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**A MANAGEMENT DILEMMA: AUTONOMY
VERSUS CONTROL**

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of

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Abstract

Managers are frequently offered conflicting advice to increase the organisation's ability to meet its goals; grant employees autonomy, which may lead to self-management and empowerment or alternatively, exercise control which may enable managers to retain a firm and organised workforce. Management are constantly challenged with this complex dilemma. This research will focus on the key factors that influence the various combinations of autonomy and control and their respective outcomes.

To this end, qualitative research with an exploratory design was conducted, as this approach has the potential to delve deep into this quandary. Consequently, in-depth interviews with 16 leading management and HR experts were held to uncover their unique insights regarding this dilemma. The rich data that was unearthed was analysed using content and frequency analysis.

The empirical findings of this research found that combinations of autonomy and control can certainly co-exist in an ever-changing fashion. Management are able to create environments with high levels of autonomy whilst simultaneously retaining high levels of monitoring and oversight when the management control is subtle and indirect. This approach will solve the dilemma under review by neutralising employee's negative resistance commonly associated with direct control. A total of seventeen factors were identified that could influence the different levels of autonomy and control in organisations.

Key Words

Autonomy

Control

Dilemma

Paradox

Management

Declaration

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before any degree or examination in any other university. I declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Dedication

Lis, this MBA would not have been possible without your unwavering support, devotion and commitment. Whatever I may have achieved, is in truth your accomplishment.

To our dear children, Eli, Shevi, Yitzi, Simchi, Hudi, Ruchama & Shaya. For the past two years, you have graciously sacrificed not having a father fully present, I am deeply grateful. My primary intention for enrolling in the MBA programme, notwithstanding the sacrifice for all concerned, was to enhance my ability to provide for your continuous growth and development. I pray that I am successful in this goal and that you share in the long term fruits of this accomplishment.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to Research Problem

1.1 Introduction

The vast majority of successful companies do not seem to last (Collins & Porras, 1994). An organisation is a collection of people, management have been entrusted with the hallowed responsibility of enabling employees to be enrolled and engaged to reach high personal and organisational performance (Barrett, 2006). Managers are frequently offered conflicting advice to increase the organisation's ability to meet its goals; grant employees autonomy, which may lead to self-management and empowerment or alternatively, exercise control which may enable managers to retain a firm and organised workforce. Management are constantly challenged with this difficult dilemma.

In an increasingly dynamic, competitive and highly complex business environment, more and more companies need to distinguish themselves and establish a competitive edge. Managers find it easy to compel people to be obedient and diligent, but struggle to make them creative and committed. The ability to inspire employees to achieve sustainable high performance has become a key differentiating factor (Hamel, 2007; Pink, 2009). Daily, managers grapple with a very real and complex management dilemma; autonomy versus control. The notion of autonomy, self management and independence seem to be a common and universal theme to which both employees and organisations aspire. However, autonomy does contain risks that may dilute the potential benefits.

Opposed to autonomy, control may be perceived as rigid, suffocating and stifling (Ritzer, 1993). However, it has clear benefits and has been professed to be the default management practice (Harris & White, 1987). There is little question that adhering to companies rules and policies are critical for successful organisational functioning (Tyler & Blader, 2005). Management seem to be in a quandary and are grappling with this complex paradox, constantly toggling between autonomy and control. Various combinations of autonomy and control may be deployed with alternative outcomes in diverse situations. The key factors that influence the degrees of autonomy and control are not clear; consequently, management is faced with a series of trial and error attempts to establish the correct balance. The outcomes and consequences of this quandary for employees and organisations can be far reaching.

A key differentiating characteristic of a successful company is management's ability to effectively navigate the constant barrage of dilemmas. Many authors emphasize the broad spectrum of dilemmas that management face in these times of diversity and change (Berry & Hülsmann, 2004). In addition, Smith & Lewis (2011) assert that tensions are inherent and persistent within organisations. A deliberate and purposeful response to the notion of paradox over time will ensure sustainable peak performance (Lusher & Lewis, 2008).

A management dilemma typically refers to the daily conflicts that managers encounter and endeavour to reconcile in an attempt to enhance their employee's performance. Smith & Lewis (2011) believe that a dilemma involves competing choices, each with its pros and cons. Smith & Berg (1987) support this notion and assert that a dilemma can create a sense of paralysis because it

implies that a choice must be made between polarities each having individual costs and benefits associated with it.

Managers want their employees to perform to the best of their ability and grapple with this classic management paradox: will this be possible? One option is to introduce high levels of autonomy, where managers empower employees to self-manage their outputs. Alternatively, perhaps employees perform better in an environment with high levels of control, where managers exercise a tight, autocratic management style. Over the past decades, the necessity of balancing the contradictory tensions of autonomy and control has steadily increased with the exponential amplification of complexity within the business environment (Gupta, Smith, Shalley, 2006). Various motivation and control theories have attempted to uncover the quintessential principles that increase individual and organisation performance with varied success (Attridge, 2009; Klein, 1989).

Maintaining a balance between autonomy and control has posed a real challenge for management. In recent times, executive and managers have been inundated by a plethora of management theories, philosophies and models. Managers seem to be thirsting for guidance, insight and assistance to tackle the complex role of managing staff. In many contexts, payoffs from high control seem to come earlier, are more certain and easier to achieve; consequently, organisations tend to favour tighter rule over autonomy (Falk & Kosveld, 2006). However, a greater focus on autonomy, independence and freedom will empower employees to drive enhanced individual and organisational performance (Hamel, 2007; Pink, 2009).

Various factors will likely influence the specific combinations of autonomy and control. The particular combinations may be different depending on the particular circumstances (Tyler & Blader, 2005). Expectations from a wide spectrum of stakeholders to manage this complex dilemma effectively are becoming increasingly vocal. The search by managers for clear and definitive guiding principles to balance this paradox has become extremely pressing.

1.2 Purpose of This Study

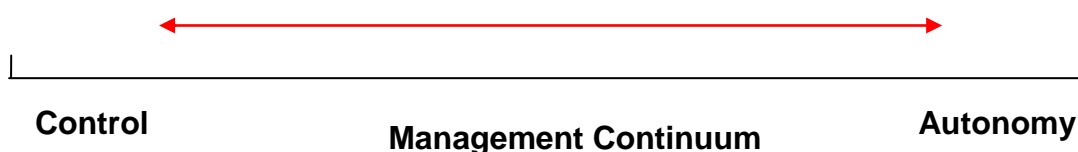
This research project critically examines the two seemingly opposing management styles; autonomy and control. An examination of the theoretical concepts underlying the effectiveness of these two approaches illustrates the origins of their respective pros and cons and the nature of the inherent ambiguity contained in the application. Although, considerable literature has already dealt with the subject of autonomy and control (Falk & Kosveld 2006; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Tyler & Blader, 2005), no substantive consensus seems to exist regarding the means with which to manage the dilemma and achieve the right balance between autonomy and control. This research will attempt to explore the key factors that influence the dilemma. An assessment of the most dominant factors that may influence the balance of the two horns of this seeming ambiguity will also be explored. A study of the potential outcomes and implications of a decision to lean towards control or the corollary autonomy will be investigated. Insights uncovered from the empirical research will be presented to assist managers to understand the elements of the paradox and potentially synthesise and integrate components of each approach.

1.3 Research Problem

It is clear that there is no single, definitive and correct management approach; yet, managers are constantly faced with the dilemma of granting employee's autonomy or exercising tight management control. The essential quandary of management is – which management approach or combination of approaches is the most effective for a given situation? This study considers the apparent tension between the two opposing management views and attempts to clarify whether the approaches are mutually exclusive or whether it is possible to combine the benefits of both to strike an optimal balance. Each perspective will have numerous pros and cons, as well as trade off's for all parties concerned.

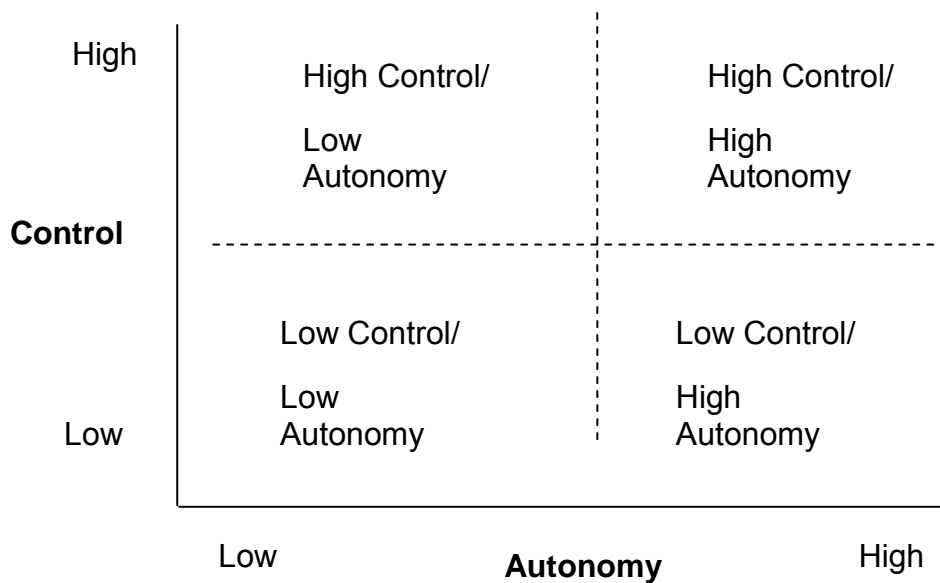
Managers may be compelled to make a fundamental decision regarding their positioning of their management style, having to choose an “autonomy” type approach or a “control” type. This dilemma is represented graphically below in Figure 1, The Management Continuum - Autonomy Versus Control. This model would seem to suggest that the closer a manager would come to either of the polar extremes on the continuum, the closer the management style would be to a purist, mutually exclusive style, each containing its unique characteristics.

Figure 1: The Management Continuum – Autonomy Versus Control



Alternatively, the management dilemma could be graphically represented as illustrated in Figure 2 below – The Dynamic Management Paradox Model. The two by two grid attempts to depict four possible combinations of autonomy and control management practices; whereby the tensions of the two respective forces can co-exist. The model is not static; it reflects a continuous, dynamic movement of the management paradox between the four quadrants based on a broad spectrum of disparate influencing factors. It may be possible for a business unit or organisation to move between various quadrants at different times owing to a myriad of different factors. The top left quadrant depicts a high control and low autonomy environment, whilst the bottom right quadrant depicts the opposite, a low control and high autonomy environment. The top right and bottom left quadrants depict an environment with high levels of both autonomy and control or the opposite low levels of both autonomy and control.

Figure 2: The Dynamic Management Paradox Model



Consequently, managers are faced with a complex problem: is it possible for a manager to practise high levels of autonomy whilst simultaneously practising high levels of control? As a result of the autonomy / control decision that a manager may exercise, the outcomes for the organisation as well as employees may be vastly different.

A manager does not function in isolation, but is part and parcel of that particular business unit and broader organisation. This study considers empirical evidence based on interviews with experts in the field of management and human resources to unearth a deeper understanding and possibly gain insights into the problem under review. In addition, various elements that may contribute towards influencing a manager's natural disposition to adopt a particular management style are considered, as well as their respective potential outcomes. If managers are able to strike the correct balance, employees are well placed to increase their personal performance in a sustainable way. Finally, some suggestions are offered as to how this dilemma may be resolved, contributing towards increased management effectiveness and employee performance.

Chapter 2: Theory and Literature Review

2.1 Forward to Literature Review

From the Literature review, four core themes were identified within the context of the management dilemma of autonomy versus control. These are;

- Management
- Management dilemma
- Different management approaches;
 - Autonomy
 - Control
 - Autonomy & control
- Factors that may influence autonomy and control;
 - Personality traits and characteristics
 - Culture
 - The nature of the job and industry

These themes will be discussed below;

2.2 Management

Globally, the business world seems to becoming more and more obsessed with management. The study of management has increased exponentially over the past few decades. There is an increasing plethora of international business schools, multitudes of business consultants and an almost infinite number of business journals, publications and management best seller books.

According to Drucker (2001), the study of management began to emerge in the 1930's. "Rarely in human history has any institution emerged as quickly as management or had as great an impact so fast. In less than 150 years, management has transformed the social and economic fabric of the world's developed countries" (p. 3). However, too often managers are "paid to oversee, control and administer" (Hamel, 2007, p. 60). Management is about people; its main task is to enable people to become capable of joint performance, to make their strengths effective and their weaknesses irrelevant (Drucker, 2001).

Decades ago, McGregor (1960) postulated that a manager's belief in the functioning concept of employees will significantly influence his particular leadership style. At the time, he proposed a pioneering theory that attempted to explain the psychology behind a manager's leadership choices; he termed the two opposing, mutually exclusive perspectives, Theory X and Theory Y leaders. According to Larsson, Vinberg & Wiklund (2007), Theory X leaders will have the following beliefs;

- The average human being has an inherent dislike of work and will avoid it if he or she can.
- Because of this human characteristic with reference to the dislike of work, most people must be coerced, controlled, directed, and threatened with punishment to force them to put forth adequate effort toward the achievement of organizational objectives.
- The average human being prefers to be directed, wishes to avoid responsibility, has relatively little ambition and wants security above all. The

Scientific Management principles are, to a large extent, based on these assumptions.

In stark contrast, the Theory Y managers believe the following regarding employees;

- The expenditure of physical and mental effort in work is as natural as play or rest.
- External control and the threat of punishment are not the only means for bringing about effort toward organizational objectives. Man will exercise self-direction and self-control in the service of objectives to which he is committed.
- Commitment to objectives is a function of the rewards associated with their achievement.
- The average human being learns, under proper conditions, not only to accept but to seek responsibility.
- The capacity to exercise a relatively high degree of imagination, ingenuity, and creativity in the solution of organizational problems is widely, not narrowly, distributed in the population.
- Under the conditions of modern industrial life, the intellectual potentialities of the average human being are only partially utilized.

In a more recent assessment of the history of management, Hamel (2007) found that management seem to have too much management and too little freedom. Managers find it easy to compel people to be obedient and diligent, but they struggle to make them creative and committed. The future of

organisations is dependent on management innovation, a new era that will advance the science of management to help bring about sustainable benefits for organisations (Hamel, 2007).

2.3 Management Dilemmas

The terms “dilemma”, “paradox”, “ambiguity” and “complexity” are often loosely phrased to characterise the inherent tension found in managing people. It is often convenient to group these terms together, perhaps in a superficial, shallow way. Typically, the terms refer interchangeably to contradictory forces or tensions that have the potential to negatively influence a specific outcome. However, research seems to emphasise certain nuanced differences between the respective terms (Lusher & Lewis 2008; Smith 2000; Smith & Lewis 2011).

The term “dilemma” will typically involve choosing between two conflicting alternatives. Fontin (1997) asserts that a dilemma is a decision making situation, which is characterised by two reasonable options, for which equal, but contradictory substantiations can be found. The notion of a dilemma indicates internal conflict specifically concerning a particular decision that is required, with potentially opposing outcomes.

Lusher & Lewis (2008) state that a dilemma contains potential for resolution, as the basis of a dilemma is an either/or choice. A decision must be made between two dissimilar and diverse options, intensifying a manager’s sense of paralysis.

Research has increasingly embraced the term “paradox management” to help understand the complex nature of managing paradoxes (Smith & Lewis, 2011,

p. 760). The concept of “paradox appears increasingly in organisation studies, usually to describe conflicting demands, opposing perspectives, or seemingly illogical findings” (Lewis, 2000, p. 760). Paradox refers to contradictory, yet inter-related concepts that seem logical in isolation but absurd and irrational when appearing together. Paradox may be defined as “contradictory, yet interrelated elements (dualities) that exist simultaneously and persist over time. Such elements seem logical when considered in isolation, but irrational, inconsistent and absurd when juxtaposed” (Smith & Lewis, 2011, p. 387).

Often, paradox will include “divergent perspectives and disruptive experiences” (Lewis, 2000, p. 760). A related concept, Johnson (1996, p 13) asserts that “polarity management”, similar to paradox management, involves managing sets of opposites which cannot function independently. The two sides of a polarity are interdependent: one cannot chose one solution and neglect the other, making an ongoing attempt to get “the best of both worlds” (Johnson, 1996, p. 13). O’Reilly & Tushman (2007) refer to the tension between exploitation and exploration as ambidexterity. Exploitation is about control and exploration is about autonomy, whilst ambidexterity refers to doing both, the ability to successfully manage both conflicting opposites. Sieber (2008) highlights the paradox inherent in managers developing employees for the stated benefit of the organisation, whilst through the development of the individual; he will become more competent and attractive for other companies to poach him.

Managing employees to obtain results in the new economy demands that a manager be capable of navigating the turbulent waters of management

paradoxes. Daily, managers are faced with abundant paradoxes in an attempt to reconcile the opposing tensions. Managers will increasingly need to become more comfortable and even profit from the inherent tension that is embedded in a paradox. The embracing of a paradox may help to develop a greater ability to foster creative insight and change. Managing paradox seems inevitable, managers may be able to adopt a “paradox lens and a paradoxical inquiry” to understand the contradictory managerial demands and inherent ubiquitous tensions (Lusher & Lewis, 2008, p. 239).

A key characteristic of a paradox is that there may be a short term way of balancing the competing forces but there is never a long term solution (Smith & Lewis, 2011). The competing forces push and pull in a continuous, dynamic environment. Consequently, it is imperative for managers to transform their mindsets to understand that “the world will increasingly demand that they manage paradoxes rather than solve problems” (Rhinesmith, 2001, p. 4). Many of the current trends in business are not problems to solve, but polarities to manage (Smith & Lewis, 2011). In addition, Johnson, (1996), asserts that it is foolish to treat personal and organisational polarities as if they can be solved & not managed. Polarity cuts through the “either/or” decision towards an “and” decision. Polarity management involves combining the positive aspects of both polar opposites, whilst managing the negatives (Johnson, 1996).

The concepts of dilemma and paradox seem to have many similarities, common characteristics and overlapping principles. A dilemma is similar to a paradox in cases where options are contradictory and interrelated, such that any choice between them is temporary as the inherent tensions will ultimately reappear

(Lusher & Lewis, 2008). In a different study, Smith & Lewis (2011), define a dilemma as “competing choices, each with advantages and disadvantages. Paradoxical when options are contradictory and interrelated such that any choice between them is temporary and tension will resurface” (pg. 287). Serretta, Bendixen & Sutherland (2009) discuss dilemmas facing boards within the South African context; they assert that dilemmas and paradoxes can only be managed and not solved.

