold of 0.7, as well as AVE numbers that were higher than the minimum acceptable value of 0.5.

	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Employee Engagement	0.91	0.59
Internal strategic openness	0.92	0.57
Strategic Alignment	0.93	0.66

Table 4.32: Composite reliability and Average variance extracted for model 1

Model 2

In order to check the possibility of improving composite reliability and AVE numbers, all indicators that had loadings less than 0.7 were removed. As shown in the below figure 4.3, the new coefficient of determination (R^2) for strategic alignment was 0.485, and therefore implying that internal strategic openness moderately explains 48.5% of the variance in alignment. Furthermore, the R^2 for engagement was 0.649, and thus signifying that the latent variables internal strategic openness, and strategic alignment explained 64.9% of the variance in employee engagement. Furthermore, the inner path model suggested that all three path relationships were statistically significant, as the standardized path coefficients exceeded the value of 0.1 ($0.697 > 0.1$; $0.462 > 0.1$; $0.412 > 0.1$). Moreover, the inner model also indicated that internal strategic openness was a stronger predictor for alignment (0.697) than it was for engagement (0.412), and that strategic alignment had a stronger effect on employee engagement (0.462) than internal strategic openness (0.412). For the second model, the software converged after 6 iterations, and therefore signifying that the estimation is acceptably good.

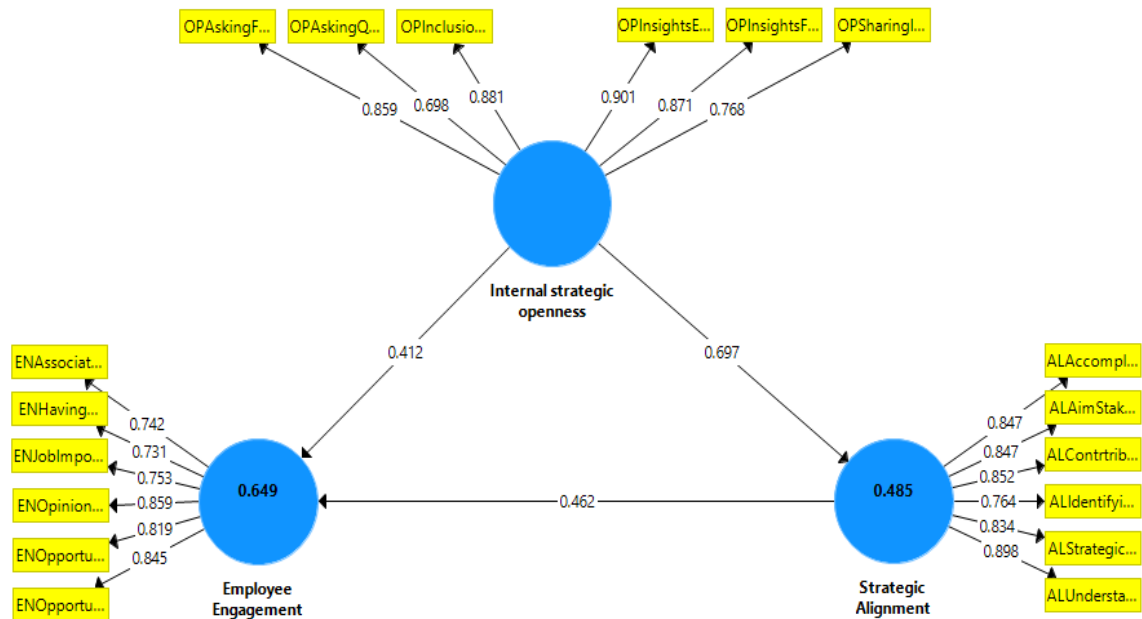


Figure 4.3: PLS-SEM model 2

In order to further test the significance of the structural paths of both the inner and outer models, a bootstrap procedure was used in order to produce t-statistics. Having executed the two-tailed t-tests with a significance level of 5%, all linkages in both the inner and outer models were found to be significant as their relevant coefficients exceeded 1.96 as shown in the below figure 4.4.

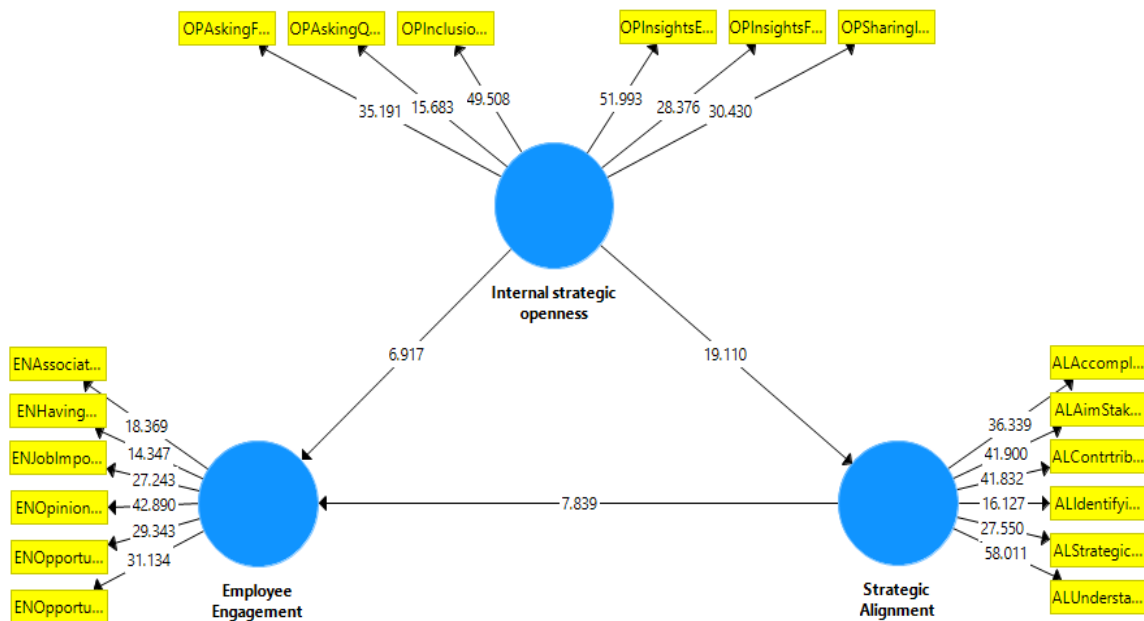


Figure 4.4: Bootstrap procedure for model 2

The removal of the indicators that had loadings less than 0.7 did slightly improve composite reliability for openness and alignment, and moderately boost AVE for all three variables as shown in the below table 4.33. All latent variables had composite reliability values that well exceeded the preferred threshold of 0.7, as well as AVE numbers that were higher than the minimum acceptable value of 0.5. Therefore both internal consistency reliability and convergent validity were confirmed.

	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Employee Engagement	0.91	0.63
Internal strategic openness	0.93	0.69
Strategic Alignment	0.94	0.71

Table 4.33: Composite reliability and Average variance extracted for model 2

As for indicator reliability, all loadings squared values surpassed the minimum acceptable value of 0.4, with the majority being close to or exceeding the preferred value of 0.7 as shown in the below table 4.34.

		Loadings	Indicator reliability
Alignment	ALAccomplishingGoals	0.85	0.72
	ALAIMStakeholders	0.85	0.72
	ALConrttributingObjectives	0.85	0.72
	ALIdentifyingPurpose	0.76	0.58
	ALStrategicDirections	0.83	0.69
	ALUnderstandingObjectives	0.9	0.81
Engagement	ENAssociatesQualityWork	0.74	0.55
	ENHavingMaterials	0.73	0.53
	ENJobImportant	0.75	0.56
	ENOpinionCount	0.86	0.74
	ENOpportunityToGrow	0.82	0.67
	ENOpportunityToPerform	0.85	0.72
Openness	OPAskingForInput	0.86	0.74
	OPAskingQuestions	0.7	0.49
	OPInclusionInFormulation	0.88	0.77
	OPInsightsEvaluation	0.9	0.81
	OPInsightsFormulation	0.87	0.76
	OPSharingInfoVolentarily	0.77	0.59

Table 4.34: Outer loadings and Indicator reliability for model 2

Lastly, as shown by the Fornell-Larcker criterion in the below table 4.35, the square root of AVE in each latent variable was larger than the correlations amongst the three variables of internal strategic openness, strategic alignment, and employee engagement. In this line, the results indicated that discriminant validity was well established and confirmed.

	Employee Engagement	Internal strategic openness	Strategic Alignment
Employee Engagement	0.79		
Internal openness	0.73	0.83	
Strategic Alignment	0.75	0.7	0.84

Table 4.35: Fornell-Larcker criterion for model 2

4.7 Discussion of results

The statistical tests that were conducted reflected the perceptions of Bank of Beirut employees regarding the existing level of internal strategic openness, strategic alignment, and employee engagement. More specifically, significant variations according to demographic variables were revealed at both the 1% and 5 % levels. The results enabled the testing of 21 out of 24 hypotheses of which 7 are related to each of openness, alignment, and engagement.

Internal strategic openness

Regarding the variations in perceptions of openness within different demographic sub-groups, there was no significant variation between the two genders, hence the hypothesis “H2: Internal strategic openness varies with respect to gender” is rejected. Contrariwise, there was a significant variation between the groups “Under 30 years of age” and “30 years of age and above” at the 5% level, with the older category reporting higher perceptions of openness. In this line, the hypothesis “H3: Internal strategic openness varies with respect to age” is accepted. There was a significant variation at the 1% level in perceptions of the existent level of openness between the three groups under “Years of experience at the bank ranked”. Employees who had more than 3 but below 6 years of experience, as well as those who had more than 6 years of experience perceived on average higher levels of internal strategic openness than those who only had 3 years of experience or less, with both variations occurring at the 1% level. Knowing that no there was no significant difference in opinion between the two upper categories, it was then possible to infer that the significant difference emerged mainly between employees having less and more than 3 years of experience. Henceforth, the hypothesis “H4: Internal strategic openness varies with respect to years of experience at the organization” is confirmed and accepted. As for “Years of experience in position ranked”, there was no significant variation in perceptions of internal strategic openness between the 2 categories of “Below or equal to 3 years” and “3 years and above”. Thus, the hypothesis “H5: Internal strategic openness varies with respect to years of experience in current position” is rejected. Similarly, there was no significant difference in perceptions of openness amongst the 3 groups of education. Therefore, the hypothesis “H6: Internal strategic openness varies with respect to educational level” is rejected. Conversely, employees

from the “Supervisory” and “Staff” position categories reported different perceptions at the 1%, with those having a supervisory position perceiving more internal openness than their staff counterparts. Hence, the hypothesis “H7: Internal strategic openness varies with respect to current position” is accepted. Lastly, employees who held certifications perceived higher degrees of strategic openness than those who were not certified, with the variation occurring at the 1% between the two groups. Therefore, the hypothesis “H8: Internal strategic openness varies with respect to the possession of a professional certificate” is validated and accepted. As shown in figure 4.5, higher perceptions regarding the existent level of internal strategic openness were found to have emerged from employees having one or more characteristics of either being 30 years and above, having more than 3 years of experience at the bank, occupying a supervisory position, and having a certificate. Individuals from all four categories reported more involvement in strategic activity, as well as held higher perceptions regarding the existent level of transparency and management’s interactivity than others who possessed opposing criteria.

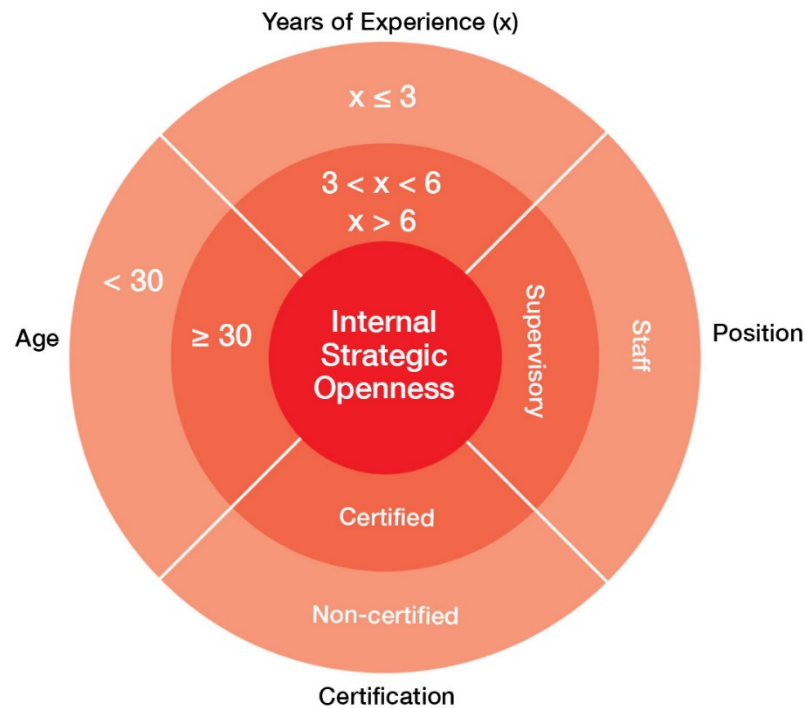
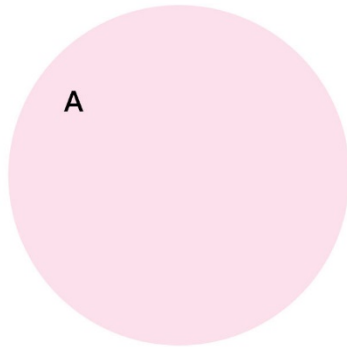