In their action research, Lusher & Lewis (2008) found that pushing managers to explore dilemmas often caused their paradoxical nature to surface. The more managers stressed the positive of one side, the more this accentuated the opposite. Regarding the tension between delegation and control, Smith & Lewis, (2011) suggest that the more managers discussed the value of delegation to empower employees, the more this highlighted the need for control to ensure efficient implementation.

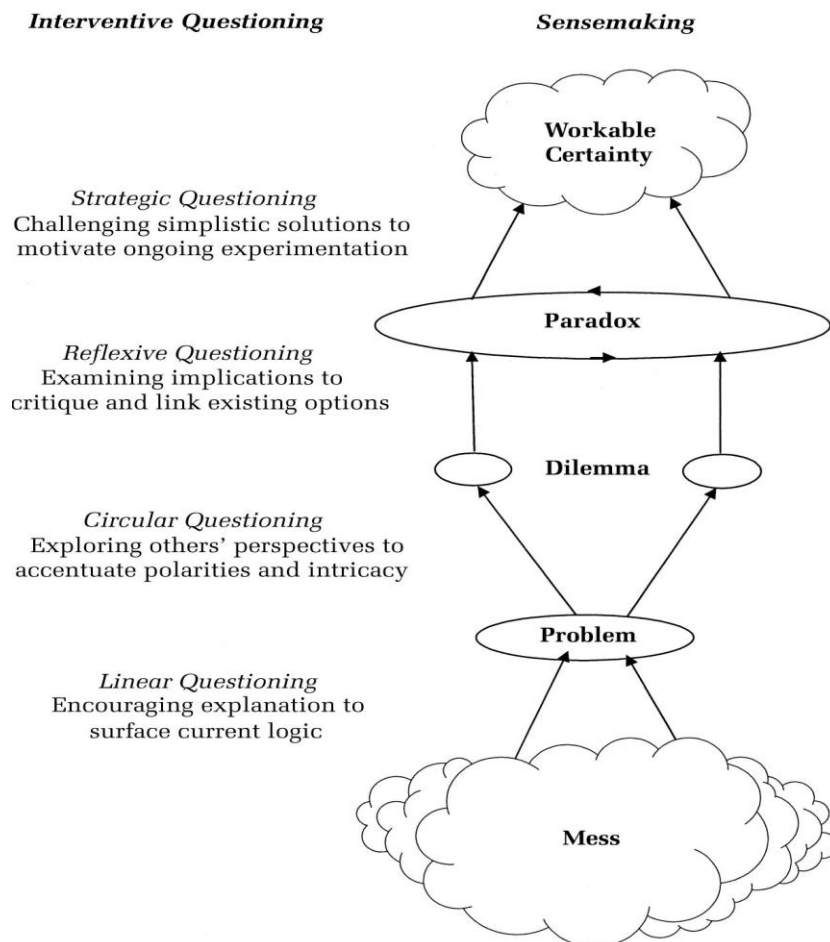
Lusher & Lewis (2008), assert that initially managers experienced tensions as a dilemma, requiring a clear decision. However, by recognising that they could never choose between competing tensions, because either option intensified needs for its opposite, they began to adopt paradoxical thinking and opened discussions to consider both possibilities. This created in managers the ability to diffuse the tensions in a constructive and beneficial manner.

Smith & Lewis, (2011) found that the tensions of a paradox are a virtuous cycle, with awareness of tensions triggering a management strategy of acceptance rather than defensiveness. A few examples of classic organisational paradoxes

where managers are encouraged to embrace opposing tensions simultaneously to develop a useful managerial approach include the tensions between collaboration and competition, empowerment and direction and routine and change. A dynamic equilibrium can be sought which balances the persistence of conflicting forces and purposeful, cyclical responses over time that enable sustainability (Smith & Lewis, 2011).

In order to discern the subtle differences between a dilemma and a paradox, Lusher & Lewis (2008), proposed the following Sense Making Model, figure 3 below, to graphically depict the different, perhaps subtle characteristics;

Figure 3: The Sense Making Model



Source: Lusher & Lewis

The model above depicts the five steps that characterise the typical progression of clarifying complex and perhaps ambiguous perspectives that a manager may go through. The process begins with a confusing “mess” and then slowly progresses ultimately towards a lucid and clear “sense making” perspective. Through this progression, Lusher & Lewis (2008), clarify the subtle differences between a dilemma and paradox;

Step 1: Mess. A manager’s first step in the process is the identification and stating of a “mess”; a fluid, fuzzy and vague issue. The issue under review has the potential to be dealt with in a sensible and collaborative manner.

Step 2: Problem. As a direct consequence of step 1, managers are better able to define and articulate a more specific problem. The discussion and sparring enable managers to seek a judicious and rational problem solving approach.

Step 3: Dilemma. In this step, managers may feel a sense of paralysis because of the implication that a choice must be made. A manager will need to grapple with multiple solutions between polarities each posing benefits and limitations.

Step 4: Paradox. A manager’s difficulty oscillating between the horns of a dilemma motivated a paradoxical lens. (Lewis, 2000) asserts that paradoxical thinking is a consequence of recognising a dilemma in which no single decision or choice can resolve the tension because opposing solutions are required and interwoven to achieve a united and simultaneous result. A paradox embodies the “and” mindset as opposed to an “either/or mindset”.

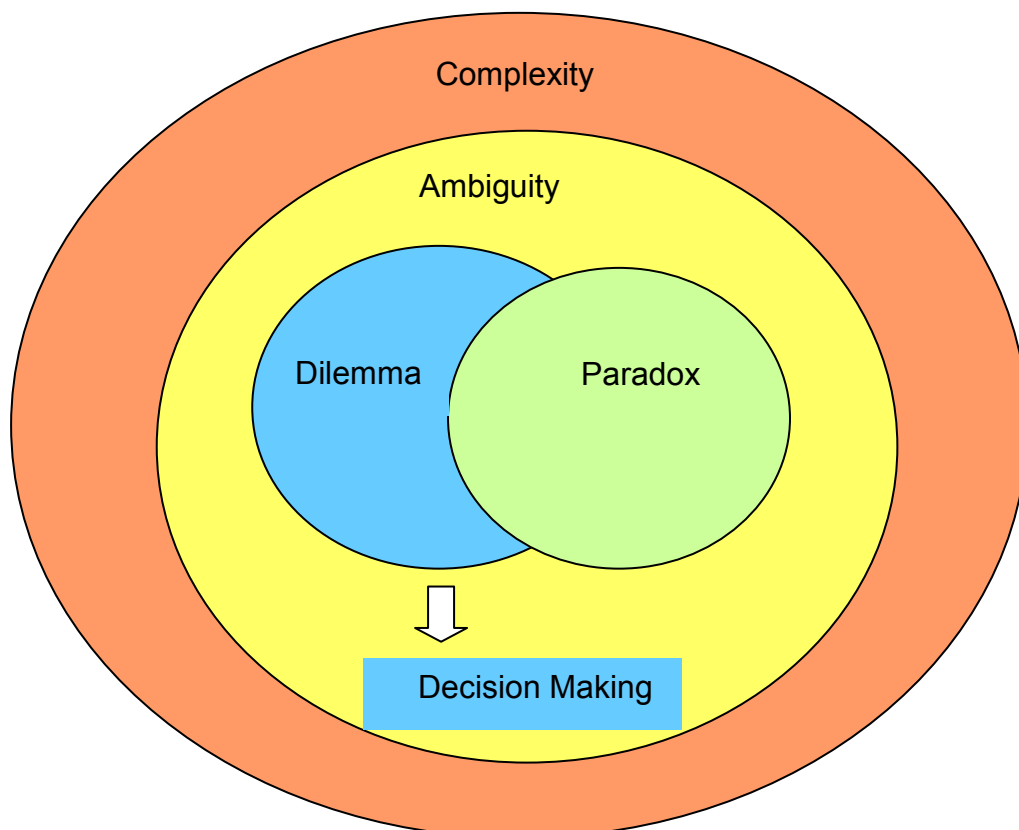
The Step 5: Workable certainty. According to the proposed model, the final step in the process would produce a workable certainty result. The manager has refined the level of questioning towards more strategic questioning.

A related term, ambiguity, often involves uncertainty or contradictions that cannot be resolved or reconciled. It also includes the deficiency of an agreement on boundaries, clear principles or solutions (Alvesson, 1993). Ambiguity is different from uncertainty as it cannot be clarified only through gathering more facts. Ambiguity includes the possibility of rationality, clarifying mean-ends relationships or exercising qualified judgment. Costa (2005) developed a compelling argument highlighting the ambiguities and paradox inherent in performance management systems. Notwithstanding these intrinsic difficulties, these systems have become increasingly ubiquitous within organisations. Managers regularly make judgments and choices that are ambiguous by constantly assessing the differential weighting of the potential probabilities (Einhorn & Hogarth, 1985). Managers function in an increasingly ambiguous environment, where various irreconcilable stakeholders jostle for a manager's attention.

Managers increasingly face mounting challenges in terms of managing complexity. Complexity can be characterised by increasing the respective variables, thereby increasing the levels of complexity. The consequence may imply more stimuli or signals that need to be assessed and processed (Boyacigiller, 2000). Concerning management, complexity and duality seem to be related concepts, the process of combining of disparate concepts (Luo & Zhang, 2008).

While organisations become larger, traversing geographic boundaries, the business environment will inevitably become more complex. As depicted in Figure 4 below, the Circles of Complexity Model below, within this complex environment, the ground is fertile for ambiguity, which in turn, will promote and increase the incidence of paradox and dilemma. The notion of paradox and dilemma are closely related and do have certain overlaps. Typically, a paradox refers to the ability for polarities to co-exist, to effectively manage the divergent tensions, whilst a dilemma refers to the steering of the opposing tensions towards a decision. However, the choice may not necessarily be an “either/or” decision; it may in fact be an “and” decision, the decision to balance the tensions in an attempt to leverage off both. According to this understanding, the notion of dilemma and paradox has large common, overlapping similarities and are in fact very closely aligned.

Figure 4: The Circles of Complexity Model



Consequently, the researcher has used the terms dilemma and paradox interchangeably throughout this research project as the vast majority of their respective characteristics are in fact the same.

2.4 Different Management Approaches

2.4.1 Introduction

It seems there is no standard guideline for managing employees for results. A manager may elect to grant his employees significant freedom and independence or employ a very tight command and control management style. Alternatively, there may also be numerous combinations of autonomy and control. Whichever style a manager chooses the outcomes for organisations and their respective employees will be potentially very different.

2.4.2 Autonomy

2.4.2.1 Definition

Autonomy can be defined as the experience of “integration and freedom” (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 231). Autonomy is a common and deep seated need rooted in the psyche of all human beings and is an important contributing component that drives and motivates employee performance (Pink, 2009). Autonomy, empowerment, self management are all expressions of the notion that employees have the ability to achieve results through their own striving, and independence. Employees that function in an autonomous environment are more likely to achieve sustainable high performance (Hamel, 2007).

2.4.2.2 Outcomes of Autonomy for Employees

Autonomy is regarded as one of the three basic needs of an employee (Ryan & Deci, 2008). Employees that worked under managers that granted high levels of autonomy, found greater job satisfaction and a higher level of employee well being (Baard, Ryan & Deci, 2004).

However, the empirical link between autonomy and employee performance remains inconclusive (Verhoest, Peters, Boukart, & Vershuere, 2004). Autonomy within organisations may refer to individuals or teams. Referring to teams, Langfred (2000; 2004) states that teams with high trust can suffer performance losses when they have adopted a team design with high individual autonomy. Langfred (2007) also notes that self managing teams are not always good at managing themselves. He adds that managers need to be aware of the importance of giving self-managing teams the tools and skills to manage themselves as opposed to letting them sink or swim. According to Haas (2010), one reason that autonomy does not improve the effectiveness of teams is that teams are often isolated from their environments, to the detriment of their performance.

2.4.2.3 Outcomes of Autonomy for Organisations

If autonomy improves the performance of employees, does it translate into higher performance for organisations? A study conducted by Baard, Ryan & Deci, (2004) consisted of 320 small businesses, half of which granted workers autonomy, the other half relying on traditional control management, found that companies that offered autonomy grew at four times the rate of control-

orientated companies. However, Langfred (2007) states that whilst, employees may enjoy the freedom and autonomy of a self managed working environment, it may in fact impact negatively on organisational goals.

2.4.3 Control

2.4.3.1 Definition

Control typically refers to the tight management of employees by their managers. Ritzer (1993), defined control as “the bureaucracy itself may be seen as one huge non-human technology. Its nearly automatic functioning may be seen as an effort to replace human judgement with the dictates of rules, regulations, and structures” (p. 21). Simons (1995) defined management control as “the formal, information-based routines and procedures managers use to maintain or alter patterns in organiz(sic)ational activities”(p. 5). Dewettinck & Buyens, (2006) defined behavioural control as the extent to which managers monitor, direct, evaluate and reward employee activities within organisations.

2.4.3.2 Outcomes of Control for Employees

Control for employees may be positive or negative. Some studies suggest that management control does seem to inhibit employee motivation and performance. Taylor (2010) found that if an external locus of control is forced on an individual, it will reduce the goal oriented behaviour as well as levels of trust and consequently the performance. Falk & Kosveld (2006) corroborate these findings. In a study, they found the majority of individuals did in fact display

control adverse behaviour; they were less motivated to perform well if the principal forced them to provide a minimum level of performance.

2.4.3.3 Outcomes of Control for Organisations

According to conventional thinking, management control is critical to ensure that employees comply with the organisation's objectives. According to Tyler & Blader (2005), organisations typically rely on employees to follow formal rules and procedures to ensure that the right management controls are firmly in place. Adherence to rules and procedures is critical for organisations to function effectively, a reality borne out of the significant time and effort management devoted to controlling employee behaviour. Anderson & Oliver (1987) state that a sales control system is "an organisation's set of procedures for monitoring, directing, evaluating, and compensating its employees" (p. 76).

Over the past two decades, companies across the world have adopted Kaplan & Norton's (1996) balanced scorecard management tool to help to control employee's performance. The balanced scorecard is divided into four core focus quadrants; financial, internal business process, learning and development and customer. Within each quadrant, a manager will insert a number of metrics to closely track the employee's performance. Since the introduction of the balanced scorecard, the efficacy thereof has been debated vociferously amongst managers and human resource specialists.

As mentioned above, another form of control in an organisation is commonly referred to as behavioural control, which involves the monitoring, evaluating and controlling of employee behaviour with a view to achieving specific performance

outcomes. Dewettinck & Buyens, (2006) found evidence to support the notion that behaviour control played a strong role in optimizing the workplace. It is probable that behavioural control provides managers with the opportunity for coaching, counselling and the ability to make adjustments to work allocations, thus improving employee performance. In addition, the study found a strong relationship between behavioural control and situational learning orientation.

Harris & White (1987) found that the core management infrastructure for any large, complex dynamic resource system is command and control. This perspective is based on the military hierarchical power that is derived from a command and control approach where discipline and control are an essential factor. Falk & Kosveld, (2006) found that companies should consider carefully the “hidden costs” (p. 1612) of control when designing processes and procedures for the work environment.

Consequently, the studies regarding the virtues of a control management style seem to be inconclusive and perhaps somewhat ambiguous. Management control may increase or decrease the performance of employees depending on a broad spectrum of factors.

2.4.4 Autonomy and Control

Is it possible for management to balance autonomy and control, two seemingly opposite management approaches? Studies focused on this dilemma seem to be ambiguous and inconclusive (Dewettinck & Buyens, 2006; Hass, 2010). In another study, Langfred (2004) asserts that even if employees have high levels of autonomy, some monitoring of employees should be in place to reduce

process loss and coordination errors. Simons (1995) enumerated 4 levers of control that managers may pull in different situations; belief systems, boundary systems, diagnostic control systems and interactive control systems. Autonomy would be able to bind with the more indirect types of control levers.

Wageman (1995) argues that the leader must take on the role of coach rather than director. Typically, a coach would be responsible for setting the goals for the team, creating a framework and structure for the team members to leverage off their collective strengths. The team is granted autonomy to perform their best within a defined set of rules and guidelines. Consequently, in an organisation setting, according to Wageman (1995), the notion of strict control would be redundant; instead, he would propose guidelines and a framework.

Regarding sales teams, there is evidence to support this notion of a complementary fusing of empowerment and control (Lambe, Webb & Ishinda, 2009). Control refers to an organisation's set of procedures for monitoring, guiding, evaluating, and compensating employees. Empowerment or autonomy refers to the teams, where sales reps jointly manage and execute their team's work (Lambe, et al., 2009).

However, it seems likely that an empowerment management style alone is limited in its ability to exert a positive influence on the desired self – managing behaviours. Indeed, the research concluded that although empowerment is positively associated with self-managing behaviours, sales management's use of control can substantially increase the degree to which selling teams exhibit advantageous team self-management behaviours (Lambe et al., 2009). There is

evidence that organisations with structures and processes that enable employees to engage in exploration and exploitation simultaneously, rather than separately or sequentially have a higher propensity for more engaged and motivated employees (Haas, 2010). Collins & Porras (1994) assert that “highly liberated companies liberate themselves with the Genius of the AND – the ability to embrace both extremes of a number of dimensions at the same time. Instead of choosing between A *OR* B, they figure out a way to have both A *AND* B” (pg. 44).

2.4.4.1 Outcomes of Autonomy and Control for Employees

Even in organisations that encourage autonomy, employees still need to feel supported in their professional development (Dewettinck & Buyens, 2006). Management control can give the guidelines and structure to employees to foster employee training and development. In addition, it can augment an evaluation and performance framework to increase employee performance. Consequently, striking the right balance between autonomy and control must be regarded as one of the key factors for high performing employees.

2.4.4.2 Outcomes of Autonomy and Control for Organisations

Dewettinck & Buyens, (2006) note that there seems to be some preliminary evidence that both empowerment and management control may be invaluable in optimising performance within an organisation. The two approaches can accomplish different but complementary functions. Management need to communicate the “what” as well as the “how” to employees. The “how” may help in guiding and creating a learning oriented workplace that fosters employee

performance levels (Lewis, 2011). Consequently, striking the right combinations of both empowerment and management control may be hugely valuable in optimising organisational goals.

2.5 Factors that may Influence Autonomy and Control

2.5.1 Introduction

Managers are typically pre-disposed to one particular management style, either autonomy or control, based on a variety of different factors. The respective factors will likely lead managers to adopt various combinations of the two management practices. Different factors may have diverse levels of influence depending on the specific circumstances.