Figure 4.5: Variations in perceptions of internal openness

This un-incidental difference in opinion may be attributed to multiple potentialities. The first plausible explanation is that employees having the above mentioned criteria perceive more strategic openness as they are by definition more exposed to strategic activity due to some or a combination of certain characteristics such as having tenure and being in a supervisory position. Such mutual perceptions regarding strategic openness can be further interpreted as the result of the common praxis and practices that they may share, and of which the lower-openness perceiving sub groups are excluded. Such praxis can be characterized by formal activities such as strategy meetings or informal ones like strategic conversations. The second explanation may be that not only do these employees

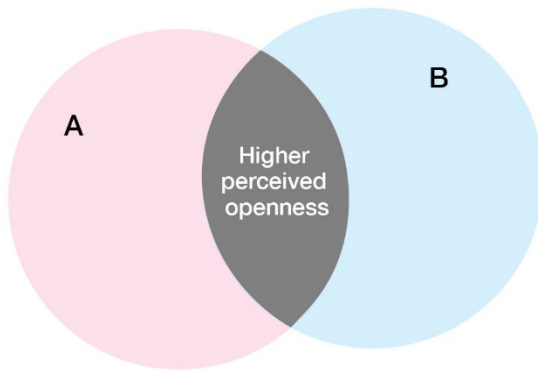
share a praxis that renders them more strategically exposed and active, but the organization is more inclusive and transparent with them as they are perceived as able to provide more valuable input throughout the strategic planning process. Those having more than 3 years of experience in the bank might most probably be more knowledgeable with work practices and the overall operations of the bank than more recent internal members, as well as be in supervisory positions with higher strategic exposure. To add, individuals who occupy supervisory positions are more exposed to strategy work due their proximity to the top on the scalar chain, as well as may have more experience at BOB than those in staff positions. Moreover, individuals who hold industry related certificates such as a CFA or a CPA may also be perceived to offer higher quality input into the strategic planning process within the bank. Lastly, employees who are 30 years of age and above may most likely have more tenure and be in higher positions than their younger counterparts. The third explanation is that in addition to being more strategically exposed, the organization is more open to these employees as they are perceived to possess higher contributory abilities as well as hold higher expectations concerning openness. Therefore, the increased level of openness in strategic work towards some employees may be also aimed at conveying compliance with their social expectations that have resulted from the transformations that the modern workplace has been exhibiting. The socio-cultural change that has attributed more respect to localized knowledge and less emphasis on the monopoly of wisdom at the top has created new social expectations regarding strategy work for internal members. For instance, employees who mainly have high tenure and occupy supervisory positions such as lower and middle level managers may perceive themselves as legitimate strategy actors and thus possess higher

expectations for inclusion and transparency. Lastly, one plausible explanation that builds upon its predecessor is that the perceived abilities of employees with certain shared characteristics, or the combination of the two may lead to their classification as more valuable stakeholders, and consequently lead the organization to be more strategically open with them . When managing stakeholders at the rational level, they are identified along with the extent to which they affect or are affected by the organization (Freeman, 1984). Therefore, even if those belonging to the “lower openness perceiving group” hold societal expectations regarding openness with similar or differing intensities, the organization may be more strategically open to those who possess the “higher order” characteristics as they are classified as more valuable. As postulated by Bucholz and Rosenthal (2015), “stakeholder management involves taking the interests and concerns of various groups and individuals into account, so that they are all satisfied at least to some extent, or at least that the most important stakeholders with regard to any given issue are” (pp.138). The below figures 4.6, 4.7, 4.8 and 4.9 display the progression of interpretations regarding the variations in internal strategic openness within the demographic groups.



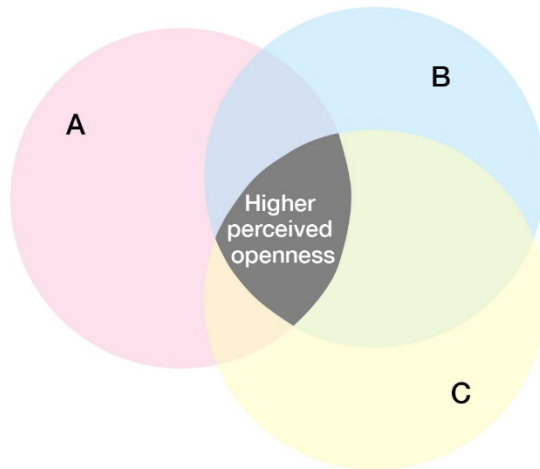
A: Strategic exposure due to praxis and practices

Figure 4.6: First interpretation



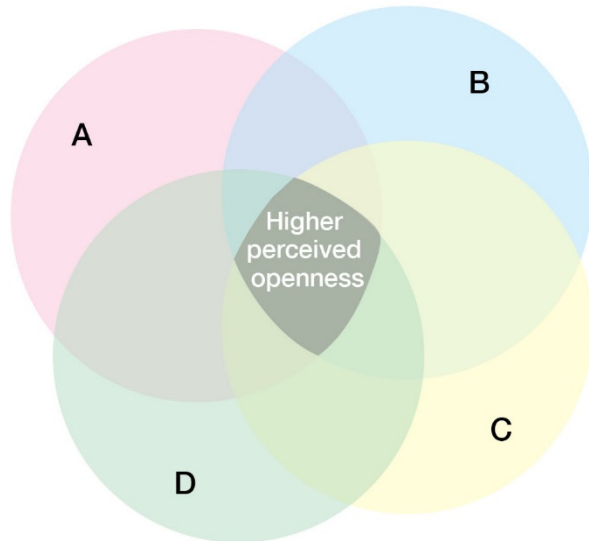
A: Strategic exposure due to praxis and practices
B: Increased openness from the bank due to perceived abilities

Figure 4.7: Second interpretation



- A: Strategic exposure due to praxis and practices
- B: Increased openness from the bank due to perceived abilities
- C: Increased openness from the bank as a response to social expectations

Figure 4.8: Third interpretation



- A: Strategic exposure due to praxis and practices
- B: Increased openness from the bank due to perceived abilities
- C: Increased openness from the bank as a response to social expectations
- D: Conveying compliance to social demands for more valuable stakeholders