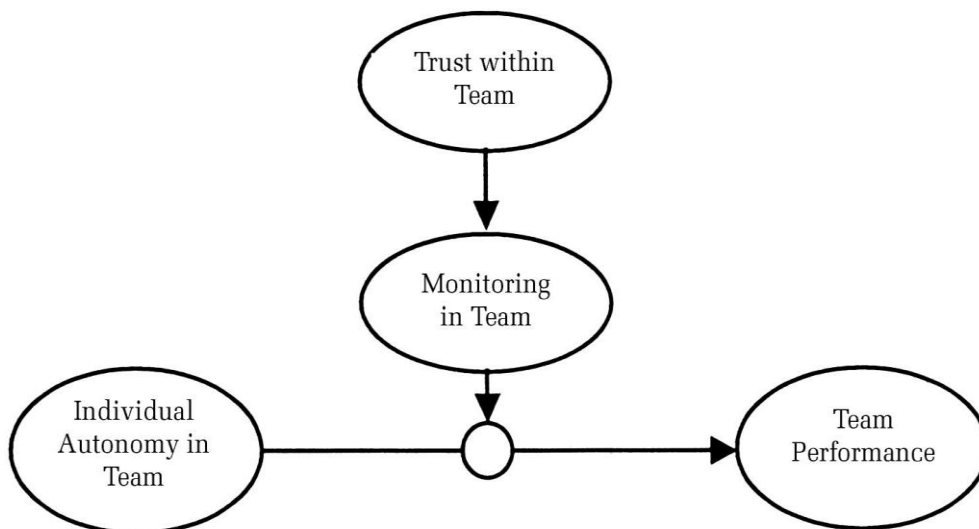
2.5.2 Personality Traits and Characteristics

Different behavioural types or personalities of both employees and managers will likely play a role in influencing the levels of autonomy and/ or control in companies. How an individual approaches interpersonal conflict can be influenced by personality traits. Much research indicates that certain trait-like tendencies are reasonably reliable in predicting whether individuals will attempt to control conflict or look for mutually beneficial solutions (Taylor, 2010). Langfred (2007) asserts that relational conflict is defined as “interpersonal conflict” (p. 885) and may influence the ability to perform in a self management environment. Characteristics that may influence management practices include the setting and achieving of goals. It is one of the key components of intrinsic motivation and directly influences the propensity for employees to self manage (Lee, McInerney, Liem, & Ortiga, 2010). Another key factor that may contribute

to successful self-management amongst employees is self leadership, the ability to self motivate by embedding intrinsic rewards into their work (Millikin, Hom, & Manz, 2010).

An additional core characteristic that may influence a manager’s approach to autonomy and control is the level of trust within a team or organisation. The higher the level of trust, the less likely will be the need for monitoring and control (Langfred, 2004), as depicted in Figure 6 below, The Overall Trust Model. In addition, Langfred (2004,) enumerates the personality traits or characteristics of trust as “benevolence, honesty, and competence” (p. 386). The Overall Trust Model showing the trust relationship is depicted in figure 5 below;

Figure 5: The Overall Trust Model



Source: Langfred (2004)

2.5.3 Culture

The culture of an organisation may also influence a manager's ability to grant employees the level of autonomy or control that is necessary as well as employees' perceptions and beliefs regarding their working environment. Shared beliefs and culture seem to have a strong influence on the decisions and behaviour of managers as well as employees (Van den Steen, 2010). A culture of trust through transparency is a critical component to break through the manager/employee divide in order to create an open environment where appropriate levels of autonomy and control can be nurtured (Nayar, 2010).

2.5.4 The Nature of the Job and Industry

The nature of the specific job may also influence the combination of autonomy and control that a manager may choose to employ. Autonomy may be very important for some jobs, although, it may not be as critical for others (Langfred, 2007). The level of autonomy for knowledge workers may be distinctly different from other roles (Colquitt, Janz, & Noe, 1997). Jobs that are very task and process orientated have less of a need for autonomy than perhaps a sales orientated job. The unnecessary overuse of self-management for these types of jobs may have negative consequences for the employee and the organisation (Langfred, 2007). The interdependence among employees within organisations may have different outcomes depending on the specific job (Wageman, 1995).

A specific industry may also lend itself to more autonomy type practices or the converse, tight management practices (Cohen, Ledford & Spreitzer, 1999). An employee in a high pressurised sales organisation may be different to an

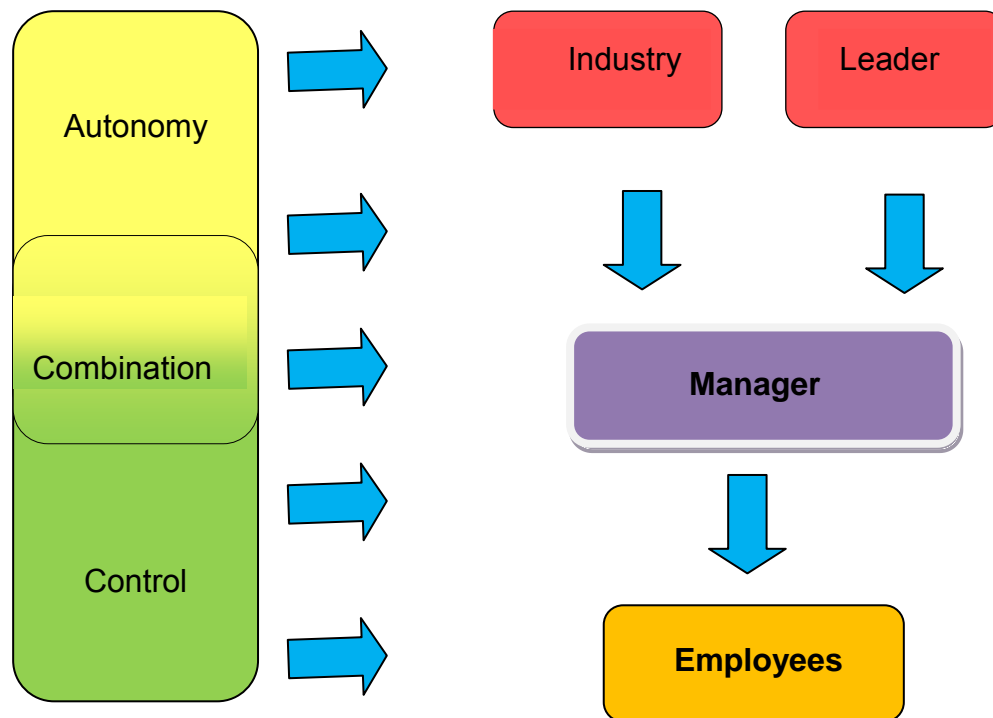
employee in a different industry (Lambe et al., 2009). Perhaps, the IT software industry may have a natural pre-disposition to autonomy whilst the banking industry, a highly regulated and intense risk environment, may have the opposite tendency.

2.6 A Summary of the Literature Review

Autonomy, self management and empowerment are terms describing a particular management style. Control, micro-management and management power are terms describing another type of management style. There has been voluminous literature assessing the merits and shortcoming of the two practices. Over the past century, the management of employees has been characterised by high levels of control at times and autonomy at other times. Organisations and managers seem to oscillate between the two. Currently the chant of increased levels of autonomy seems to be in vogue, however, in practice, the notion of control is ubiquitously practiced. Combinations of the two conflicting practices have varied success, with inconclusive results.

The purpose of this research project is to assess the effectiveness of the different measures of combinations of autonomy and control. Figure 6 – The Autonomy/Control Persuasion Model below was developed as a result of integration from the literature review in this chapter. Autonomy or control, as well as different combinations of the two, directly contribute to the success of an industry and leader of an organisation. Horizontally, as part of the culture of the organisation and vertically (top down), autonomy and control influence the effectiveness of an organisation at all levels.

Figure 6: The Autonomy/Control Persuasion Model



Empirical research has been conducted to clarify and verify the primary and secondary factors that may influence a manager to exhibit various combinations of the two practices. In addition, greater understanding of the dynamics and influences of the two forces is necessary to comprehend and reconcile the multifaceted relationship.

Managing employees in a complex environment is a fluid and dynamic process. It is unlikely that a particular combination of the two practices will remain constant for any length of time. Consequently, the two polar forces will need to be constantly aligned with the changing landscape. Organisations need to

differentiate themselves from their competitors and one of the key levers is the ability to manage employees to gain results.

Managing the two diverse forces is a dilemma or paradox and a key determinant of successful management is the ability to successfully negotiate and straddle between the two opposing forces. Insights are required to highlight the methods and techniques that managers have deployed to unite the “yin yang” relationship in order to marry the paradox. The ability to make decisions that may exclude either of the practices is not necessarily a solution; rather, a constant co-existing of the divergent forces seems to be closer to the answer. The literature review has provided part of the “what”, this research project attempts to uncover further insights regarding the “what” and proposes some guidelines to the ‘how’.

Chapter 3: Research Questions

3.1 The Purpose of the Research

This chapter details the purpose of conducting this research into the components of the management dilemma, autonomy versus control. The precise purpose of this research report is to seek answers to the research questions outlined below and to describe, decode and translate the findings into a practical and meaningful framework that would help to demystify the components of the management dilemma. This chapter draws on the issues emerging from the literature review presented in Chapter 2, together with the concepts and the purpose of the research detailed in the introduction.

3.2 Research Questions

The five research questions are;

Research Question 1:

Are managers able to adopt mutually exclusive autonomy **or** control management practices?

Research Question 2:

What are the possible outcomes of adopting a mutually exclusive, autonomy **or** control management practice for employees and organisations?

Research Question 3:

Are managers able to simultaneously combine combinations of autonomy **and** control management practices to improve employee and organisational performance?

Research Question 4:

What are the possible outcomes of simultaneously adopting autonomy **and** control type management practices for employees and organisations?

Research Question 5:

What are the key determining factors that could influence a manager to adopt autonomy and/or control management practices?

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

4.1 Rationale for Proposed Method

This chapter discusses the research methodology utilised in this study. The literature review forms the theoretical basis for the preparation of this research project. The research consisted of a series of qualitative in-depth, expert interviews and was highly exploratory and qualitative in nature. This is apparent in the research method, design, sampling and data analysis techniques employed.

The research details a qualitative study exploring and delving into the complex management paradox of balancing the two apparently conflicting management approaches, autonomy and control. Although, significant literature abounds regarding different management styles and approaches, this study specifically aims to clarify the management paradox with empirical research. It is an attempt to uncover and glean new insights from experts, skilled in the field of nurturing employees. According to Marshall & Rossman (2006), the intended audience of the study is an important consideration when compiling the research methodology and qualitative research. The research focused on contextual and real world issues, therefore necessitated an interactive and humanistic approach (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

The qualitative method was employed as the primary research approach given that the objective of the research was to seek refinement and delve deeper into the constructs and principles pertaining to the dilemma of autonomy and control

as presented in the literature. Zikmund (2003) recommend a qualitative design when the researcher is attempting to clarify and define the problem. Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill (2009) stress the use of a qualitative design for studies that are based on meanings that are expressed in words, the transferring of insights and deeper meaning can be drawn out of experts through a qualitative process. They add that in an analysis conducted through the use of conceptualisation which will be condensed and restructured to support meaningful analysis; it is an important factor to employ a qualitative design. Blumberg, Cooper, & Schindler, (2008) assert that one needs a study of a qualitative nature in order to gather new insights and explore new phenomena in the field of management.

Tharenou, Donohue, & Cooper (2007) state that qualitative data may be used to build theory that explains a particular phenomenon. They add that a superficial analysis would not be sufficient to adequately answer certain research questions; a deeper, probing design may be more effective. Robson (2002) supports Tharenou et al., (2007) regarding his attitude towards qualitative research and adds the point that qualitative data is associated with concepts that are characterised by their richness and fullness, based on the opportunity to explore a subject in as real a way as possible.

The choice of an exploratory design was based on the nature and complexity of the research topic. “Exploratory research is conducted to clarify ambiguous problems” (Zikmund, 2003, p., 54). Robson (2002) asserts that an exploratory study is a valuable method to find out “what is happening, to seek new insights, to ask questions and to assess phenomena in a new light” (p. 59). Zikmund (2003) further adds that an exploratory study will help to gain greater

understanding of a concept or crystallise a problem. The intention of exploratory research is not to find a comprehensive, all encompassing solution to a problem; rather, the intention is to gain a general appreciation of the problem (Hansel, 2009; Lamb 2007).

The research methods that apply to exploratory research are “highly flexible, unstructured and qualitative” (Tustin, Ligthelm, Martins & van Wyk, 2005, p.87). The undertaking of exploratory research provided the necessary information to answer the research questions. Exploratory research can be performed by interviewing experts in the specific subject to elicit new insights (Saunders et al., 2009).

Semi-structured interviews have been selected as the specific research design to be used for this study. Welman, Kruger & Mitchell (2005) assert that this is a useful method of data collection if the interviewer has a broad list of themes and questions to be covered that may become more refined as the interviews progress. Tharenhou et al., (2007) states further that semi-structured interviews have an “overall topic, general themes, targeted issues, and specific questions” (p. 104) to uncover definitive information from the selected interviewees.

In depth interviewing was used as the technique to interrogate the chosen subject. The in-depth interview was more like a dialogue as opposed to a formal scenario with preset response categories. Importantly, the interviewer utilised the approach of valuing the respondents’ attitudes and perspectives as subjectivity is key to the research results (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

A key benefit of face-to-face interviews is the likelihood of obtaining complete and precise information, which can be clarified and confirmed (Zikmund, 2003). Tharenou et al., (2007), states that “the overall aim of interviews is to elicit the interviewee’s information (i.e. their overall thoughts and feelings) about a topic”. (pg.102). The researcher needs to do an exploration to learn new insights to uncover strands of knowledge to understand the factors and constructs of the specific topic under review (Blumberg et al., 2008).

Structured interviews would not have been appropriate for these interviews as they would have limited the interviewees from exploring the topic. Individual interviews are capable of exploring a new topic in order to develop a new hypothesis or a concept to identify important characteristics and drivers of a phenomenon (Blumberg et al., 2008). The focus of this particular research design was to conduct interactive interviews with a view to obtaining unexpected information.

The interviewing technique can be an extremely valuable way to uncover information to solve a problem. Some researchers estimate that 90 percent of all social investigations involve interviews (Briggs, 1986). One of the main advantages of the interview conversation is that it provides “a pipeline for transporting truthful knowledge” (Holstein & Gubrium, 2011, p. 150). Typically, the interviewer will probe and delve into the relevant subject much more deeply to unearth a wellspring of ideas, thoughts and insights (Tharenou et al., 2007).

4.2 Research Process

The research took place in the form of face-to-face interviews that lasted between 45 minutes to an hour with 16 experts that are known to be highly knowledgeable and authoritative in the field of general and human resource management.

4.3 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis is the perceptions of executives and human resource specialists towards the management dilemma; autonomy versus control. The research design and methodology outlined matched the nature of the research topic, thereby ensuring that the research objectives were achieved and related directly back to the problem definition.

4.4 Population

The respondents selected were leading company executives as well as respected human resource specialists. The executives selected had a sound reputation based on their extensive experience and deep understanding of the complexity of managing employees for results. The human resource specialists were selected based on their profound practical and theoretical application of people practice models. The executives and HR specialists were deliberately selected from diverse industries to elicit insights from a broad based population to reduce any industry concentration bias. In addition, executives were selected from organisations of different sizes, structures and cultures.

The interviews conducted were representative of the following industries;

- Banking:
- Insurance
- Finance
- Retail
- Mining
- Health care
- Academia
- Consulting
- People Management
- Information Technology

4.5 The Size and Nature of the Sample

The actual size of the population is unknown as the study was of an exploratory nature and there are no known sources of reliable data on this population. A non-probability sample of nine executives with extensive experience in the field of general management as well as seven experts of human resources was selected, a total of 16 respondents. This selection method is commonly known as purposive sampling (Zikmund, 2003).

The sample selection was judgmental in nature, where sample members would conform to some criteria, i.e. experts in the management of people. Thereafter, the snowballing sampling technique was adopted, where the first group of interviewees were used to locate other experts that may have similar characteristics and knowledge, which, in turn, would identify others (Blumberg

et al., 2008). The sample of 16 interviewees was deemed sufficient once the themes, thoughts and insights of the experts began to converge and become increasingly repetitive. A detailed description of the sample is given in Table 1 below;

Table 1: The Sample Description

No	Participants Name	Designation/Alignment to Research Project	Company	Industry
1	Prof. Steve Bluen	Professor of Human Behaviour. Previous: Executive Director: HR	GIBS SAB	Academic/ Business School Food & Beverage
2	Terry Meyer	Executive Director Prolific writer, speaker and author of five books on leadership & human capital.	Leadership SA	Leadership Consulting
3	Jonathon Cook	Executive Director Managing Director	GIBS Thornhill Associates	Academic/ Business School Human Capital consulting
4	Italia Boninelli	Senior VP: HR Strategy & Change Management Founder member of the National Human Resources Research Initiative of the South African Board for Personnel Practice Prolific writer and author of two books on human capital.	Anglo Gold Ashanti	Mining
5	Anthony Costa	Executive: Business Performance MBA Research: The ambiguities of performance management	Old Mutual	Insurance/ Financial Services
6	Nico Schoeman	Business Director Previous: CEO	Mine Waste Solutions Simmer & Jack Mines Limited	Mining Mining
7	Derek Wilcocks	Managing Director	Internet Solutions	Information Technology
8	Linda Fine	HR Executive: Africa & Middle East	Internet Solutions	Information Technology
9	Gida Sekandi	Executive Director	Capricorn Investment Holdings	Banking
10	Mteto Nyathi	Managing Director Non Executive Director	Microsoft Blue Label Telecoms Limited	Information Technology Telecoms
11	Fergus Maropen	Group HR Director Previous: VP: Human Resources	Absa Bank BHP Billiton	Banking Mining

12	Prof. Nick Binedell	Founding Director	GIBS	Academic/ Business School
13	Neil Maslen	Managing Director	Mindcor	Executive Search/ Consulting
14	Mark Lamberti	Chairman CEO	Massmart Transaction Capital	Retail Financial Services
15	Colleen Magner	Managing Partner Expert on paradox and polarity Management	Reos Partners	Leadership Consulting
16	Adrian Gore	Founder & CEO	Discovery	Health Care

4.6 Data Collection

The data collection consisted of 15 face-to-face interviews with the selected respondents. One interview was conducted telephonically as the respondent was located in Namibia. Each interview lasted between 45 minutes and an hour depending on the specific flow of the discussion. The respondent's body language was observed to get an overall sense of the data in order to uncover common themes and insights (Zikmund 2003). All the respondents displayed a relaxed and comfortable demeanour, symbolising their ease and confidence with the subject under discussion. The use of the interview guideline ensured interview consistency and interviewer neutrality, improving the overall quality of the research process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). All the interviews were recorded and then transcribed to assist in the examination and analysis process.