Figure 4.9: Fourth interpretation

These findings are consistent with what Whittington (2011) postulated. The social shift towards managerial egalitarianism may have also driven the organization into promoting increased transparency and inclusion internally, especially to reach lower and middle level managers. Lower and middle managers within the banking industry are known to shift through their careers between different financial entities. Thus, the efforts of maintaining secrecy have become relatively obsolete, especially that Bank of Beirut is one of many interdependent and cooperative constituents of the Lebanese banking community. From a cultural perspective, post-modernism has induced a shift away from the ideologies of wisdom being exclusively at the top, to encompass a wider array of inter-organizational knowledge. Additionally, strategy knowledge has become increasingly available due to the wider and easier access to the existing body of the science and higher education. A large proportion of the bank's employees hold master degrees and certifications, in addition to those who have received trainings at Bank of Beirut's academy. In an attempt to incent its employees to pursue higher education, not only does the bank cover the academic expenses of those wishing to pursue graduate studies, but also rewards those who display exceptional commitment in meeting their e-learning goals as set by the academy. As for technological forces, software and programs have emerged as sociomaterial tools for the creation, communication, and overall accomplishment of various strategic tasks. In addition, various applications, forums, blogs, and social media have become widely available for including internal members in strategy work, as well as provide a two way communication channel.

Strategic alignment

Regarding strategic alignment, there was no significant variations between the two genders, hence the hypothesis “H10: Internal strategic openness varies with respect to gender” is rejected. Conversely, there was a significant variation in perceived alignment between the categories “Under 30 years of age” and “30 years of age and above” at the 1% level, with employees from the older category reporting higher levels than their younger counterparts. In this line, the hypothesis “H11: Perceived strategic alignment varies with respect to age” is confirmed and accepted. There was a significant variation at the 1% level in perceptions regarding strategic alignment between the three groups under “Years of experience at the bank ranked”. Employees who had more than 6 years of experience, reported higher levels of perceived alignment than those having more than 3 years and less than 6 years of experience, as well as those who only had 3 years of experience or less, with both variations occurring at the 1% level. There was no significant variation between the two lower categories, therefore it was possible to infer that the significant difference emerged mainly between employees having less than 6 years of experience and those having more. Henceforth, the hypothesis “H12: Perceived strategic alignment varies with respect to years of experience at the organization” is validated and accepted. As for “Years of experience in position ranked”, there was no significant variation in perceived strategic alignment between the 2 categories of “Below or equal to 3 years” and “3 years and above”. Hence, the hypothesis “H13: Perceived strategic alignment varies with respect to years of experience in current position” is rejected. Contrariwise, there was significant variation in perceived alignment at the 5%

level between the three groups of education. Employees holding a master degree reported higher levels than those with bachelor or technical degrees with both variations occurring at the 5% level. Therefore, the hypothesis “H14: Perceived strategic alignment varies with respect to educational level” is confirmed and accepted. As for position, there was a significant variation in perceived strategic alignment at the 1% level between the categories of “Supervisory” and “Staff”, with the higher ranking group reporting higher levels than its lower ranking counterpart. In this line, the hypothesis “H15: Perceived strategic alignment varies with respect to current position” is accepted and confirmed. Lastly, there was a significant variation in alignment at the 5% level between employees with certifications and those who did not possess any, with those who are certified displaying higher levels of perceived strategic alignment than their non-certified fellow employees. Therefore, the hypothesis “H16: Perceived strategic alignment varies with respect to the possession of a professional certificate”.

As shown in figure 4.10, higher levels of perceived strategic alignment were found to have emerged from employees having one or more characteristics of either being 30 years and above, having more than 6 years of experience at the bank, occupying a supervisory position, holding a master degree, and having a certificate. Individuals from all five groups conveyed higher perceived line of sight objectives and perceived line of sight actions than others who possessed opposing criteria. More specifically, employees belonging to these groups reported more knowledge of what the organizations’ goals and strategy were, as well as higher understandings of desired behaviors and their roles in the accomplishment of these objectives.



Figure 4.10: Variation in perceived alignment

These variations in perceived strategic alignment can be interpreted as a logical reflection of the degree to which employees across the different categories perceive themselves to understand and are able to enact the organization's strategy. Employees having more than 6 years of experience at Bank of Beirut have most likely built greater knowledge regarding the organization's strategy and objectives than their less tenured counterparts, as well as have developed more awareness regarding how their job contributes to the accomplishment of goals, especially if they were located in high levels along the scalar chain. Likewise, individuals in supervisory positions displayed higher perceived line of sight objective and perceived line of sight actions than those in staff positions, as they

may have more tenure at BOB, as well as exhibit higher strategic activity. Employees who hold industry related certificates and master degrees may have accumulated a body of knowledge that has positively impacted their perceptions of alignment, specifically by scientifically enlarging and enriching their understandings of the organization and its related processes. Lastly, employees who are 30 years of age and above might be located in higher levels of the hierarchy or have more years of experience at BOB than their younger counterparts, and thus have become more aware of the organization's strategic direction, goals, and needed actions. It was also noticeable that employees who perceived higher levels of openness, and which had the characteristics of being over 30, being in a supervisory position, and having a certificate also reported higher perceptions of strategic alignment. To add, both openness and alignment levels did significantly differ according to years of experience at the bank, and therefore further raising the suspicions that internal strategic openness may indeed affect strategic alignment.

Employee engagement

As for employee engagement, there was no significant variations between the two genders, hence the hypothesis "H18: Employee engagement varies with respect to gender" is rejected. Conversely, there was a significant variation in engagement between the two age categories of "Under 30 years of age" and "30 years of age and above" at the 1% level, with employees who are 30 years of age and above displaying higher engagement levels than those of the lower age category. Therefore, the hypothesis "H19: Employee engagement varies with respect to age" is validated and accepted. There was a

significant variation at the 1% level in perceptions regarding engagement between the three groups under “Years of experience at the bank ranked”. The reported engagement levels significantly varied at the 5% level between the groups “3 years and below” and “Above 3 and below 6 years” at the 5% level, with employees who had more than 3 yet less than 6 years of experience reporting higher levels of engagement than those who had 3 years and less. Additionally, there was a significant variation between the categories of “3 years and below” and “Above 6 years” at the 1 % level, with employees who had more than 6 years of experience at the bank reporting higher levels of engagement than those who only had 3 years or less. Moreover, employee engagement was found to significantly vary at the 5% level between the categories “Above 3 and below 6 years” and “Above 6 years”, with employees who had more than 6 years of experience exhibiting higher levels of engagement than those who only had between 3 and 6. Therefore, the results showed that employees with more tenure reported higher engagement levels than others from lower experience categories. In this line, the hypothesis “H20: Employee engagement varies with respect to years of experience at the organization” is confirmed and accepted. There was a significant variation in engagement at the 5% level between the categories “Below or equal to 3 years of experience in position” and “Above 3 years of experience in position”, with employees from the upper category displaying higher engagement levels. Therefore, the hypothesis “H21: Employee engagement varies with respect to years of experience in current position” is confirmed and accepted. Conversely, there was no significant variation in engagement levels across the 3 categories of educational level, and hence hypothesis “H22: Employee engagement varies with respect to educational level” is rejected. As for position, there was a significant variation in employee