At the beginning of the interview, the respondents were requested to sign the interview consent form (see Appendix 2). The interviewees were then guided through the interview guide as per Appendix 1, which contained ten drafted questions intended to tease out insights relating to the five questions central to this research project. An interview guide can be a useful tool for researchers

that elect a semi-structured interview process (Zikmund, 2003). The guide was specifically designed to be flexible to allow the interviewees to evolve and adapt their thoughts. This design also accommodated their different perspectives and experiences without prescribing a specific set of questions (Tharenou et al., 2007). This interview design was particularly useful as an exploratory technique which allowed the respective experts to give meaning to unravelling the components and constructs of the research topic (Blumberg et al., 2008).

The interviewees represented various roles, companies and industries, allowing a diverse mix of experience and ideas. The respondents were committed and completely engaged in the conversation for the duration of the interview. There was a palpable excitement in discussing the complicated subject of this research. It became increasingly clear that the dilemma under review was a challenge that all the respondents had thought about and grappled with to varied degrees. As the discussion progressed, the respondents were grateful to spend time wrestling with the paradox, trying to unravel the associated complexities. The sequence of the questions varied from one interview to the next, depending on the circumstances. Additional questions were also required to explore various questions or objectives that were unique to a particular organisation or industry (Saunders et al., 2009). Probing techniques were also used to evoke additional information from the respondents (Blumberg et al., 2008).

Whilst it is technically possible in a qualitative study to separate the data collection and data analysis phases, the collection and analysis phases should

take place iteratively in order to gain deeper levels of understanding and insights as the process unfolds. Blumberg et al., (2008), assert that “the greatest value lies in the depth of information and detail that can be secured” (pg. 281).

4.7 Data Analysis

4.7.1 Qualitative Data Analysis

Raw data collection occurred through personal interviews as they are able to provide an efficient and accurate means of assessing information about the defined population (Zikmund, 2003). The aim of data analysis is to obtain results that test the study research questions as accurately as possible (Tharenou et al., 2007).

Miles & Huberman, (1994) propose three high levels of data analysis;

- Summarising and packaging data
- Repackaging and aggregating the data
- Developing and testing propositions to construct an explanatory framework

Saunders et al., (2009) assert that data analysis refers to the examination and breakdown of the interview transcripts into logical and structured themes to uncover insights and clarify new understanding of the area of focus. The analysis of qualitative data can often result in the findings of the research being influenced by the researcher’s interpretation of the data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The unspoken influence of the interviewer can distort and sway the

respondent towards a pre-determined result (Blumberg et al., 2008). Furthermore, unless the interviewer takes a high level approach to analysing the data, a subjective interpretation of the respondent's reply may be likely (Gilham, 2005). The content analysis technique was used to diminish these potential risks;

4.7.2 Content Analysis

Welman et al., (2005) define content analysis as “a quantitative analysis of qualitative data” (pg. 221). This technique is unobtrusive and non-reactive (Marshall & Rossman, 2006), thereby allowing the researcher to infer meaning from the data in a way that demonstrates logic. Welman et al., (2005) add “the technique involves counting the sequencing and frequency of particular words, phrases or concepts” (pg. 221). Content analysis was used to populate the data according to the themes and categories.

All the interviews conducted were transcribed in order to analyse the data. Content analysis allowed the researcher to identify the new themes and patterns, allowing for easier synthesis into categories. A comparative approach was employed to allow for comparing responses from each sample in terms of the components of the dilemma under review, thus strengthening the study's overall outcome.

A coding frame designed in excel was formulated to map the data from the interviews as well as the interview guide to the research questions, as shown in Appendix 3. Coding is the process by which categories are established to make sense of the data (Tharenou et al., 2007). The transformation of data into key

findings does not follow defined formulae but rather requires guidance in the form of a coding frame that enables the content analysis to be more effective, allowing for the gathering of meaning in the data. Categories that repeat themselves can be combined, however, “the list of categories must be comprehensive, covering all the categories, in order to be analysed (Tharenhou et al., 2007, p. 254)

The use of frequency analysis and a coding frame was used to allow for the aggregation and categorisation of the data in terms of the specific research questions (Welman et al., 2005). This allowed the researcher to better understand and interpret the categories, frequency and nature of the responses. The frequency analysis allowed the researcher to rank the number of respondents that expressed their views regarding a particular research question or component thereof. Themes that had the most comments were ranked in descending order, from highest to lowest, as shown in Chapter 5.

4.8 Result of Analysis

The information obtained was used to answer the proposed research questions and to uncover insights in order to unravel the dilemma under review. As a result of the research findings, a proposed theoretical model is presented as a guide to navigate the research problem successfully.

4.9 Data Validity and Reliability

The nature of this research design is subjective and is potentially open to various forms of bias as discussed. It is still possible that interviewer bias can occur; where the comments, tone or non-verbal behaviour of the interviewer

may influence the way that the interviewees respond to the questions asked (Saunders et al., 2009). To mitigate this risk, the researcher made a conscious effort to allow the respondents freedom to delve into the subject with gentle prodding based on the interview guide. Various forms of data analysis on the qualitative data gleaned from the semi-structured interviews have been used to answer the research questions. The expected outcome will be “a narrative or story” highlighting the new information and insights drawn from the interviews (Tharenou et al., 2007, pg. 52).

4.10 Potential Research Limitations

The following aspects are limitations of this study;

- The researcher has not been formally trained in conducting expert interviews, where probing techniques are important to effectively draw insights from the interview process.
- Company executives and HR specialists have been identified as the appropriate population for this study as it is assumed that they are expert in the field of management. However, the sample may not be fully representative of the population as lower level managers may be more in touch with the complexity of the management dilemma as they too wrestle with this dilemma.

4.11 Conclusion

The research design and methodology were intended to meet the requirements and objectives established at the commencement of this research report. The research drew insights from a number of recent academic studies. The chosen

design succeeded in extending and enhancing the research topic by delving into the subject to gain fresh knowledge and uncover novel insights.

Chapter 5: Results

5.1 Introduction

The results are presented in alignment with the research questions indicated in Chapter 3. Firstly, the key observations are discussed under the relevant research questions. Thereafter, the researcher concludes with a summary of the findings discussing the salient points which will be discussed further in chapter six.

5.2 Data Analysis

All 16 interviews that were scheduled were conducted over a period of three months. Within the context of qualitative and exploratory research, the researcher asserts that 16 interviews are an appropriate response rate. Semi-structured interviews were the research design used, which allowed the flexibility to delve into the subject in order to uncover new insights. Consequently, not all of the 16 respondents answered all 5 of the research questions precisely. During the interviews, recordings and notes were taken with the expressed permission of the interviewees. The recordings were later transcribed and as a basis to verify the factual correctness of the notes produced by the scribe.

The notes from the interview were then analysed using content analysis, specifically condensation, meaning categorisation and thematic analysis (Lee, 1999). The factors were clustered under the relevant research questions using Excel. The use of meaning categorisation under content analysis methods were

used in conjunction with the ad hoc methods described above to conduct the analysis.

The researcher asserts that the response selection process was adequately applied which resulted in a satisfactory respondent list. The respondent list represented executive managers and HR specialists from a broad spectrum of industries. Both large and small organisations were represented. Regarding the results reflected below, the respondents were allocated random respondent numbers (dissimilar to the order of the interviewee list recorded in the previous chapter) to protect the confidentiality of the interviewees.

5.3 Results

5.3.1 Research Question 1

Are managers able to adopt mutually exclusive autonomy or control management practices?

5.3.1.1 Results

As reflected in Table 4 below, of the 16 respondents, 11 felt that it is not possible for managers to adopt a mutually exclusive autonomy or control management approach, whilst three respondents felt that it is possible in very specific circumstances as per Table 4 below;

Table 2: Ranking of Research Question 1

Ranking	Are managers able to adopt mutually exclusive autonomy or control practise?	Number of Respondents
1	Autonomy or control is not possible	11
2	Autonomy or control is possible	3

5.3.1.2 Autonomy or Control is not Possible

There were common elements in response to this question that were repeated during the interview process indicating a strong, consistent opinion. Eleven respondents felt that an environment of absolute autonomy with no control will completely disempower managers. Employees will be left to their own devices which could significantly damage the organisation. Respondents also felt that it is critical for managers to have the ability to monitor and oversee employee performance to ensure alignment with the organisations targets and goals. Employees also need to have a structure whereby regular feedback and guidance from managers regarding their role and agreed objectives can be communicated regularly.

Respondents felt that total control with no autonomy would not be feasible and equally destructive as it would be too restrictive. Consequently, all organisations, even those that aspire to employ high levels of autonomy, will need to have some level of control and autonomy in place. The accurate dilemma therefore, is which **combination** of autonomy and control should managers employ in any given situation? In response to question 1, respondents expressed their views as follows;

- *“Neither of these are two interdependent poles in a particular leadership context, neither of these poles exist without the other effectively.”*
- *“I think it is a continuum as opposed to two opposites. It is a continuum and in some situations the best recipe is probably a mixture of both.”*
- *“... I struggle with this as I don’t think they have to be exclusive at all.”*

5.3.1.3 Autonomy or Control is Possible in Specific Circumstances

Three respondents felt that either extreme autonomy or control is generally not viable; however, managers could adopt absolute autonomy or control in very limited and specific circumstances as expressed below;

- *“I think if you are brand new on a job and the consequences of making a mistake are quite high, then I think it is appropriate and only under those very specialised circumstances, to have total control. Or if you are in a crisis situation or where there is a life and death threat you know, there are certain circumstances, but I think they are the exception rather than the rule”.*
- *“So even in environments that are supposedly low control it is very unusual to have an absolute free for all unless the individual’s creative output, as an individual per se, is the only purpose of the firm. You do get, I suppose trading environments where individuals are traders and can be an absolutely brilliant trader and is largely left to his own devices.”*

5.3.2 Research Question 2

What are the possible outcomes of adopting a mutually exclusive autonomy or control management practice for employees and organisations?

5.3.2.1 Results

As reflected in Table 5 below, eight respondents felt that too much control would result in creating a suffocating environment. Five respondents felt that the

benefits of absolute control would be short lived and ultimately the organisation would be worse off. On the other hand, two respondents felt that too much autonomy would create a reckless and irresponsible working environment.

Table 3: Ranking of Research Question 2

Ranking	What are the possible outcomes of adopting a mutually exclusive autonomy or control management practice for employees and organisations?	Number of Respondents
1	Control creates a suffocating environment	8
2	Control can lead to short term success	5
3	Too much autonomy can increase risk	2

5.3.2.2 Control Creates a Suffocating Environment

The stifling and suffocating nature of total control was noted by eight respondents as a recurring outcome of excessive control. The inevitable consequence would neutralise any positive benefits of tight control. Excessive control will sap employee's energy and possibly destroy an organisation. Control comes easy to managers as they have the ability to exert their power to ensure consistency and predictability; however, it comes at the cost of nurturing and empowering the human spirit. Respondents expressed their thoughts as follows;

- *“I think that the consequences of that are quite dire, ... and you know by having over-control you remove creativity, you remove empowerment, you remove initiative and everything comes down to ‘you want me to act like a robot I will act like a robot but you will land up getting about 40 or 50% of my potential output; the discretionary effort I have will not be spent on this’”.*

- *“It is not sustainable, it becomes stifling, it becomes debilitating – more than just stifling”.*
- *“In a completely controlled environment where you have no say..., it is suffocating”.*
- *“I also believe that people come with a certain level of energy, just for the sake of making the point let’s say they come to work with 40% of their energy level in the morning, and most companies have crushed that to 20% by lunchtime.”*

5.3.2.3 Control can Influence Short Term Success

Five respondents felt that control may have short term benefits regarding organisational efficiency and effectiveness. It can give management a sense of control and power. However, over time, excessive control will inevitably become negative and detrimental to an organisation; it is simply not sustainable as noted by respondents below;

- *“... I just think that the plus side of having total control is that it becomes clockwork.”*
- *“In the first year he produced good results because in effect he stopped the wastage, he cut all the costs ...it improved dramatically. The second year there were still some small signs of improvement but major signs of strain, a total culture of fear, people not co-operating, people keeping information to themselves, people being territorial, people creating their own sets of processes and policies and systems around their own little micro area to safe guard themselves.”*

- *“A very controlled environment can be very efficient, sometimes for weeks, sometimes for months, sometimes for years, but eventually I think it has a systemic feedback which is not sustainable.”*
- *You want to feel that you are not powerless. And I think it is partly delusional because you can never really be in control.”*

5.3.2.4 Too Much Autonomy

On the opposite pole, two respondents felt that too much autonomy can be equally destructive for an employee and organisation. Whilst autonomy has many benefits for employees and organisations, too much autonomy can introduce excessive risk into an organisation. If structures and controls are weak, organisations are in danger of exposing themselves to unwanted hazards at their peril. Respondents highlighted their perspectives as follows;

- *“I think there is the potential of losing control, there is the potential of chaos reigning. I mean you know there is a lovely saying that basically you should empower people, unless they are stupid”.*
- *“...increased autonomy can give rise to increased risk as well as potential inefficiency because you are not harnessing things as well as you could”.*

5.3.3 Research Question 3

Are managers able to simultaneously combine combinations of autonomy and control management practices to improve employee and organisational performance?

5.3.3.1 Results

As reflected in Table 6 below, all the respondents unanimously agreed that balancing the right combinations of autonomy and control is essential for ensuring high performance regarding employees and organisations. Managers don't have to choose between the two extremes; rather astute managers are able to straddle both, testing different doses for different situations. Managing the dilemma effectively demands an understanding that neither of these two poles exist without the other. Sometimes things can co-exist that are seemingly contradictory. Not everything in this world has to align like the world of accounting and balancing. The dilemma doesn't have to be solved, rather there can be a state where there is a tension and that is a completely natural state. Fifteen respondents felt that the attributes of control are exceptionally valuable when combined with autonomy.

The notion of control can be interpreted in various ways. Managers that are able to implement control in a way that doesn't elicit a negative response from employees are well poised to strike an optimal balance. Respondents offered their thoughts regarding the understanding of the meaning of control. Six respondents highlighted the benefits and value of granting autonomy to employees. Employees have aspirations to be able to reach high levels of personal fulfilment and actualisation. Autonomy when combined with control can be very powerful; respondents offered their understanding of the importance as discussed below;

Table 4: Ranking of Research Question 3

Ranking	Are managers able to simultaneously combine combinations of autonomy and control management practices to improve employee and organisational performance?	Number of Respondents
1	Combinations of autonomy and control	16
2	The meaning of control	15
3	The importance of autonomy	6

5.3.3.2 The Meaning of Control

Fifteen respondents clarified the meaning of control. Control, in combination with autonomy, is a critical component in determining employee and organisational performance. However, control can mean different things to different people. Control can refer to the direct control that managers enforce on employees, also known as micro-management. This type of control is commonly negatively associated with a traditional hierarchical management structure.

However, control can also have positive connotations and more likely refer to an indirect influence that management can exert in a more subtle way. This type of control has the benefit of giving management the necessary oversight without creating a negative, prescriptive working environment. Examples of indirect control would be the culture of the organisation, values, guiding principles and the performance management systems that focus on outputs as opposed to tasks. When control is focused on indirect influence as opposed to direct, dictatorial management of tasks, autonomy and control can co-exist resulting in the unleashing of the human spirit and setting it free. Respondents expressed their views as follows;

- *“You are codifying control, but you are codifying it in a kind of voluntary way.”*
- *“We have a value system here that is how we exercise control...”*
- *“This is indirect, so this is around setting frameworks, parameters, guiding principles, values.”*
- *“In some cases where we have frameworks it is there to create the consistency without the negative connotation.”*
- *“...like sheep farming: you can spend your time and effort building fences to keep the sheep in, and it takes a lot of time and effort to keep those fences erected, to keep them, parts of the barbed wire break and whatever. So you can spend all your energy to try and keep them in because some of the sheep might go to the edges and start wanting to go outside of the pasture. Or you can spend your energies building a well in the centre of the grazing land.”*

5.3.3.3 The Importance of Autonomy

Six respondents clarified the importance of autonomy. The experience of autonomy helps to drive employee enrolment and engagement; employees feel empowered and intrinsically motivated. Autonomy in combination with control has the ability to breathe life into employees and organisations. Autonomy helps to create a culture of high energy and vitality. Respondents expressed their thoughts as follows;

- *“I think your excellent companies that have excellent people would want to go to autonomy, because again it is the mind-shift from a hierarchical kind of structure to a network structure.”*
- *“...allowing people freedom of thought and development opportunity that to me borders on the high autonomy side of things.”*
- *“What motivates people, I think is a sense of value add, besides the remuneration issue, what I have seen to motivate people is a sense of value add and a sense of growth.”*

5.3.3.4 Combinations of Autonomy and Control

All the respondents felt that managers are able to simultaneously balance various combinations of autonomy and control to improve employee and organisational performance. Different managers and organisations will employ various combinations of the two practices to achieve sustainable performance. Various combinations of autonomy and control are possible depending on a myriad of different factors. Combinations of the two could vary from high autonomy and high control to low autonomy and low control with various permutations between the two extremes.

Respondents felt that a combination of high autonomy and high control would be the aspirant goal for the vast majority of cases. This goal would be predicated on the understanding of control as a positive and indirect type of control as defined above. Therefore, high doses of the right control and autonomy will lead to high employee and company performance as articulated by the respondents below;

- *“I would say autonomy is possible in any environment where somebody has said that the absolute minimum set of rules we need to achieve the purpose of this organization is the following.”*
- *“So I think leadership has to provide control in the format of direction, but control should not be without the presence of autonomy and autonomy should not be without the presence of control.”*
- *“...and I think very often it’s the processes and the systems that allow for the autonomy. So if you’re, and maybe this is the paradox, if you’ve got good controls in place, you can be more autonomous.”*
- *“So I think this high control high autonomy is right as the ultimate.”*

5.3.4 Research Question 4

What are the possible outcomes of simultaneously adopting autonomy and control type management practices for employees and organisations?

5.3.4.1 Results

Eleven respondents felt that the outcomes of simultaneously adopting combinations of autonomy and control would be positive for organisations as displayed in table 7 below. Indirect control leads to more engaged and enrolled employees who are prepared to put in more discretionary effort. Combinations of autonomy and control have significant benefits for employees and organisations.

Employees will feel more empowered and liberated but within the parameters of indirect control which are influenced by management. Humans were created

free to reach their potential. The notion of self actualisation and job fulfilment are attainable in an environment of high autonomy and control. Autonomy is nourished within a framework which enables direction and guidance.

Companies and employees will perform optimally if management are able to get the right balance between autonomy and control. Different situations will demand different combinations of the two forces. The tensions will always exist; however, it is critical to get the right doses of each for the varied situations. The outcome is that the benefits of both can then be leveraged to achieve the most favourable outcome.