engagement at the 1% level between the categories of “Supervisory” and “Staff”, with the higher ranking group reporting higher engagement levels than its lower ranking counterpart. In this line, the hypothesis “H23: Employee engagement varies with respect to current position” is confirmed and accepted. Lastly, there was a significant variation in employee engagement at the 1 % level between the categories of “Certified” and “Not certified”, with those who held certifications reporting higher engagement levels than employees who did not. In this line, the hypothesis “H24: Employee engagement varies with respect to the possession of a professional certificate” is validated and accepted. As displayed by figure 4.11, higher employee engagement levels emerged from individuals having one or more characteristics of either being 30 years and above, having more tenure along the three experience categories, having more than 3 years of experience in current position, occupying a supervisory position, and having a certificate. Employees from the abovementioned groups reported higher perceptions throughout one or multiple performance development needs, those being individual and teamwork, and growth needs.

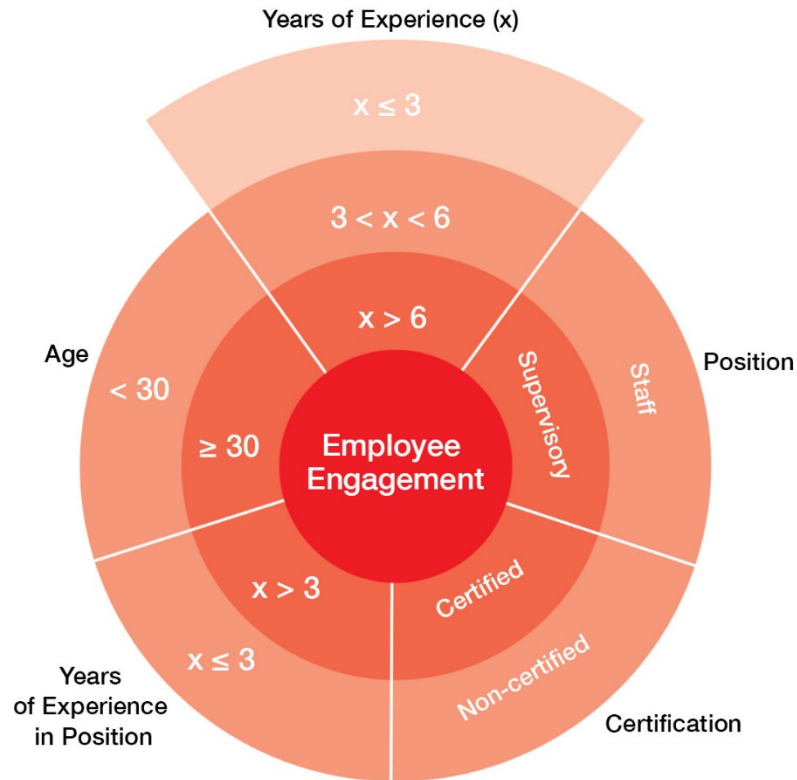


Figure 4.11: Variations in employee engagement

The variations in reported engagement levels across the demographic and employee characteristic groups of age, tenure, position, and certification proved to conform to some parts of the literature on engagement while being inconsistent with others, due to the conflicting nature of the existing body of research. The absence of any significant variations in employee engagement between individuals of the two genders is consistent with the findings of Dale Carnegie (2012) and Zhang et al. (2014). However, the existence of variations in engagement levels according to age were consistent with the findings of Gallup (2017), Dale Carnegie (2012), James et al. (2007), Zhang et al. (2014), Pitt-Catsouphes and Matz-Costa (2008), but contradictory to those of Robinson et al

(2004), and Mishra (2015). As explained by Gallup (2017), “engagement improves with employees’ age” (p.8), as with time they increasingly find work that fits them, and which consequently boosts engagement levels. The variations across the categories of tenure were inconsistent with the findings of Mishra (2015), and Zhang (2015) who found no significant relations. Moreover, the variations between the different groups of position were inconsistent with those of Volkov (2016), while the results for no significant variations according to educational level were consistent with Gallup (2017). One plausible explanation for the higher engagement levels for employees with more tenure along the three experience categories, who have more than 3 years of experience in current position, occupy a supervisory position, and possess a certificate is that these individuals may have become more prone to look and find meaning in their jobs, as well as exhibit higher strategic alignment. In reference to the existing body of research, work meaningfulness and strategic alignment have been proven to be significant predictors of employee engagement (May et al., 2004; Stringer, 2007; Mackoff and Triolo, 2008; Hyvönen et al., 2009; Biggs et al., 2014). In this line, the contradicting results in the existing literature along with the findings of this study highlight the factuality that variations in engagement levels according to demographic characteristics may actually vary in both significance and nature amongst different organizations. It was also noticeable that employees who perceived higher levels of openness and alignment, and who had the characteristics of being 30 years and above, occupying a supervisory position, and having a certificate also reported higher levels of engagement. To add, openness, alignment, and engagement levels did all significantly differ according to years

of experience at the bank, and therefore further raising the suspicions that internal strategic openness and alignment may indeed affect employee engagement.

Connecting internal strategic openness, alignment, and engagement

According to the first model, the results of the partial least squares structural equation modelling indicated that internal strategic openness was a moderate predictor of strategic alignment with an R^2 of 0.457, while openness and alignment were moderate predictors of engagement with an R^2 of 0.673. The standardized path coefficient and t-statistics confirmed the significance of the structural paths, however due to the possibility of optimizing the model, all indicators that had outer loadings less than 0.7 were removed, with their exclusion being justified by the enhancement of both composite reliability and AVE numbers. The optimized model resulted in a new R^2 of 0.485 for alignment and hence indicating that internal strategic openness caused 48.5% of the variance in strategic alignment. Moreover, the new model indicated that both openness and alignment moderately predicted 64.9% of the variance in employee engagement. The obtained path coefficients in both models indicated that internal strategic openness was a stronger predictor for alignment than it was for engagement, and that strategic alignment had a stronger effect on employee engagement than did internal strategic openness. In this line, the hypotheses “H1: Internal strategic openness positively affects perceived strategic alignment”, “H9: Perceived strategic alignment positively affects employee engagement”, and “H17: Employee engagement is positively affected by internal strategic openness” are all confirmed and accepted. The confirmation and validation of

the causal relationship between strategic alignment and employee engagement proved to be consistent with the findings of Stringer (2007), Mackoff and Triolo (2008), Hyvönen et al. (2009), and Biggs et al., (2014), and whereby alignment does significantly and positively affect employee engagement.