Table 5: Ranking of Research Question 4

Ranking	What are the possible outcomes of simultaneously adopting autonomy and control type management practices for employees and organisations?	Number of Respondents
1	The benefits of combinations of autonomy and control	11

5.3.4.2 The Benefits of Autonomy and Control

Through indirect control, management are able to have oversight and supervision. Consequently, they are able to ensure higher levels of predictable company performance by ensuring consistent service. Whilst, simultaneously allowing employees the freedom to innovate in areas of new product development as noted below;

- *“So the orientation towards the unleashing of human energy is huge, and I believe too that discretionary effort comes from intrinsic motivation, not extrinsic motivation.”*

- *“When your governance is good like McDonalds, when your systems are codified the management are more relaxed to explore new things and the business can scale.”*
- *“...internal manifestations are high motivation, high energy, and retention, able to attract great people. Organisations get a reputation, ‘this is a great place to work that is where I want to be.’”*

5.3.5 Research Question 5

What are the key determining factors that could influence a manager to adopt autonomy and/or control management practices?

5.3.5.1 Results

Numerous factors will likely influence a manager’s adoption of a particular combination of autonomy and control in different situations. Not all factors have the same power and influence; some are more dominant than others. Typically, several factors with varying intensities will contribute to the application of the two forces. Some factors are intrinsic to the manager; his particular personality, his leadership ability, maturity and his ability to learn. Other factors are intrinsic to the employee; his level and function, personality, competence, ability to learn, his particular age and maturity.

Different factors are associated with the specific organisation; the culture, the type and size of company, the structure, the risk profile, the strategy and the performance management framework. In addition, other factors that are extrinsic to the organisation will also likely play a role; the type of industry, the

business environment as well as technology as an enabler. The multi-faceted influences which may contribute to a highly complex environment, will determine the levels of autonomy and control.

Seventeen factors were identified and highlighted by the respondents during the interviews as being the key determinants that would influence the dilemma under review. The factors were then ranked according to the number of responses for that specific factor. The higher the ranking of the factor, the more likely the factor has broad acceptance as an important contributing variable regarding influencing the dilemma under review as listed below in Table 8;

Table 6: Ranking of Research Question 5

Ranking	What are the determining factors that could influence a manager to adopt autonomy and/or control management practices?	Number of Respondents
1	Culture	14
2	Different industries	12
3	Different levels and functions	12
4	Personality	11
5	Different companies	10
6	Leadership	10
7	Maturity	9
8	Risk	8
9	Employee competence	8
10	Business environment	6
11	Trust	5
12	Structure	5
13	Technology as an enabler	4
14	Generational	4
15	Size of business	4
16	Performance Management	3
17	Ability to learn	3

5.3.5.2 Culture

The culture of an organisation would seem to have the most significant influence on the dilemma under discussion. An overwhelming number of respondents, fourteen in total, felt that culture will be a significant factor that will

aid in determining the right balance. The culture of an organisation is the intangible influence that a company develops over a long period of time. Over time, the culture affects the ethos of the concern to the extent that it develops its own unique personality.

Culture can be regarded as an indirect control lever that will have the value of providing a framework which will have unspoken, invisible parameters within which employees operate. The benefit of this type of indirect control is that employees will be less likely to feel constrained within a tight prescriptive suffocating environment. Management can have control with perceived or real autonomy. The respondents expressed their views as follows;

- *“If you have a culture that allows people to innovate, influence and create, it can be high control, high autonomy.”*
- *“So culture can also be an instrument of control, and that is why I guess there are nuances to it in this research, I mean some people would call culture high control.”*
- *“I think culture is emergent, I don’t think it is one of those things that you can button down, but you can influence it, and by hiring people that actually subscribe to a particular culture, the culture becomes self-reinforcing.”*
- *“...but it is purely culture driven...If you don’t fit and you don’t perform the system will get you out very quickly.”*

5.3.5.3 Different Industries

Twelve respondents felt that the type of industry that a company operates will be a key determinant of the level of autonomy or control that is exercised. The banking sector, which is predicated on strong risk management and governance, may have a different autonomy versus control weighting than an advertising or creative type industry. A knowledge business that may attract a more educated and possibly younger employee will need to have higher levels of autonomy than an industry that would attract lower skill level employees. The very nature of the industry will create an environment that will influence the dilemma as expressed below;

- *“In a factory environment I would say if you have a formula that works well and which is efficient, you delegate and it just turns over.”*
- *“A creative industry may have lower control and higher autonomy because you want to leverage the creativity of the people and it is less important to have...the output is tangible, not intangible.”*
- *“I think in knowledge intensive industries and we are certainly in one, I think that to be effective you have to be more towards autonomy.”*
- *“... a musician has high autonomy, an artist. So maybe the more creative industries.”*

5.3.5.4 Different Levels and Functions

Twelve respondents felt that the level of the specific job will be a key determining factor regarding the degrees of control and autonomy. A Chief Executive Officer will typically be granted a significant amount of autonomy by

the board to drive the company's strategy and targets. The control applied by the board will commonly be indirect control in the form of a balanced scorecard with specific targets and metrics. In contrast, a lower level employee in a factory assembly line will characteristically need to follow a prescriptive process with direct controls in place. The level of autonomy will likely be very low. Respondents highlighted their thoughts as displayed below;

- *“I think its functional, it depends on the kind of function you are doing, if you are in a very production environment, like here at our call centres, there is very little autonomy, how they speak and the rules that they follow is all scripted and codified, you should get the same results if you phone different people. Yet you talk to our business analysts and they are making decisions on stuff that is fairly autonomous. It really does depend on the type of function.”*
- *“...compare that to your CEO of a global company. Your instruction is ‘grow the share price and you might choose to diversify to Latin America or Asia or whatever, we will really figure out whether you made the right decision or not in 20 years time.’”*
- *“...the levels of work theory around stratified systems, levels of work. You have got to get the people and the job right, the mix right.”*
- *“The lower the level of work, the more structure you need to provide for people to feel confident to do the work.”*

5.3.5.5 Personality

Eleven respondents felt that the personality of the manager or the employees will affect the level of autonomy or control. Individuals have different traits and characteristics, they will either naturally lean towards independence and self management or the opposite, a defined structure with a degree of rigidity. Different management styles will resonate with different people based on their specific personalities. Employees are attracted to managers that display the type of management style that aligns with their personality. Managers will be more effective if they are able to ally their personality with their employees and leverage the particular strengths. Respondents highlighted their views as follows;

- *“My gut feel is that it depends on the personality.”*
- *“Real leadership is not situational, because real leadership implies dealing with uncertainty and real leadership then is personality driven.”*
- *“For some people to work in a very confined regulated environment is fine because it gives them a comfort zone, there is no risk that they have to take, and it is all just follow the rules and there are people whose personalities lend to that kind of thing.”*
- *“I mean take Myers Briggs, everyone is an absolutely unique individual and I guess the fascinating part about it is that how do you as a manager get the combination right, because that to me is almost the management challenge.”*

5.3.5.6 Different Companies

Although the type of industry may be an important factor regarding the dilemma, ten respondents felt that the type of company even within the same industry will likely influence the levels of autonomy and control. Within an industry, such as banking or advertising, different companies will deploy different strategies that would help to determine the right balance. Even within a company or within a business unit, different disciplines such as the finance and marketing departments may have different levels. Consequently, companies within the same industry are able to develop a distinctive competitive advantage by optimising the tension between the two forces. Respondents expressed their thoughts as shown below;

- *“You could have a strategic choice to be highly autonomous, to leverage knowledge, concept and diversity. So yes strategy would influence and be a factor. And that is a choice.”*
- *“...depending upon the nature of that business there could be a high level of innovation and creativity, and that then allows for autonomy.”*
- *“I think if you can start in a green field scenario then autonomy is always very powerful.”*
- *“...but on the other hand if you get something like a {Company name} and a {Company Name} etc, they will have certain things about which they have control, but the rest they would give autonomy because they are very different kinds of businesses.”*

5.3.5.7 Leadership

Ten respondents felt that leadership will also be a significant factor in determining the right balance. A manager prescribes the particular framework of the organisation or business unit; he sets the tone for the respective employees. Different managers display different leadership styles; they have the ability to manage with a tight control approach or the opposite. A CEO of a company has a unique ability to cascade a particular leadership style down to all levels of an organisation. Respondents highlighted this theme as follows;

- *“Absolutely, no question about it – leadership style and the philosophy is an absolutely fundamental thing.”*
- *“The company is the same, the product is the same, everything is the same and the styles of the two leaders were diametrically opposed: one was a completely empowering one and one was a complete control fellow.”*
- *“And the two classic dimensions in situational leadership are similar but they came out of the Ohio studies...”*
- *“I think leaders have big impact on these mechanisms.”*

5.3.5.8 Maturity

Nine respondents felt that maturity will play a role. The concept “maturity” however can have varied applications. Maturity can refer to the maturity of a particular company. The older a company is, the more likely it is to have established frameworks, policies and guidelines, a more controlled

environment. Conversely, a younger company will be more nimble and agile; consequently, it will have a greater propensity for autonomy.

Maturity can also refer to the maturity of employees. Management will be more likely to grant autonomy to employees that are responsible and reflect a high level of independence and integrity. In addition, maturity can also refer to the maturity of the manager. Managers with high levels of emotional maturity will be more likely to balance autonomy and control in a more effective way. The three applications of maturity were expressed as follows;

- *“I see it as a function of the maturity of the business, the discipline of the business, the trust in the systems and the people.”*
- *“...business maturity; if it is a company that is just sort of a start up type environment, obviously the systems and processes in that environment are completely different to a more mature environment.”*
- *“The level of maturity of your subordinates.”*
- *“I suppose probably the single most important thing is just to develop some level of emotional intelligence in managers...”*

5.3.5.9 Risk

The greater the risk of failure, the more managers will have an increased propensity for a control type environment. Eight respondents viewed risk as an important factor that will influence the particular management style. Consequently, companies that operate in a high risk industry or environment will typically have a greater need for control. Similarly, managers that are sensitive

to risk factors will employ more control than managers that have a more relaxed and laid back attitude. Respondents highlighted their thoughts as follows;

- *“I guess the biggest factor is risk.”*
- *“... it’s not about the mistake; it’s about how we react to the mistake that people make...”*
- *“Absolutely, risk is important, but I think you have to look at whether that risk is at a point in time or whether that risk is systemic.”*
- *“The way you manage risk is linked to the control.”*

5.3.5.10 Employee competence

Eight respondents felt that the competence of the respective employees will be an important factor. Employees that are more skilled, confident and competent will not require as much management attention and control as employees that are still relatively new in their role. Managers will be more comfortable granting autonomy and self-management to employees that are well versed in their jobs. Competent employees will not require constant management oversight; they will be able to fulfil their duties autonomously as expressed below;

- *“If I did not have confidence in the quality of management and people, I would impose control. With brilliant people, I relinquish control.”*
- *“...the starting point is who is the individual, because you can’t soar with eagles when you are dealing with turkeys, I mean we understand that. So the first point is; does this person have the inherent capability, the intellect, the judgement, the character.”*

- *“...quality of people within a values framework and if I have those in place then I can lie by the pool and that can cascade down.”*
- *“I think competence is one of the most basic issues, if you have competence and confidence in a team you will let them be more autonomous.”*

5.3.5.11 Business Environment

The business environment is another factor that will influence the type of management style. Six respondents felt that the type of environment that the particular company functions will affect the management practices. Companies do not operate in isolation; they are affected by the landscape and broader environment. Different countries will have different societal and communal influences that will affect management practices. An economy or industry in crisis may sway a company's management practices to a more controlled approach. Respondents expressed their views as follows;

- *“The business environment will definitely influence this.”*
- *“China has recently had a huge ascendancy in manufacturing because they have a society that is very tolerant of a very controlling management style and I think if one sits here and says ‘it shouldn’t be like that’ well it might be a very bad moral judgement, but it doesn’t affect the reality.”*
- *“So maybe power, power distance, one of the factors in measuring culture. Power distance is the degree of distance in relative power tolerated by people in a society. So Australia has a low power distance,*

they don't tolerate autocrats, whereas Japan has quite a high power distance."

- *"I think there are also trends. There are cycles and organisations and business theory if you like swing from the more autonomy to the more controlled."*

5.3.5.12 Trust

Five respondents felt that trust is an important factor. If a manager trusts his employees, he will be more comfortable to grant them independence and autonomy. It is important for a manager to feel that employees will respect the autonomy granted and not abuse it. Companies and specifically managers that have been vested with the authority to steer their employees towards the company strategy and targets, will need to feel that employees will utilise their time productively and constructively. Over time, managers can come to trust employees and consequently reduce their management oversight as discussed below;

- *"...if you have trust in your systems and trust in the individuals and that trust is not an emotional trust, it's a trust that they will maximise profitability and efficiency, if you have trust that that will happen then you can delegate tasks."*
- *"It is based on trust. Autonomy assumes trust; breach the trust and you are done."*

- *“So there is an equation for trust and it is something I have used a lot which says that trust is equal to the multiple of credibility multiplied by intimacy divided by risk.”*
- *“Where you have a more trusting, less controlling manager, he doesn’t necessarily control the process of how the team gets there, but rather, he is managing whether there is progress to the end result.”*

5.3.5.13 Structure

Five respondents asserted that the type of structure of a company will affect the level of autonomy or control. Management function within the structure of an organisation. The specific design and configuration of an organisation will allow management the necessary freedom to exercise controls that will allow employees autonomy or the opposite, a more inflexible, controlled environment. The processes and systems will also influence the need for management control. Respondents highlighted their thoughts as follows;

- *“It’s not just culture, it’s the policies, systems and processes that you put around the management of people.”*
- *“...the real discussion is what are you centralising, what are you decentralising?”*
- *...the core has to be stable and efficient and repetitive and routinised and the periphery has to be innovative and flexible and effective.”*

5.3.5.14 Technology as an Enabler

Four respondents expressed the notion that greater levels of autonomy can be achieved if a company has embedded technology. This idea is based on

developing an enabling technology to create an environment whereby the systems can automate the right controls. Managers are then able to grant employees more autonomy because the technology will allow managers to either track day-to-day operations or effectively track the results.

Managers that have these automated controls in place will likely be more comfortable to allow employees more room to achieve results. Technology is a factor that could contribute to the notion of high autonomy with high control. The technology enables the high control which can then allow a higher level of autonomy. The respondents expressed their views as follows;

- *“...a shift to centralising control because technology enables them to do that.”*
- *“It's vastly driven by technology that has enabled the people to have access to information and more educated and understanding the connection between things. Those connections in the past used to sit with the leaders but now people at all levels have that information...so basically you should be moving more towards autonomy as an ideal state.”*
- *“This is the revolution that technology has brought, it is remote control.”*
- *“... I mean Facebook is an extraordinarily controlling technology.”*

5.3.5.15 Generational

Managers and employees from different generations will influence their autonomy and control needs differently. Four respondents felt that the age of a person is an important factor in understanding the dilemma. Managers from the

“baby boom” era will have more of a tendency to adopt strong traditional and hierarchical practices; this is the management approach that they are familiar and comfortable with. Employees from this era will also be comfortable with this type of approach as it reflects the approach that helped fashion their management outlook from their first working days.

In contrast, younger employees and managers, from the more recent “X, Y and Z generation” have had very different experiences; their management approach will tend to lean a lot more towards the autonomy side of the spectrum. Younger employees are more demanding and vocal regarding working hours, work/life balance, dress code and social media during working hours. As more and more young employees enter the formal working environment, management will need to be cognisant of their needs in contrast to the needs of the older baby boomers. Respondents highlight these themes as follows;

- *“...the age generation is whether they are a Y generation will have an impact and then the culture obviously. The reason I say that is we are starting to see the management of Y generation and the X generation like autonomy; they come to work when they want to come to work and they kind of distance themselves from the more standard organisations.”*
- *“So I think it is an age phenomenon.”*
- *“... I think there is definitely a generational difference.”*

5.3.5.16 Size of Business

Four respondents felt that the size of the business will impact the respective management practices; smaller, more entrepreneurial businesses will generally

be more autonomous. A small business will need to be nimble and agile and typically won't have the budget to implement elaborate frameworks, processes and controls. Some respondents felt that if the controls that are embedded in the business currently would have been embedded in the first few year of the business, the business would never have survived.

A company moves through various cycles throughout its lifetime. The level of autonomy and control can be directly linked to the particular size of the organisation at a particular point in time. Autonomy and control is dynamic and will need to change with the changing organisation. These views were expressed as follows;

- *“... the ultimate control is the one man business where everything is in that person's head and they make all the decisions, and of course with the passage of time that is fine if you want to run a one man business. But if you want to run a bigger business you have to start to delegate, you have to start to let other people do things and sometimes they are not going to do them as well as you think you can do them, and they are going to make mistakes. So with the growth of a business it tends towards chaos and what we do as the business grows, is to mitigate the chaos by imposing systems and controls and processes.”*
- *“... you can't scale without delegating control, so they can scale by giving control to the people but they have really delegated control to the systems. The recipe works.”*
- *“...size is a factor, because the bigger you are the more difficult it is to exercise the informal use of control, plus the complexity is such that you*

can't respond as quickly to exceptions. So when there are ten or fifteen of you, you don't need performance appraisal, maybe you don't need leave forms and so on, you just agree. And then when there are 150 of you..."

5.3.5.17 Performance Management

Control can be defined as controlling tasks. Control can also be defined as controlling the outcome. Three respondents felt that comprehensive performance management systems will affect the level of control and autonomy. Clear expectations and clear consequences of performance linked to an agreed performance agreement will allow managers more freedom to manage effectively. If a company has robust performance management systems in place, then management have the ability to exercise high levels of indirect control through managing the outputs. The performance management system will be directly linked to remuneration and incentives like performance bonuses and share allocations.

Consequently, well established and embedded performance management systems will allow managers to move their organisation or teams towards a high (indirect) control and high autonomy environment; whereby they will be able to manage performance effectively to mitigate the risks that are associated with high autonomy as discussed below;

- *"...performance management of outcomes would influence this; if you have a good system like a balanced score card that would give you*

control which may allow for greater degrees of autonomy in high risk environments.”

- *“...you need to clarify expectations; you need to clarify things...”*
- *“...I think you have to have all the rules quite clear but I do think in your manufacturing line for example you could have incentivisation based on outputs....I think you would need to have the controls, the measures, the outputs quite clearly defined, and then maybe the means of getting there could be more autonomous.”*

5.3.5.18 Ability to Learn

Three respondents felt that the ability to learn will influence management practices. Managers that are able to constantly learn and grow will inevitably be more in touch with their employees and consequently have a greater level of understanding regarding the right balance of autonomy and control. Engaged managers that are open to learning new ideas and growing as individuals would invest time and energy to empower their employees to achieve their respective career goals and aspirations as opposed to managers that perpetuate the same management style that they are comfortable with. Consequently, depending on the manager’s affinity for learning and development, the levels of autonomy and control will follow.