The reported levels of perceived alignment for the whole sample were positively affected by perceived openness ($R^2 = 0.485$), and employee engagement was positively affected by both openness and alignment ($R^2 = 0.649$). Therefore, a certain proportion of the observed variations in strategic alignment may be hence also explained by the difference in perceptions regarding the existent level of openness, and those in engagement can be interpreted by the variations in both perceptions of openness and alignment. The established causality between internal strategic openness and strategic alignment can be explained by the wider inclusion of internal members in strategy work, which results in increased strategy understanding of both objectives and actions, as well as stronger commitment and contributory behavior. As for the causal relationships with employee engagement that are triggered by internal strategic openness and alignment, they can be explained by the intersection of the legitimacy and stakeholder theories with strategy as practice, and whereby all approaches adopt social lenses rather than economic ones. The increased level of openness in towards some internal members may be aimed at conveying compliance with their social expectations. Internal strategic openness may also be perceived to maximize value via its participatory nature, as well as its ability to stop the “feeding the bear” phenomenon for those included. Likewise, alignment can maximize value for internal members by providing a holistic understanding of the big picture as well as the individual’s relevant contribution, thus providing meaningfulness,

role clarity, and significance. The creation of such combined value can hence affect employee engagement levels, through one or multiple levels of employees' performance development needs. Examples of such would be illustrated by increases in knowledge of what is expected of employees at work, having the opportunity to perform, higher value for personal opinion at work, seeing the job as important in light of the company's mission, and having the opportunity to grow.

4.8 Conclusion

Following the conduction of parametric and non-parametric tests, variations in perceived internal strategic openness, perceived alignment, and employee engagement emerged from within different demographic characteristics. Four out of seven hypotheses regarding variation in perceived internal strategic openness according to demographic factors were confirmed and three were rejected. The difference in perceptions regarding internal strategic openness may be explained through multiple interpretations, with each stemming from a one common social perspective. As for variations in perceived alignment, the significant difference between the sub-categories of certain characteristics led to the acceptance of five hypotheses out of seven and the rejection of the remaining two. Moreover, 48% of the variations in perceived alignment were found to be caused by perceived openness, with those who reported higher levels of perceived openness also reporting higher perceived alignment. Therefore, the one hypothesis stating causality between perceived internal strategic openness and perceived alignment was accepted. As for variations in employee engagement, 64.9% were explained by both internal strategic openness and strategic alignment, with employees who reported higher levels of

perceived openness and perceived alignment also displaying higher engagement. Therefore, five out of seven hypotheses regarding variation in engagement according to demographic factors were confirmed, and the one hypothesis stating causality between openness and engagement was accepted. In this line, perceived openness, alignment, and engagement levels do vary amongst different internal members with different shared characteristics. Moreover, the three variables share a causal relationship whereby openness predicts alignment, while both significantly affect employee engagement. From a social perspective, the effect that internal strategic openness along with strategic alignment and their combined value maximizing properties have on employee engagement levels can be explained by the intersection of the neo-institutional, SAP, legitimacy and stakeholder theoretical foundations.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This research explores internal strategic openness, strategic alignment, and engagement of employees in the core banking functions at bank of Beirut. More specifically, it aims through a mixture of inductive and deductive reasoning approaches to scrutinize any existing variations in each with regards to demographic criteria. Additionally, it aims to highlight the possible contributive role of openness in the creation of alignment and engagement, along with the effect that openness and alignment may have on employee engagement. The methodological approach of surveying allowed the conduction of multiple parametric and non-parametric statistical tests, which enabled the rejection and acceptance of hypothesis regarding the three variables in accordance with the test results. The theoretical foundations upon which the conceptual model for the study was built adopt a social perspective. Therefore, increased openness towards some internal members was partially explained by the stakeholder and legitimacy theories, and the remainder by the principles of strategy of practice itself. To add, the effects that both openness and alignment had on engagement were also interpreted by the said theories, mainly through the creation of value and/or responsiveness to certain stakeholders' expectations.

5.2 Summary of results

The scrutiny of internal strategic openness, strategic alignment, and employee engagement of core banking function employees at Bank of Beirut revealed unexplored

relations between the three aspects, as well as specificities in each in regards to the both time and space. Having conducted the required statistical tests, the hypotheses pertaining to each of the research questions that incented this study were either rejected or validated as shown in the below table 5.1.

Research question	Hypothesis	Test	Result
Does internal strategic openness affect perceived strategic alignment?	H1: Internal strategic openness positively affects perceived strategic alignment	PLS SEM	Accepted
	H2: Internal strategic openness varies with respect to gender	U-test	Rejected
	H3: Internal strategic openness varies with respect to age	T-test	Accepted
	H4: Internal strategic openness varies with respect to years of experience at the organization	ANOVA/T-test	Accepted
Do perceptions of openness vary amongst employees with different demographic characteristics and how?	H5: Internal strategic openness varies with respect to years of experience in current position	T-test	Rejected
	H6: Internal strategic openness varies with respect to educational level	U-test	Rejected
	H7: Internal strategic openness varies with respect to current position	U-test	Accepted
	H8: Internal strategic openness varies with respect to the possession of a professional certificate	U-test	Accepted
Does perceived strategic alignment affect employee engagement?	H9: Perceived strategic alignment positively affects employee engagement	PLS SEM	Accepted
	H10: Perceived strategic alignment varies with respect to gender	U-test	Rejected
	H11: Perceived strategic alignment varies with respect to age	T-test	Accepted
	H12: Perceived strategic alignment varies with respect to years of experience at the organization	ANOVA/T-test	Accepted
Do perceptions of strategic alignment vary amongst employees with different demographic characteristics and How?	H13: Perceived strategic alignment varies with respect to years of experience in current position	T-test	Rejected
	H14: Perceived strategic alignment varies with respect to educational level	Kruskal Wallis/U-test	Accepted
	H15: Perceived strategic alignment varies with respect to current position	U-test	Accepted
	H16: Perceived strategic alignment varies with respect to the possession of a professional certificate	U-test	Accepted
Is employee engagement affected by internal	H17: Employee engagement is positively affected by internal strategic openness	PLS SEM	Accepted

strategic openness?			
Do engagement levels vary amongst employees with different demographic characteristics and how?	H18: Employee engagement varies with respect to gender	U-test	Rejected
	H19: Employee engagement varies with respect to age	T-test	Accepted
	H20: Employee engagement varies with respect to years of experience at the organization	ANOVA/T-test	Accepted
	H21: Employee engagement varies with respect to years of experience in current position	T-test	Accepted
	H22: Employee engagement varies with respect to educational level	U-test	Rejected
	H23: Employee engagement varies with respect to current position	U-test	Accepted
	H24: Employee engagement varies with respect to the possession of a professional certificate	U-test	Accepted

Table 5.1: Summary of results

As answers for the six main research questions, internal strategic openness did affect both engagement, and alignment, as well as openness and alignment did in fact have a significant causal effect on employee engagement. Multiple theoretical foundations were used to interpret the variations in perceived openness and its effect along with perceived alignment on engagement. The variations in perceived openness in regards to certain employee criteria were explained through the reliance on the theoretical foundations of strategy of practice along with the implications of the stakeholder theory. The causal relationship between internal openness and alignment was interpreted by the implications that open strategy may hold as provided by the existing literature. Lastly, the combined relationship of perceived internal strategic openness and perceived strategic alignment with employee engagement was justified by resorting to both the stakeholder and legitimacy theories.

5.3 Validity issues

In regards to validity issues concerning most social research, four types being internal, external, construct, and statistical validity need to be assessed. Since this study employs quantitative methods and aims to establish causality between openness, perceived alignment, and engagement, it is hence crucial to prove that the independent variable(s) are responsible for the changes in the dependent one(s) and establish internal validity. The coefficients of determination for both alignment and engagement were respectively 0.485 and 0.649, with all three path relationships being statistically significant with standardized path coefficients exceeding 0.1 ($0.697 > 0.1$; $0.462 > 0.1$; $0.412 > 0.1$). Since the adopted research strategy is a snapshot case study of Bank of Beirut and not of a longitudinal, or pre-post nature, single and multiple group threats such as maturation, history, testing, instrumentation, or mortality are not relevant threats to internal validity. As for external validity, the 216 obtained observations were normally distributed, and randomly represented 67.7% of those working in the bank's core business functions, hence implying that the results can be generalized to the greater population of employees working in the core business functions of Bank of Beirut. The random sampling method can be observed as a mitigating factor against people threat, and the methodological approach through the use of questionnaires at the time and place of the organization's normal operations and under normal circumstances ensured the ruling out of any place or time threats. Knowing that the scope of the research did not cover employees from other complementary functions or different countries, the findings cannot be hence applied to entail all of the group's employees. Furthermore, the research through its focus on Bank of Beirut solely as the targeted organization cannot and does not aim to generalize its findings to the remainder of the Lebanese banking industry.

Regarding construct validity, the obtained results were explained in accordance to multiple theoretical foundations that adopt a social perspective. From a strategy as practice perspective, strategy is perceived a social accomplishment of collective activity. Openness itself is the manifestation of a socio-organizational change that has affected how strategy work is conducted, specifically through the actions and interactions of different strategy actors. Similarly and as explained by neo-institutionalism, as well as the legitimacy and stakeholder theories, some organizational behaviors are the result of social pressures, and are hence aimed at conveying compliance with societal expectations and/or obtaining support through maximizing value. In this line, the shift towards more openness can be perceived as a response to the expectations of certain internal members, as well as a value maximizing organizational feature. The literature on open strategy theoretically proposes that openness may contribute in aligning employees with the organization. Moreover and as confirmed by the existing body of research, strategic alignment may affect engagement levels through providing meaningfulness and role clarity. Although the relationship between openness and engagement has not yet been empirically explored, however the value maximizing and socially responsive properties that openness may hold, along with the ability to produce alignment constitute enough evidence to inductively engage in related research. Lastly and concerning statistical validity, different statistical tests were utilized for checking variations and causality based on the existing assumptions. The conditions of insuring that the sample was representative, random and normally distributed were checked and met, therefore justifying the conduction of parametric tests. Moreover, all parametric and non-parametric tests targeting variation included a 5% error, and the obtained results were

considered to be significant at either the 1% or 5% levels. Lastly, the PLS-SEM was considered as the optimal alternative amongst other SEM approaches for the research due to the latter's exploratory nature, researches, relatively small sample, and the little to no availability of theory concerning the tested relationships. The significance of the model was ensured through conducting a bootstrapping procedure, and which resulted in coefficients exceeding 1.96 at the 5% significance level.

5.4 Potential future research

This exploratory research scrutinized the relationship between internal strategic openness, alignment, and engagement by quantitatively collecting the perceptions of employees working in the core banking functions of Bank of Beirut's retail and corporate divisions. Having indicated the existence of significant causal relationships between the three elements of internal strategic openness, strategic alignment, and employee engagement, the findings of this research may hence be perceived as a foundation for future research to explore these relationships within different spatial and temporal contexts. More specifically, future studies may be scoped on the internal members of different organizations in the same or different industry, as well repeated within the same organizational context through a longitudinal methodological approach. Regarding internal strategic openness, future research may also add to the existing quantitative approach some qualitative methods like direct observations, interviews, or practitioner diaries. Such additions would enable a more in depth identification and analysis of the proposed factors to be causing the differences in perceived internal openness, specifically the existing praxis, practices, social expectations, as well as top management's own

insights. Concerning strategic alignment, a methodological addition to the existing research strategy consisting of Boswell's complementary measurement may allow a more predictive power as it would provide a more holistic insight that includes both actual and perceived alignment. Lastly, future studies may also explore and test different parts of the proposed conceptual model, therefore contributing even further to the enlargement of the literature on open strategy, as well as provide closer insights into its potential abilities.

5.5 Limitations

Along with most researches are some time, funding, as well as access to data related constraints. Within the context of this study, access to data constraints proved to have posed limitations to the ability of using a multi-method approach, especially one that includes direct observations, or practitioner diaries. Furthermore and due to time limitations, the addition of methods such as interviews and exploratory two stage questionnaires were deemed impossible, even though their addition would have been valuable to the overall research.