Employees also have an ability to grow and develop. Although a particular management style may be rather prescriptive and rigid, an employee’s ability to be trained and learn his role may directly influence a manager’s decision to allow more freedom and independence. A manager may see potential in an

employee and if he is able to “learn the ropes”; managers will tend to entrust more responsibility to the employee. Respondents highlighted these themes as follows;

- *“...learning and the ability to be open to that learning is probably the single most important thing.”*
- *“He is running a R40 billion rand business, why? I have worked with him now for 12 or 13 years, I don’t know of one situation that I have ever seen him encounter where he hasn’t analyzed what happened, and built that into his own business model, his own mental model of the world. So he is constantly in a learning mode and he is saying this situation warrants me to think this way and he can grow at that rate.”*
- *“...afterwards, do you allow people to reflect and to say ‘we could have done it better, we could learn from that, this is how we could do it, I think I could rather do that role in the team next time because I think I could do that better.’”*

5.4 Conclusion on Findings

The results from the five questions generated aggregate results of significance and validity. The results demonstrated both support of the existing literature regarding the dilemma of autonomy versus control. In addition, the findings unearthed profound and unique insights delving into the mechanics and depth of management practices.

In Chapter 6, the results from the research process regarding the dilemma under review are discussed in more detail.

Chapter 6: Discussion of Results

6.1 Introduction

The research findings are discussed in more detail in this chapter and are directly linked back to the literature in Chapter 2. The research questions and in-depth interview questions utilised in this study were informed by the body of existing literature regarding autonomy and/or control. The level of data achieved in seeking to find answers to the five main research questions was gathered from a process of 16 in-depth interviews with experts in the field of management as well as HR. The data coding and analysis allowed for the aggregation and refinement of the data, providing insights into the respective components and differentiating features underpinning the paradox of autonomy and control. The frequency ranking technique allowed for the content to be ranked according to the regularity of comments by the respondents.

The dilemma under review is not an entirely elusive concept; the research results discussed in this chapter contribute to an enhanced understanding in respect to the theory published to date on this subject. The relevance of the results and literature in the context of this study will be explored in this section.

6.2 Research Question 1

Are managers able to adopt mutually exclusive autonomy or control management practices?

Research question 1 sought to clarify whether managers are able to adopt an absolute control or autonomy type management practice. The results from the

in-depth interview, data coding and analysis phase of the research showed the following results;

6.2.1 Autonomy or Control is not Possible

The interviews highlighted the strong view that autonomy and control are not mutually exclusive. Across the 16 respondents (refer to Table 4), 11 felt that it would not be possible for managers to entrust employees with total autonomy. Employees do need some level of structure, guidance and direction. Similarly, on the opposite end of the spectrum, it would be equally unfeasible for managers to exert an extreme autocratic and rigid control on staff. Exclusive autonomy would create an ill-disciplined, confused and directionless environment that would soon degenerate into chaos. On the converse, an intense micro-management type of supervision would be exceptionally negative and destructive for employees and the organisation. Based on the frequency and aggregated counts, this perspective on autonomy or control was viewed as most significant.

In support of these results, it would be useful to refer back to the work of Ritzer (1993), in section 2.4.3.1, who clearly defined the nature of a tight, prescriptive control environment. In essence, this type of control has the danger of neglecting the human dimension, ignoring the notion that people have feelings, goals and aspirations and are not substitutes for automated machines. In contrast, absolute autonomy is equally not sustainable. Langfred (2004) in section 2.4.2.2 noted that high individual autonomy within teams can lead to lower performance. It thus becomes clear that extreme, autonomy or control is

not viable. Both poles have negative consequences for both employees and organisations.

6.2.2 Autonomy or Control is Possible

In certain and very unique circumstances absolute autonomy or control can be achieved. This perspective was ranked second with 3 counts as shown in Table 4 above. Absolute control may be possible in a situation where an employee is in a new job and the consequences of making a mistake are very high. A crisis situation of life and death where the stakes are high can demand total control.

Absolute autonomy can also exist in exceptional circumstances. Whilst it is doesn't seem viable in a management position, examples of individual self-management were identified. A trader of financial instruments can be left alone to trade and generate exceptional revenues for a company. It is possible that in the pursuit of exceptional returns, management will be tempted to overlook controls. An artist can have total autonomy to decide on a particular theme, which colours to use and when to paint. However, in the vast majority of cases, autonomy and control should co-exist.

The notion that absolute autonomy or control is in fact possible was not covered in the literature and possibly reflects a new perspective on managing in exceptional situations. Although, the applications are rather narrow, there may be benefit in broadening the usefulness of either one of the polar extremes to accommodate unusual circumstances.

6.3 Research Question 2

What are the possible outcomes of adopting a mutually exclusive, autonomy or control management practice for employees and organisations?

Research question 2 sought to understand the consequences and implications of employing absolute management practices of autonomy or control; for both employees and organisations. Whilst autonomy and control may have exceptionally valuable characteristics as well as benefits for employees and organisations, each practice in isolation can have devastating consequences. Extreme control can create a suffocating environment where employees become despondent and disengaged.

Any benefits of control such as efficiency and predictability will be short-lived. Extreme autonomy on the other hand will introduce exceptionally high risk into an organisation and will engender disarray and possibly turmoil. The negative consequences of either extreme over time will neutralise the possible benefits of management's positive intent. The results from the in-depth interviews, data coding and analysis phase of the research highlighted the outcomes of mutually exclusive management practices of autonomy and control, which enhanced the current literature as discussed below;

6.3.1 Control Creates a Suffocating Environment

The negative consequences of an extreme controlling environment can be exceptionally toxic. Employees, with a total of 8 counts (refer to Table 5), will perceive the working environment to be stifling and suffocating. People tend to

respond negatively when told what to do; a natural resistance to control will be set off. The human spirit defies a dictatorial instruction to perform in a robotic and lifeless fashion. Intrinsicly, employees have a need to express themselves with creativity and originality. Levels of energy and vigour are accessed through levels of autonomy and self-management. However, when management impose acute levels of tight management control, employees feel the energy and vitality drawn from them. Employees will become withdrawn, disinterested and disengaged and will respond by fulfilling their tasks with the minimum effort required. The organisation's culture will be characterised with low levels of trust and collaboration. Employees will fear management; mistakes and failures will be hidden because of the perceived consequences resulting in an environment of low innovation.

Taylor (2010), in section 2.4.3.2, expressed the notion that an external locus of control forced on employees, will wipe out employee motivation and performance, which emerges in the results described above. Trust, which is the glue that aligns and connects managers and employees in their joint pursuit of high performance, will be eroded. Consistent with the results above, Falk & Kosveld (2006), in section 2.4.3.2, found that the majority of employees actually display a control adverse behaviour in extreme levels of management resulting in poor performance. The research result therefore supports this literature as it speaks to the destructive and suffocating nature of prescribing a stifling, military control type of environment.

6.3.2 Control can Influence Short Term Success

The notion of control influencing the short term success of employees and organisations was ranked second in the frequency ranking with 5 respondents. Naturally, managers will easily lean towards applying excessive control in managing staff. The need for consistent, predictable and efficient performance will entice managers to overlook the human dimension regarding their staff and focus on getting the job done. A high control management style may achieve some “quick wins” with short term benefits. However, the destructive nature of high control will ensure that the benefits are not sustainable and are relatively short-lived. The damage to the morale, culture and manager/employee relationship could be devastating.

In section 2.4.3.2, Falk & Kosveld (2006), wrote about the hierarchical and military command and control management style within organisations. This management type may have short term benefits as experienced in the military; however, employees within organisations will tend to resist this approach. In the same journal, Falk & Kosveld (2006) exhort managers to consider carefully the “hidden costs” (p. 1612) of control on the long term sustainability of the organisation.

6.3.3 Too much Autonomy

Ranked third with a count of 2 across the 16 interviewees (refer to Table 5) is the view that excessive autonomy can be detrimental. Whilst autonomy is generally associated with positive and constructive attributes, too much autonomy is unfavourable. Self-management appears to grant employees the

freedom and liberty to achieve success without the negative aspects of management, however, the lack of guidance and structure can immobilise and disrupt high performance. Management need to steer employees in the right direction with regular feedback. Management also need to coordinate employee's tasks and activities to ensure high productivity. Excessive employee independence results in isolation and a detachment from the organisation's goals and objectives. Based on the frequency and aggregated counts, this component of the dilemma was viewed as significant.

In support of these results, one should refer back to the work of Langfred (2007) in section 2.4.2, who clearly articulated the danger of excessive autonomy by highlighting the importance of giving employees the tools and skills to manage themselves to avert employees from drowning in their own independence. In the same section, Haas (2010) highlighted the risk of self management of employees in respect to their physical location. Consequently, the research findings corroborated the literature highlighting the danger of granting excessive autonomy at the expense of control. Langfred (2007), in section 2.4.2, noted that autonomy may not be in the best interest of the organisation's objectives. Employees are at risk of drifting away from the firm's goals.

6.4 Research Question 3

Are managers able to simultaneously combine combinations of autonomy and control management practices to improve employee and organisational performance?

Research question 3 sought to understand whether managers would be able to merge various blends of control and autonomy. Managers that are able to optimise the right balance may be well poised to enhance employee and organisation performance. Autonomy and control seem to be paradoxical and contradictory. However, the two concepts are in fact able to co-exist. Managers are able to view the opposing forces as complimentary and inclusive, both should be visible and operational. Autonomy and control will have diverse meanings for different settings. The correct dose of autonomy and control will be dynamic and will need to be adjusted as the variables change. The results of the in-depth interviews, data coding and analysis phase of the research showed the following results;

6.4.1 The Meaning of Control

Control can have varied interpretations which will likely affect the ability to merge levels of autonomy. If control is perceived as prescriptive, autocratic and dictatorial, autonomy and self-management will remain polarised. However, a more indirect and subtle type of control will certainly accommodate levels of independence and freedom. Managers can develop a level of comfort from monitoring from a distance and inculcating a strong belief system that fosters a culture of accountability. Managers need to feel a level of control whilst employees need to feel a level of freedom. The two requirements can co-exist if the human spirit is allowed a degree of expression.

In support of these results, one should refer back to the work of Simons (1995) in section 2.4.4; who enumerated 4 levers of control. The direct levers included

boundary systems that had formally stated rules and prescriptions as well as interactive control systems that managers use to involve themselves regularly and personally in the activities of employees. The indirect levers enabling autonomy to flourish included diagnostic control systems. These systems are able to monitor outcomes as well as belief systems which define values, purpose and direction. Nayar (2010) in section 2.5.3 support this notion that culture can be an effective indirect control mechanism that helps foster autonomy.

Another example of an indirect, yet effective control mechanism is the balanced scorecard, designed and popularised by Kaplan & Norton (1996), as described in section 2.4.3.3. A balanced scorecard allows managers to track and monitor a broad range of employee and organisational metrics to ensure that the employee activities are aligned to the stated strategy and performance goals. Employees negative perception of control will be minimised and even neutralised through the effective use of the balanced score card.

6.4.2 The Importance of Autonomy

The underlying principle expressed by the respondents regarding the importance of autonomy is the employee's aspirant goal of relative freedom and self-management. Employees will feel motivated and empowered if managers grant them independence to achieve their joint goals and targets. Autonomy involves more of a partnership between manager and employee than a hierarchical downward manager/subordinate relationship. Autonomy will

engender intrinsic motivation in employees as they will be consulted and included in the decision making process.

The above findings are consistent with the literature in section 2.4.2. Ryan & Deci (2000), refer to autonomy as the experience of integration and freedom. The ability to express one's creativity and originality. Employees will more likely feel empowered and enrolled to reach levels of fulfilment and self-actualisation. Hamel (2007) felt that employees within an environment of autonomy will be motivated to strive to achieve high performance in a sustainable manner. Pink (2009) noted that the notion of autonomy is a deep seated need rooted in the psyche of all human beings and is an important factor underlying the motivation of staff.

6.4.3 Combinations of Autonomy and Control

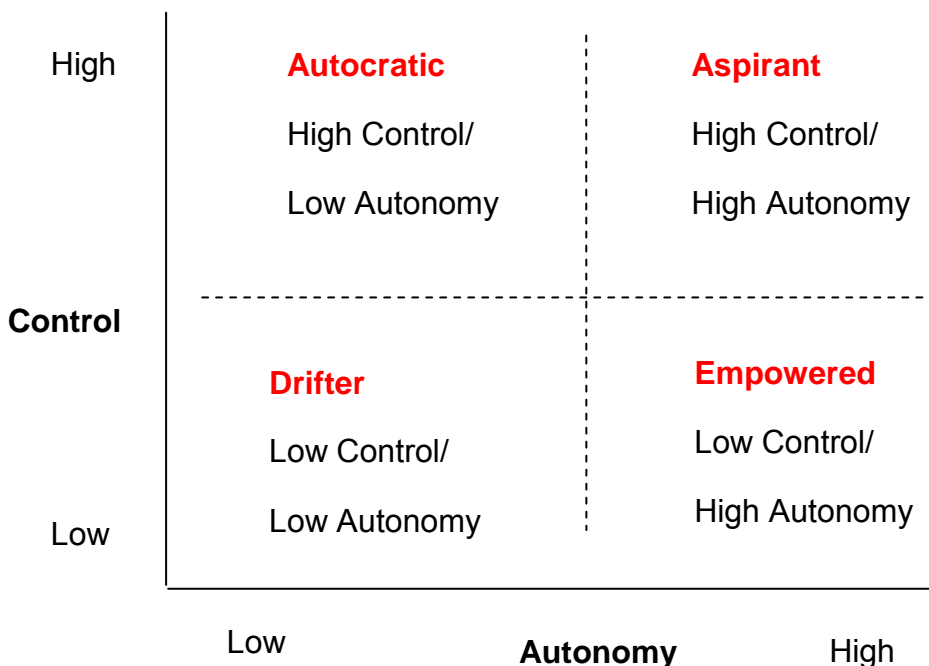
Managers are able to combine the benefits of autonomy and control to achieve an optimal balance. The notion of management control contains essential attributes that contribute to the long term success of an organisation. Autonomy will also include vital elements essential to the company's ability to unleash the potential of their employees. The two critical management practices are not mutually exclusive, rather, both are simultaneously crucial, they can and must co-exist.

The management approach towards this dilemma is not a linear focus on either autonomy or control, rather both should be embraced and leveraged. Adopting the two forces will create a natural, positive tension as a manager experiments with different combinations within different circumstances. There is no ideal

balance, the tensions are dynamic and as the internal or external environment adjusts, so the current combination will likely change. Managers are typically pre-disposed to one particular management style, either autonomy or control, based on a variety of different reasons. However, it is plausible for managers to adopt a combination of the two seemingly opposing styles.

As a result of the insightful findings elicited from the respondents a two-by-two grid was developed, termed the Dynamic Management Paradox Model, as depicted in figure 7 below. The model describes four different permutations of the two inter-related forces. These quadrants were developed as a result of ideas expressed by the interviewees in an attempt to understand the dilemma under review. The inputs were collated and the model was developed to graphically represent their contribution. Each quadrant was named to accurately identify the varying perspectives.

Figure 7 : The Revised Dynamic Management Paradox Model



The above grid depicts varying blends of autonomy and management control practices. The top left quadrant reflects an **autocratic** type of management style reflecting high control with little autonomy. Organisations in this quadrant typically have a rigid hierarchical structure with many processes, policies and procedures. The management approach in the banking industry, a highly regulated industry, is a classic example of this management style.

The advantage of this approach for management is that it gives managers an efficient management tool to ensure compliance to company processes and procedures. However, employees will perceive this management style to be prescriptive, demeaning and disempowering. It may be an effective approach in the short term but it is not sustainable. Staff will become increasingly disengaged and hostile.

On the other end of the spectrum, the bottom right quadrant portrays an **empowered** style characterised by high levels of autonomy with low levels of control. Employees are granted high levels of freedom to be creative and innovative and are expected to have high levels of self-management to drive the organisation's performance. Examples of organisations in this quadrant are companies with an intense sales orientation or perhaps companies operating in the high-tech industry that may have development teams across the globe.

Although employees may feel empowered and motivated, low levels of control will hamper management's ability to adequately supervise and monitor employee's performance. In addition, low levels of control will adversely affect management's capacity to co-ordinate activities and projects across the group.

Teams will tend to be isolated resulting in low levels of consistency and standardisation across the organisation which could directly impact customer service and ultimately the company's brand.

The bottom left quadrant is characterised by managers that are **drifters**. This approach depicts a disinterested and overly casual management style, characterised by low control as well as low autonomy. This laid-back management approach contains little benefits for either employees or companies. Organisations that foster this type of management mode will typically be comfortable staying in this quadrant for too long are at risk of either going out of business or perhaps a soft target for a takeover. Drifters can refer to tired managers that are unable to change with the environment. In this fast moving global economy companies that tolerate drifters will soon cease to exist.

At the other extreme, the top right quadrant reflects high control and high autonomy, termed the **aspirant** manager. At first glance, this combination appears to be paradoxical, a fusing of two opposites that are mutually exclusive. Is it possible to have high levels of freedom and empowerment whilst retaining high levels of tight management control? The insight to answer this question refers to the definition of control. If control is defined as direct control; an autocratic, dictatorial and prescriptive management style, then indeed, it is difficult to imagine how the two polar extremes can co-exist.

However, if the definition of control is indirect control; a strong culture, values, guidelines, then this quadrant becomes the aspirant goal of a manager and company. This quadrant reflects the benefits of combining high levels of

autonomy as well as high levels of control. Management are able to retain control whilst employees are engaged, focused and motivated. In aspirant companies, managers are encouraged to develop indirect control mechanisms that do not engender the negativity commonly associated with direct, tight control. Critical oversight and monitoring which allows for the effective managing of risk whilst enabling co-ordination across the organisation can be achieved. Employees can benefit greatly by enjoying the freedom of autonomy within pre-determined deliberate guidelines. If managers are able to strike the correct balance, employees are well placed to increase their personal performance in a sustainable and enduring way, enabling the company to achieve its corporate objectives, a win-win partnership.

The literature is consistent with the above findings. In section 2.3, Smith (2011) asserts that the concept paradox refers to “contradictory, yet interrelated elements (dualities) that exist simultaneously and persist over time (p. 387).” Managers are able to combine autonomy and control. Haas (2010) in section 2.4.4 notes that employees that are able to engage in exploration and exploitation simultaneously rather than separately or sequentially will have a higher potential to be motivated and enrolled in their jobs. Collins & Porras (1994) in the same section discuss the aspirant nature of combining high levels of autonomy and control, they advise that “highly liberated companies liberate themselves with the Genius of the AND – the ability to embrace both extremes of a number of dimensions at the same time. Instead of choosing between A OR B, they figure out a way to have both A AND B” (pg. 44).

6.5 Research Question 4:

What are the possible outcomes of simultaneously adopting autonomy and control type management practices for employees and organisations?

Research question 4 sought to understand the possible outcomes of fusing both autonomy and control. High levels of the two forces will benefit employees and ultimately their respective organisations.

6.5.1 The Benefits of Autonomy and Control

Management have a responsibility to ensure that employees are aligned to the company's vision, strategy and goals. Employees have a need to express their individuality, creativity and independence. The outcome of successfully merging the two perspectives will lead to a constructive, collective engagement that will enhance employee as well as company performance. Employees have a need to express their individuality and uniqueness within a framework of defined parameters. A framework gives employees the security of knowing where the boundaries and limitations are drawn. Employees are granted the understanding of the formation of the company's "playing field". The configuration will vary depending on a multitude of different factors, however, within this defined structure; employees have the freedom to engage deeply in their jobs.

Autonomy and control are no longer mutually exclusive forces, represented by "either/or" management practices. Management are able to straddle the ongoing paradox and dynamically balance the horns of the dilemma. The

balancing of autonomy and control will allow employees to make decisions that will encourage discretionary effort driven by intrinsic motivation. Employees that are empowered within a structure will be energised and driven to accomplish their performance goals. Staff within this context are able to view their jobs as an opportunity to grow and develop their distinct contribution. Individuals within an organisation are not automated beings; rather they are people with an inherent spirit that craves creativity and individuality.

Generally, management are inclined to impose tight management control to minimise risk and exert efficient and uncomplicated control over employees, however, employees yearn to express their independence. The insight gleaned from respondents refers to the notion that employee's desire autonomy yet within parameters and boundaries. Unbridled freedom without applicable guidelines can be more destructive than tight control. The goal of management is to constantly marry the two poles in a "yin yang" type formation in respect to the specific circumstances in an ever-changing dynamic manner.

In fact, employees want management to set the guidelines in order for them to understand what is expected of them. Clear, unambiguous communication is far more effective than a series of prescriptive rules and policies. Employees will respond positively when given freedom within a well understood "brief". Management are then able to leverage employee's inner drive whilst maintaining a reasonable oversight.

In a high control and high autonomy environment, it is not necessary for managers to be bogged down with monitoring tasks and activities; rather, they

are able to construct enough supervision within the business to enable themselves to be free in order to focus more strategically. Consequently, managers that are successful at balancing the two “opposites” are able to focus on the more important aspects of the concern as opposed to just the urgent. Managers can expend their time and energy developing and honing employee’s skills and competencies in a mutually beneficial relationship. A positive rapport between managers and employees will emerge, collectively striving to achieve the company’s goals.

Organisations will benefit greatly from this partnership. A united workforce at all levels of the company will foster a culture of teamwork and camaraderie. Reputational and operational risk will be monitored through indirect control, allowing employees space to experiment within limitations. Companies that allow employees to explore alternative avenues and perhaps sometimes fail have a greater propensity to generate new ideas and innovation. Embracing failure as a critical success factor for success is unusual but may give firms a powerful competitive advantage. A perspective of encouraging staff to fail in order to learn and innovate will typically occur in organisations that foster high autonomy with indirect control.

Employees that are able to fail will be encouraged to experiment, the critical ingredient necessary for continuous innovation. Companies with high doses of autonomy and control will encourage transparency, trust and integrity. Employees will not feel that management are supervising their daily routine, rather, they will feel empowered, which will contribute to a culture of

collaboration. Through optimising the two extremes, organisations will be able to develop a unique and sustainable competitive advantage.

The above findings are consistent with the literature in section 2.4.4, Lambe et al (2009) suggests that both autonomy and control enable employees to develop a sense of empowerment within a defined framework resulting in highly engaged employees. Simons (1995) in the same section supports this perspective by identifying different levers of control. He asserts that belief systems would allow employees to grow and flourish within a culture that mitigates the risk of non-compliance. Managers are able to have the necessary oversight without being perceived as overly prescriptive.

Regarding the perspective of balancing both autonomy and control, Johnson (1996, p 13) in section 2.3 asserts that “polarity management”, similar to paradox management, involves managing sets of opposites which cannot function independently. One particular solution cannot be selected at the expense of the other, management need to make an ongoing attempt to get “the best of both worlds” (p. 13). O’Reilly & Tushman (2007) in the same section refer to the tension between exploitation and exploration as ambidexterity. Exploitation is about control and exploration is about autonomy, whilst ambidexterity refers to doing both, the ability to successfully manage both conflicting opposites for the benefit of all stakeholders.

Lewis (2011) in section 2.4.4.2 highlights the benefits of autonomy and control for both employees and companies by clarifying the distinction between the “what”, referring to the notion of control and the “how” referring to the granting of

autonomy. Employees are then able to be empowered within defined parameters. Dewettinck & Buyens, (2006) in the same section note that there seems to be some preliminary evidence that both autonomy and management control may be invaluable in optimising performance within an organisation. The two extremes are in fact interrelated and mutually beneficial. Managers need to develop the essential skills necessary to strike the right balance between autonomy and control.

6.6 Research Question 5

What are the key determining factors that could influence a manager to adopt autonomy and/or control management practices?

Research question 5 sought to understand the core factors that influence the degree of autonomy or control as well as the respective combinations of autonomy and control adopted by managers in various situations. The respective factors have been ranked according to the frequency of the responses. Different factors will have varied weightings depending on the particular circumstances. The most influential factors are enumerated and explained below;

6.6.1 Culture

The most powerful factor that will influence manager's ability to strike the right balance between autonomy and control is culture. Culture refers to the inherent beliefs, practices and values of the people within an organisation. The culture has to be driven from the CEO, cascading down to the executive team all the

way down to the most junior staff. Culture represents the most powerful and indirect form of control whereby employees are compelled to align to the company's policies without the negative feelings of being subjected to an autocratic, prescriptive control management style. Culture unites employees to behave and conduct themselves in a particular fashion. Management are then able to foster a specific, unique ethos.

This perspective on culture was supported in the literature. Van den Steen (2010) in section 2.5.3 states that culture is a critical factor influencing a manager's ability to empower his employees to reach high levels of autonomy and productivity within the company's defined parameters. Shared beliefs and culture will influence the particular management styles. Nayar (2010) noted the importance of developing a culture of trust and transparency to fuse together the efforts of management and employees toward a united goal. Culture is the glue that binds the two seemingly opposing aspects; autonomy and control.

6.6.2 Different Industries

The specific industry will be a significant factor which will determine the levels of autonomy and control. Banking and mining will have different management control requirements relative to an IT or advertising business. Diverse industries have been conceived and developed differently, influencing the nature of the industry and respective management practices. The industry sets the tone for companies within a particular sector, defining the manner in which employees are managed.

This factor is supported in the literature. Cohen, Ledford & Spreitzer (1999) in section 2.5.4 assert that a specific industry may lend itself to a more autonomous type management style as opposed to a tight management control style. Managers are influenced by their environment and will align their management practices according to competitors and factors inherent within the industry. Lambe et al (2009) in the same section corroborates this view by highlighting the management style within a sales environment relative to other more process orientated environments.

6.6.3 Different Levels & Functions

The amount of autonomy or control that an employee experiences will depend on the level of work and the specific job. Typically, a CEO of a company will be given significant autonomy from the board to grow and develop the company. Indirect control measures, such as a balanced scorecard and financial targets will be used to measure his success. He will probably only need to report back to the board at the quarterly board meetings. In contrast, a low level employee that will need to carry out a defined set of processes on an assembly line will need to have higher doses of direct management control. Consequently, the higher the level, the more autonomy and indirect control will be employed. The lower the level, the less autonomy and more direct control will likely be prescribed. The specific function or job will also follow this pattern.

Literature regarding the specific level and job supported these findings as shown in section 2.4.5. Langfred (2007) noted that the specific job will influence the combination of autonomy and control. Certain jobs will require higher levels

of autonomy as opposed to other job types. Colquitt, Janz & Noe (1997) stated that knowledge workers will have different needs relating to autonomy and control than other types of workers. Two interviewees highlighted the theory regarding Stratified Systems Theory. Jacques (1985) postulated that the level of work will directly influence the need for direct management control. An organisation is divided into various levels of work depending on a number of factors. Based on the theory, the level of work will determine the extent of combinations of empowerment and control required.

6.6.4 Personality

The personality of a manager will also sway the particular levels of autonomy and control. It seems that the default management style of most managers is high control. Managers want to feel that they are in control, although this feeling of control may be delusional because there will always be many factors outside of their control. An environment of high autonomy demands that a manager put in place a deliberate and focused plan to engender high levels of employee empowerment. The success of implementing a culture of high autonomy will depend on the manager's character and personality. An autocratic, dictatorial management style will also be an expression of a certain personality type. To a lesser degree the personality of staff members will also determine the various levels of autonomy and control. Certain employees feel safe and secure in an environment of tight management control, whilst other employees desperately need high levels of freedom, independence and empowerment.

The respondents highlighted the centrality of managers as well as their employee's respective personalities in relation to the levels of autonomy and control within an organisation. In section 2.5.3, Langfred (2004) notes the importance of trust between employees and managers. Taylor (2010) in the same section asserts that certain trait-like tendencies are reasonably reliable in predicting whether individuals will attempt to control conflict or look for mutually beneficial solutions. Trust depends on a number of factors, including the character and integrity of the manager. Langfred (2004) adds that the personality trait or characteristic of trust can be defined as "benevolence, honesty, and competence" (p. 386). Consequently, the particular personality of the individuals involved will influence the levels of the two forces.

6.6.5 Different Companies

The particular company that an employee is employed by will have a bearing on the particular management style. Even within the same industry, different companies will reflect diverse perspectives regarding the levels of autonomy and control. The nature of the business may perhaps allow high levels of innovation and creativity which will be associated with high levels of autonomy. A stand-alone business will be vastly different to a multi-national company.

Whilst the concept of differing levels of jobs as well as industries were highlighted in the literature as important determinants of the management, the notion of different companies even within the same industry reflecting vastly different management practices was not covered. This insight may have been omitted in the literature because of the assumption that companies and their

respective competitors will tend to follow similar management styles. However, as a result of this research, it is apparent that companies are made up of different managers, employees and circumstances resulting in dissimilar management practices.

6.6.6 Leadership

Leaders play an inordinate amount of influence regarding the combinations of autonomy and control within companies. Typically, leadership refers primarily to the CEO as well as the executive team, who are responsible for engendering the ethos and culture of the organisation. Within this environment, managers are swayed to adopt a particular style that is consistent with the executive stance. Although any employee can display leadership qualities at any level of the company, it is the executive team that will have the greatest influence on the way managers manage their staff.

Leadership and culture are inextricably linked as the culture of an organisation is directly influenced and perpetuated by the CEO and executive team. In section 2.5.3 Van den Steen (2010) emphasises the critical role that culture will have on the management practices but does specifically refer to the role of leadership. However, the role leadership plays in the context of autonomy and control was a very strong determining factor highlighted by many respondents in the interviews. Respondents highlighted the situational leadership theory and cited this framework as a valuable tool to understand how a manager might leverage off different management practices for different employees within the same team.

6.6.7 Maturity

Maturity refers to the length of time that a company has been in existence. A new entrepreneurial “green fields” company will have different management needs to a better established, traditional organisation. A new venture will typically be more agile and responsive than a bigger, more mature organisation. Consequently, the dose of autonomy will tend to be higher in a newer, trendier business. However, on the other pole, more established organisations will tend to have more processes, procedures and rules enabling a more instructive and prescriptive control type environment.

Maturity as a factor influencing a company’s management practices was not specifically mentioned in the literature. However, it seems credible that organisations will be at different stages of their life cycle and consequently will have different management needs for autonomy and control.

6.6.8 Risk

A company’s appetite for risk will directly influence the level of control within an organisation. If management are risk averse and perceive the trading environment to contain high risk, the company will likely have high levels of control in the form of compliance to company procedures, policies and rules. On the other hand, companies that encourage employees to make mistakes in order to foster a culture of innovation and creativity will be less risk averse and engender higher levels of self-empowerment and autonomy. Inherent risk in a company will be influenced by the specific industry, the particular company as

well as the type of job. Government policies, regulatory bodies and associations will also be a determining factor regarding the management approach.

The perspective of risk as a determinant for the management stance regarding autonomy and control was not emphasised in the literature. It seems that risk will be an important factor influencing the need for close management supervision, monitoring and control. Employees with too much control could unleash significant damage to a company's profit and reputation. The global financial crisis as well as the much publicised recent investment trading desk losses are two current examples.

6.6.9 Employee Competence

The level of competence of employees will be an important factor that will influence the need for high levels of monitoring and control. An employee who is new on the job will have a much greater need for processes, procedures and policies than a competent and proficient person. It would be irresponsible and unreasonable to grant new-hire employees with high doses of independence and autonomy. However, management will be more compelled to allow competent staff high levels of freedom and empowerment as managers will be comfortable with high levels of oversight.

This insight was not covered in the literature. Managers that understand this determinant factor will be well placed to combine the right levels of autonomy and control for their staff depending on the competence of the employees. Too much supervision for competent staff will be stifling and suffocating whilst too little supervision for trainee staff will be unfair and frustrating for both parties.

Similarly, the right amount of independence will be dependent on the level of competence of the specific employee.

6.6.10 Business Environment

Employees work within companies; those companies operate within a particular business environment. The business landscape is influenced by various trends, cycles and location. The political and economic policies of a particular country will also affect the approach to business. Democratic, open societies will tend to encourage a more liberating and empowering business culture, whilst more draconian societies will be more inhibiting. Managers are not immune to their environments; consequently, their management practices will sway depending on the particular business environment that they operate in.

The business environment was not a factor mentioned in the literature. Although the business environment may seem to be a secondary influence, the novel perception gleaned from the interviewees is propensity to which the business environment will affect the way managers choose to manage. Management choices regarding which side of the autonomy/control paradox will be influenced by the broader business setting.

6.6.11 Trust

Trust between managers and employees will allow managers to grant more independence and autonomy to their staff. Trust emerges as a result of employees performing according to expectations on a consistent basis. Trust will allow managers to withdraw and allow employees to express themselves in their own unique and distinct way. Employees will be given direction and

guidance and then granted freedom to determine the “how”. If trust is broken, a tight management control style will be enforced until trust is re-established. Managers will need to manage new employees with tight controls until trust in the person and their abilities are secured, then gradually more autonomy will be granted. Autonomy and control is dynamic and will oscillate depending on the level of trust between managers and employees.

Trust as a factor influencing autonomy and control is a concept that was highlighted in the literature. In section 2.5.2, Langfred (2004) states that the higher the level of trust, the less likely will be the need for monitoring and control. In section 2.5.3, Nayar (2010) highlights the connection between culture and trust. He asserts that a culture of trust through transparency is a critical component to break through the manager/employee divide. Trust will enable an open environment where appropriate levels of autonomy and control can be nurtured. However, the dynamic nature of trust resulting in varying combinations of autonomy and control was not covered in the literature.

6.6.12 Structure

The specific organisational design will influence management practices within an organisation. A very hierarchical structure will encourage a command and control management style. This configuration will inhibit autonomy and limit the agility and dexterity of the company. Managers with an inherent leaning toward granting employees self-empowerment and independence will find this type of structure frustrating and obstructive. Similarly, a flat and open structure will enable autonomy but increase disorder and risk.

The structure of an organisation was not specifically covered in the literature. However, structure will usually follow a company's strategy and will influence the levels of autonomy and control. Organisations will tend to impose a particular structure in line with the culture and ethos of the company.

6.6.13 Technology as an Enabler

The adoption of technology by a company may influence the levels of autonomy and control. Technology can allow managers to exert control more easier than in the past. However, the type of control will be employed through more indirect means. Technology will allow managers to monitor and control performance without controlling employees. The significant benefit of technology will grant managers oversight without the employee's negative perception of being controlled. The result may be high levels of autonomy with high levels of control which will enable the two diverse management practices to co-exist. However, if managers abuse technology to over-control employees, the benefits will quickly evaporate and suspicion and distrust of management will quickly emerge.

The notion that technology may influence management practices was not covered in the literature review. Over the past ten years, the use of technology in companies has expanded exponentially and has become increasingly ubiquitous. Technology is a neutral enabler and can be leveraged positively or negatively depending on management's discretion.

6.6.14 Generational

Managers that are from the "baby boom" generation started their careers when the study of management was in its infancy. In the early days, management

was developed from principles borrowed from the military command and control approach. Organisations were designed based on a traditional hierarchical structure which gave power based on a manager's position in the company's structure. These management practices have become ingrained and established among the older generation of managers and employees. Younger managers and employees known as the "Y or Z generation" have a greater affinity for autonomy and independence in the work environment. These generational perspectives will influence the management respective management styles.

Generational differences regarding autonomy and control was not highlighted in the literature. As time moves on, the "baby boom" generation will retire from corporate life and the "Y and Z generations" will become more pervasive, lending support to a more autonomous working environment.

6.6.15 Size of the Business

The size of the company will affect the respective management practices. Larger organisations tend to have more structure and have a greater need to control risk by prescribing policies, procedures, rules and guidelines. As a business grows and spans different locations, management need to exercise control through rigid governance. Smaller companies are more able to allow employees more latitude and freedom due to the closer relationship between managers and their staff. The specific nature of smaller company's allows the business to have less bureaucracy and grant employees more liberty.

This insight was not covered in the literature as a factor influencing management practices. Small companies can be overly controlling whilst large businesses can be exceptionally autonomous. The size of the business is not a definitive factor that will determine the specific style of the managers; rather it is a contributing factor that may affect the levels of autonomy and control.

6.6.16 Performance Management

Performance management refers to the systems, processes and metrics that enable management to measure employee performance. Performance management can be an effective control mechanism by allowing managers to reward good performance. When managers allocate salary increases, bonuses and incentives based on performance, employees quickly understand the “rules of the game”. Managers are therefore able to impose indirect control in an organisation without it being perceived as prescriptive and negative. Performance management as an indirect control mechanism is especially effective in high performing organisations and companies that have built their reward systems based on a meritocracy. Companies with well advanced performance management systems are able to simultaneously balance the paradox and achieve high levels autonomy as well as control.

The literature captured the essence of performance management systems as discussed in section 2.4.3.3, Kaplan & Norton (1996) developed the balanced score card to help managers track employees on a broader scale as opposed to the traditional, backward looking, financial metrics. The balanced score card allows managers to introduce indirect controls within an organisation without the

associated negative implications of tight management control. Simons (1995) in section 2.4.4 captured the notion of performance management by referring to diagnostic and interactive control systems which assist managers to indirectly monitor performance.