5.6 Final Remarks

Knowing that this study adopts a social perspectives as introduced by Strategy as Practice, it therefore contributes to the recent stream of research that perceives strategic work as a social activity. Open strategy as a strategy practice is considered to be amongst the ten most popular topics under SAP, as it has socially transformed some stakeholders into becoming strategy actors. The recent shifts that have been taking place in both the

internal and external environments of organizations have created new socio-organizational norms regarding who conducts strategy work and how. Amid the theoretical implications that this study holds is that it advances the literatures on the all three topics, as it empirically scrutinized and revealed the unexplored relationships between internal strategic openness on one hand, and both alignment and engagement on the other. Moreover, the revealed relationships were interpreted through a unique theoretical triangulation of the legitimacy and stakeholder theories with the foundations of SAP. In this line, the effects that the literature on openness hinted that it may hold on strategic alignment and engagement were proven empirically for the first time. Furthermore, the concept of internal strategic openness and which was developed based on the existing literature on open strategy was introduced along with an unprecedented quantitative measure, hence contributing to the growth of research on this new topic. Finally, the introduced conceptual model offers a road map for future research under open strategy, in the aims of enlarging and enriching the growing literature on the subject. As for practical implications, the findings offer proof that Bank of Beirut can foster greater alignment and engagement, through purposively opening up within certain levels to a wider array of internal members. The organization may adopt a technological tool such as social software, as it would increase openness internally through the aspect of crowd-based input into decision making. The advantages that it offers is that it would allow Bank of Beirut to controllably open up strategy work, while at the same time enabling greater participation from a wider range of strategy actors. Not only would such actions create value through the fostering of engagement and alignment, however also by providing the organization access to a greater pool of diversified aggregate knowledge,

and from within which valuable strategic input may emerge. In this line and knowing that the bank had been and still is exhibiting a growth in its operations, openness would hence provide a controllable tool that may lead to higher alignment and engagement levels, as well as provide valuable strategic input from the growing workforce.

Appendix 1- Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE Open strategy as a strategy practice	SERIAL #												
<p>Thank you for taking time to complete this questionnaire which aims at identifying the impact that open strategizing may produce internally. Your opinion is vital for the success of this research and will be treated in the strictest confidence within the ethical code of practice for field research at the Faculty of Business Administration and at Notre Dame University - Louaize; thus the information gathered will solely be used to compile statistics. No data about you as an individual will be disclosed in any published results.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Definition of Open strategy</p> <p>Openness in the Strategy as Practice (SAP) context promises greater participation in strategic decision making, else referred to as inclusion, and increased exposure for strategizing activities to organizational stakeholders in the form of transparency.</p>	ADMINISTRATION ONLY												
<p>SECTION 1 - BACKGROUND INFORMATION</p> <p>Please tick next to the case that best describes you or fill-in the space provided</p> <p>I.01. Gender <input type="radio"/> Male <input type="radio"/> Female</p> <p>I.02. Age (please provide your age in years) _____</p> <p>I.03. Country (in which you currently work) _____</p> <p>I.04. Years of experience at BANK OF BEIRUT (Please provide the number of years) _____</p> <p>I.05. Department _____</p> <p>I.06. Current position _____</p> <p>I.07. Years of experience in the current position (Please provide the number of years) _____</p> <p>I.08. Education <input type="radio"/> Technical degree <input type="radio"/> Bachelor <input type="radio"/> Master's <input type="radio"/> Doctorate</p> <p>I.09. Professional Certification <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No</p>	ADMINISTRATION ONLY												
<p>SECTION 2 - OPENNESS</p> <p>Please circle the number that corresponds to your degree of agreement with the below statements (from 1 to 7, where 1 is Strongly disagree and 7 is Strongly agree)</p> <p>Please consider operations as the execution of daily tasks and activities as defined by relevant functions.</p> <p>Please consider strategy as the set of plans that are aimed at equipping operations with competitiveness in order for the organization to achieve and sustain long term success.</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tbody> <tr> <td style="width: 40%; padding: 5px;">2.01. I contribute with insights when BANK OF BEIRUT is formulating new strategies</td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">2.02. I contribute with insights when BANK OF BEIRUT is evaluating an existing strategy</td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">2.03. Management asks for our input into strategic level campaigns</td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">2.04. I feel included in the strategy formulation process</td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">2.05. Technology makes it easier for me to contribute my insights when BANK OF BEIRUT is formulating new strategies</td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">2.06. Technology makes it easier for me to contribute my insights when BANK OF BEIRUT is evaluating an existing strategy</td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	2.01. I contribute with insights when BANK OF BEIRUT is formulating new strategies	Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree	2.02. I contribute with insights when BANK OF BEIRUT is evaluating an existing strategy	Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree	2.03. Management asks for our input into strategic level campaigns	Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree	2.04. I feel included in the strategy formulation process	Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree	2.05. Technology makes it easier for me to contribute my insights when BANK OF BEIRUT is formulating new strategies	Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree	2.06. Technology makes it easier for me to contribute my insights when BANK OF BEIRUT is evaluating an existing strategy	Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree	ADMINISTRATION ONLY
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2.07. I can access information related to BANK OF BEIRUT's strategies	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly agree
2.08. I can freely ask questions to management regarding any topic	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly agree
2.09. Management voluntarily shares information regarding BANK OF BEIRUT's strategic matters	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly agree

SECTION 3 – STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT									
Please circle the number that corresponds to your degree of agreement with the below statements (from 1 to 7, where 1 is Strongly disagree and 7 is Strongly agree)									
3.01. I can identify BANK OF BEIRUT's purpose	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly agree
3.02. I understand BANK OF BEIRUT's strategic objectives	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly agree
3.03. I understand what BANK OF BEIRUT aims to do for its stakeholders	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly agree
3.04. I understand how BANK OF BEIRUT aims to accomplish its goals	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly agree
3.05. I understand how my job contributes to BANK OF BEIRUT's achievement of its strategic objectives	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly agree
3.06. I am clear on the strategic directions of BANK OF BEIRUT	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly agree
3.07. There are few instances when my actions go against what BANK OF BEIRUT stands for	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly agree
3.08. My work behaviors are consistent with BANK OF BEIRUT's strategy	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly agree

SECTION 4 – EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT									
Please circle the number that corresponds to your degree of agreement with the below statements (from 1 to 7, where 1 is Strongly disagree and 7 is Strongly agree)									
4.01. I know what is expected of me at work.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly agree
4.02. I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly agree
4.03. At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly agree

4.04. There is someone at work who encourages my development.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly agree
4.05. At work, my opinions seem to count.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly agree
4.06. The mission or purpose of my company makes me feel my job is important.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly agree
4.07. My associates or fellow employees are committed to doing quality work.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly agree
4.08. This last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly agree

ADMINISTRATION ONLY

If you have any comments or concerns about this questionnaire, please contact Mr. Elie Chahda- Email: ecchahda@ndu.edu.lb, or Dr. Elie Menassa, supervisor of this research - Email: elie.menassa@alumni.dmu.ac.uk - Thank you for your cooperation!

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