6.6.17 Ability to Learn

Employees who are able to learn how to do their job efficiently and effectively have less need for supervision. The role of a manager is to enable employees to do their job in an optimum way. If an employee can grasp the necessary techniques for a particular job, then managers are able to withdraw and grant employees more freedom and independence. An employee's ability to learn will vary depending on a variety of different reasons. However, companies that invest time and money into training and developing their staff will find that their managers are able to give their employees more autonomy which will free up their time to be more productive and effective. Consequently, the notion of allowing employees the space to learn and develop is related to the levels of autonomy and control within organisations.

This novel insight gleaned from the interviews was not highlighted in the literature. The benefits of allowing employees to be trained and developed seem clear and apparent for companies, managers and employees. Employee's ability to learn will be a factor which will influence the need for control and potential for granting employees autonomy.

6.7 Conclusion

Insights regarding the dilemma of autonomy and control gleaned from the 16 respondents have been rich and dense. New, fresh understanding of the components of the dilemma under review has been uncovered. Autonomy and control are able to co-exist to form a powerful combination that management are able to unleash. Both poles are simultaneously necessary and essential for the effective management of staff. There are 17 main factors that will influence the various combinations of the two forces. The outcomes for organisations, managers and employees are significant and noteworthy.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the autonomy and control model is presented as a result of the findings and insights gleaned from the respondents as discussed in Chapter 5 and chapter 6. Recommendations for managers are presented based on these findings. Finally, recommendations for future research are discussed.

7.2 Synthesis of Research Data

This research combines the foundation literature that has preceded it and integrates the findings with new knowledge and understanding uncovered through the interview process. Respondents revealed deep wisdom that linked directly back to the five questions presented in Chapter 3.

The research findings presented in Chapter 6 are consistent with the existing literature. However, this study contributes to the broader theory and expands the subject by teasing out the complexity of the apparent conflicting management practices. The first contribution relates to the interdependence of autonomy and control in the following manner;

- Autonomy and control can and must co-exist; therefore, the management dilemma is not autonomy versus control in an absolute manner, rather defining the appropriate combinations of the two poles relative to each specific situation.
- Dilemmas and paradoxes should be managed dynamically rather than be solved.

- Effective management is the ability to straddle the horns of a dilemma with the deliberate goal and aspiration to optimise both simultaneously.

In addition, this study showed empirical support for the literature relating to management's ability to wrestle the dilemma under review and leverage off it to increase employee engagement and performance as presented by Smith & Lewis (2011).

The second contribution of this study relates to the understanding of control and the respective implications thereof. Direct and prescriptive management control may be an efficient and useful management tool in the short term. However, over time, employees will feel more and more disempowered and will disengage from management as they will perceive the working environment to be stifling and suffocating. Attempts by management to impose tight management controls over their employees will be met with resistance, frustration and anger. Employees are individuals who have a free and creative spirit; they yearn to be granted the opportunity to contribute to a company in a distinct and valuable manner. Whilst the notion of autonomy and freedom are undeniably deep yearnings of most employees, without a constructive framework with clear guidelines, absolute autonomy will degenerate into confusion and chaos.

Therefore, management should rather elect to grant employees autonomy by employing indirect control as opposed to direct control. Indirect control will give management all the benefits of oversight and risk management with very few of the inherent limitations of direct control. Management are able to adopt high levels of autonomy as well as high levels of (indirect) control. A win-win

outcome is possible; employees will feel motivated and fulfilled, whilst management will have the necessary monitoring and control through culture, frameworks and guidelines.

The third contribution of this study relates to the breadth and span of factors that will likely contribute to the management dilemma under review. Respondents highlighted seventeen key factors, ranked according to the frequency of the response that will likely influence the levels of autonomy and control within organisations. The factors are wide-ranging and offer useful insights for managers to consider regarding striking the right balance regarding the management of their staff.

As a result of this new perspective, outcomes for all stakeholders will be dependent on manager's ability to create the environment with appropriate management practices that enable employees to perform to the best of their ability without the negative associations of tight management. If management are successful in achieving this balance, employees will be intrinsically motivated to strive towards empowerment and high performance. These companies will enjoy long-term, sustainable high performance.

7.3 The Autonomy and Control Interdependence Model

7.3.1 Introduction

A graphic representation of the dilemma under review based on the findings of this research as discussed above in Chapter 6. The two models are presented below in Figure 8 and Figure 9 respectively highlighting the novel and rich insights gleaned from the 16 respondents. Management have a sacrosanct

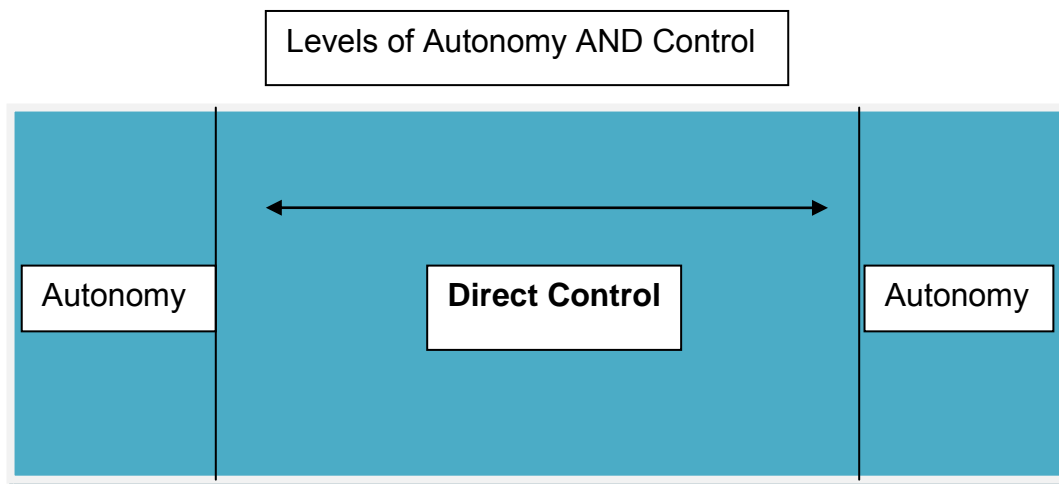
responsibility to ensure that the organisation is shielded from any undue risks and potential liabilities. The notion of granting employees freedom and independence will be achieved through a broad, autonomous management approach as depicted below in Figure 8. Whilst the recent management dogma suggest that autonomy is the preferred style, it remains a company imperative to ensure that the right doses of monitoring and control are implemented and adhered to. However, management will always have the choice to deploy a direct or indirect control approach which will have diverse outcomes for employees and their respective organisations.

7.3.2 Direct Control

Regarding the direct control model, typically, management are able to gain tight control of employees with little effort, leveraging off processes, procedures and policies. Management deceive themselves and are fooled into believing that this approach can be effective on an on-going and sustainable way. As depicted in Figure 8 below, levels of control are high with very low levels of autonomy. Management will need to expend inordinate amounts of time to manage employees tasks and activities. Staff will feel disempowered and will require constant supervision to ensure that the job is completed satisfactorily. Individuals don't like to have to follow instructions in a prescriptive manner. The direct model will stifle creativity and innovation. It will be extremely unusual for employees to contribute any discretionary effort. In addition, managers will not allow the levels of autonomy to increase as they will perceive increased independence as losing control.

Although autonomy and control can co-exist, the two extremes don't seem to be compatible; tensions between the two polar opposites will engender an awkward push and pull with direct control being the dominant force. The ability to optimally balance the management dilemma will be constantly eroded as managers will keep defaulting to the high control and low autonomy approach.

Figure 8: The Autonomy & Direct Control Model



7.3.3 Indirect Control

The Integrative Autonomy & Indirect Control Model as depicted below in Figure 9, has been developed based on the findings in Chapter 6. Autonomy and control are depicted horizontally divided by an opaque, dotted line. The two equal forces continuously reinforce and leverage off each other in an increasingly positive, co-existence relationship. Autonomy and indirect control create a healthy tension that nurtures a mutually symbiotic relationship. Employees are granted high levels of freedom and independence whilst managers are able to ensure that the company's risks and potential liabilities

are controlled. The reason for this unusual combination is because management have elected to engender an atmosphere of trust and mutual cooperation through pro-actively developing the company's unique culture, allowing managers to retain indirect oversight. This proposed approach will result in a win-win outcome for employees, managers and ultimately their respective organisations.

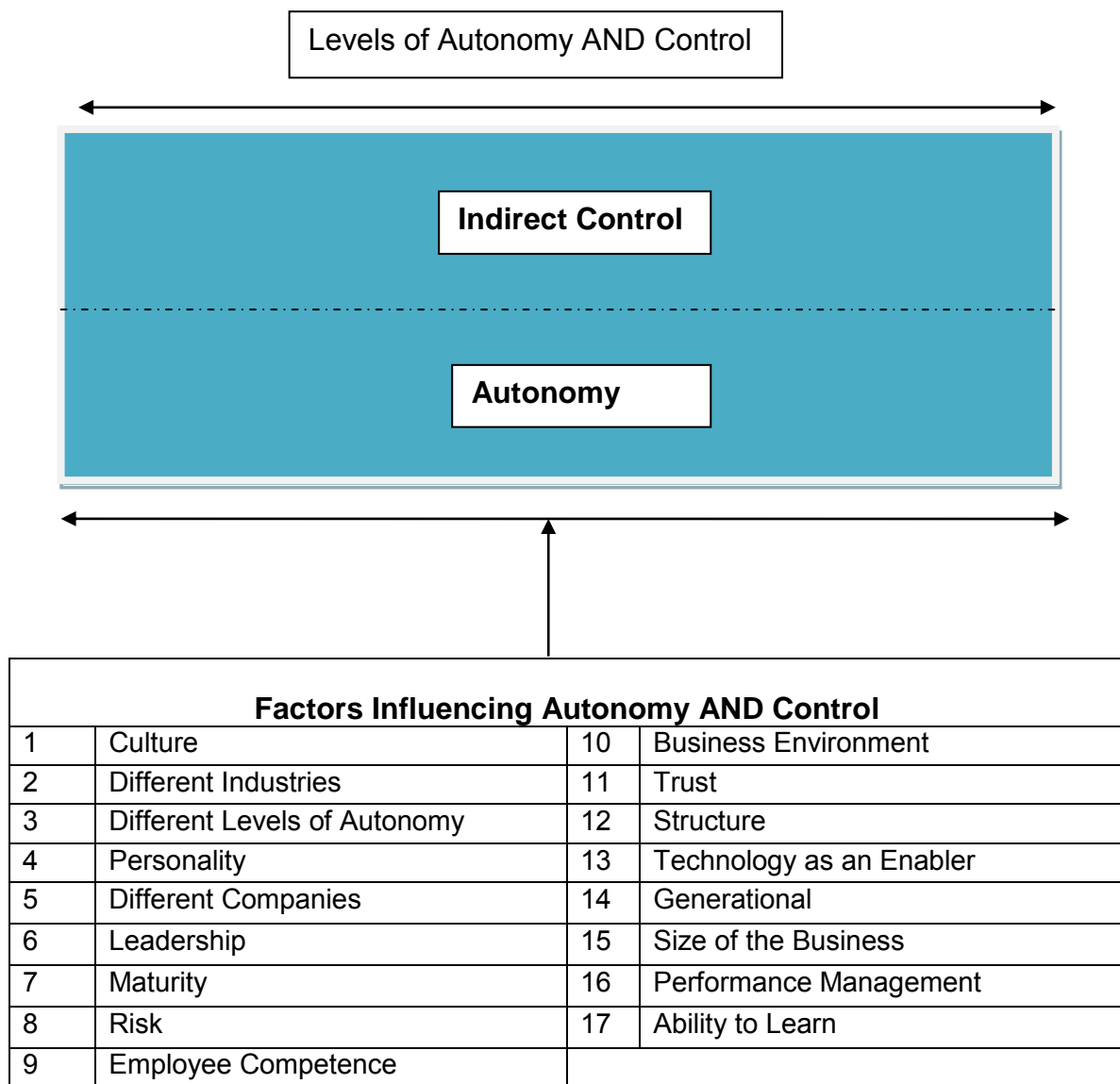
The negative response of employees, typically associated with an instructive and prescriptive management style, is neutralised allowing for independence and freedom to sprout. The powerful outcome is increased creativity and innovation from employees whilst retaining an appropriate level of monitoring and control for management. In addition, managers will need to consider the seventeen factors discussed above which will affect the levels of autonomy and control to varying degrees. Not all the factors will impact the dilemma under review, however, industries and companies are changing at an increasingly fast pace, and factors that weren't historically relevant, may suddenly become significant.

Autonomy and indirect control will be optimised for managers and employees when the relevant factors mentioned in this research are in place. The Indirect management factors that will foster high levels of autonomy and control are; culture, leadership, the emotional maturity of the manager, trust and lastly, well developed performance management systems.

Indirect control that will engender high levels of autonomy will be most effective when employees display a number of the following factors; a personality that

embraces autonomy, emotional maturity, competence and skill of the job, trust between staff and managers, the relative age as well as the employee’s ability and willingness to learn and grow. These factors create the soil and fertiliser that will allow autonomy and indirect control to flourish.

Figure 9: The Integrative Autonomy & Indirect Control Model



7.4 Recommendations for Managers

Through indirect control, managers are able to blend high levels of autonomy and control. Employees will feel energised and empowered, without the associated negative resistance usually associated with a tight management style. The management of employees has become increasingly complex and fraught with difficult challenges. Employees are endowed with a spirit that yearns for freedom and empowerment, however within the ambit of adequate monitoring and oversight. Managers should resist their pre-disposition and temptation to default to a direct management approach. Indirect control demands a deliberate and comprehensive plan to create a working environment that fosters teamwork and allows employees to reach levels of self-actualisation whilst simultaneously allowing managers the ability to maintain the necessary oversight.

Managers should assess the 17 factors listed above and identify the key factors that are already positively influencing the levels of autonomy and indirect control. Once identified, these factors should be nurtured and enhanced. Regarding factors that are not well embedded in a manager's business unit or division, there is a compelling case for a manager to start introducing these factors into his management toolkit to influence his style with the deliberate intention positively increase the levels of autonomy and indirect control.

7.5 Recommendations for Future Research

The topic of this research is relatively new in academic terms; consequently, the choice of research design has been an exploratory type. The research project has been aimed at uncovering insights regarding management's ability to combine levels of autonomy and control. Future research may be useful to confirm and validate the findings of this research.

Three areas for further research are suggested below;

1. This research project was based on interviews with 16 experts in the field of management and HR. Further research may be important to elicit responses from a broader sample of middle managers that may have a different and perhaps more practical perspective regarding the dilemma under review.
2. The notion of indirect control which allows for high levels of oversight simultaneously with high levels of autonomy is a new and untested theory. Further research may be valuable to develop techniques and devices to assist managers to successfully implement indirect control within their environments.
3. The research sought to unravel the key factors that may influence the dilemma under review, in total 17 factors were identified. Further research may be useful to quantitatively test whether in fact these are the key factors and confirm their relative ratings.

7.6 Conclusion

Managers struggle with the paradox of granting employees autonomy whilst still retaining control. Management is not necessarily an intuitive science. This research project has attempted to understand the inherent tensions between the two forces on a deeper level and offer a proposed management framework to help managers navigate the complexity of this dilemma. High levels of freedom and independence for employees can be achieved when management elect to adopt indirect management control such as creating a strong corporate culture or managing outputs as opposed to tasks and activities. Management are then able to have the necessary monitoring and oversight in an environment that allows employees the autonomy that they desire, in effect, solving the dilemma under review. In addition, seventeen factors were identified that will influence the levels and combinations of autonomy and control which will result in varying outcomes for employees and their respective organisations.

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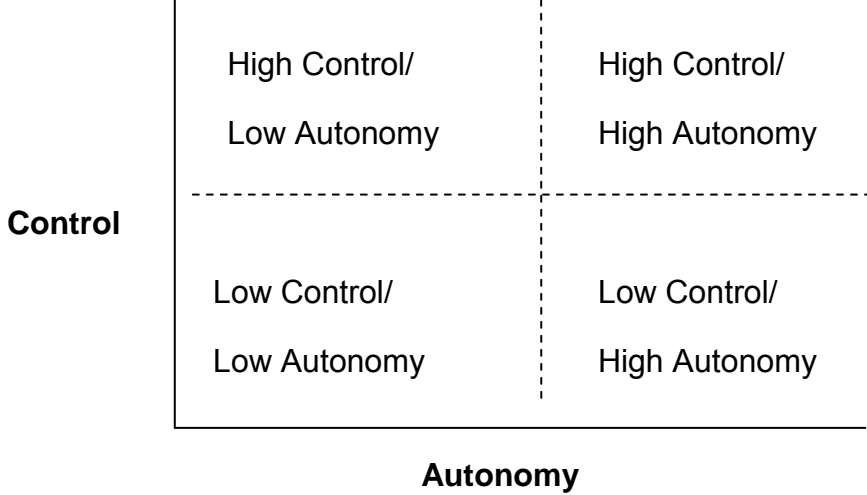
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Appendices:

9.1 Appendix 1: Interview Guide:

1	<p>Are the management practices of autonomy and control completely polarised and mutually exclusive as displayed on the Management Continuum below?</p> 
2	<p>If autonomy and control were on opposite sides of a management continuum, which of the two management approaches would be considered the most effective?</p>
3	<p>Are various combinations of management practices of autonomy and control possible - as depicted in the four quadrants in the Management Grid below?</p> 
4	<p>What are the possible tensions and trade off's between the two practices?</p>
5	<p>What are the factors (employee and/or manager) that may</p>

	influence the choice of which management practice/s (autonomy and control) to employ?
6	What are the organisational factors that may influence the choice of which management practice/s (autonomy and control) to employ?
7	Which factors are the most dominant and why?
8	Is it possible for a manager to effectively manage the management practice dilemma?
9	What are the possible outcomes of the various management practices for employees?
10	What are the possible outcomes of the various management practices for organisations?

9.2 Appendix 2: Interview Consent Letter

Interview Consent Letter

I am conducting research on a management dilemma concerning whether to grant employees autonomy or to enforce tight management control. I am trying to uncover insights regarding finding the right management balance. Our interview is expected to last about an hour, and will help us understand how best to leverage the apparent conflicting management practices to achieve an optimal management style. Your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time without penalty. I would like to request that I record the interview; of course, all data will be kept confidential. If you have any concerns, please contact me or my supervisor. Our details are provided below.

Researcher name: Gary Gilbert Researcher Supervisor name: Margie Sutherland

Email: gary@mindcor.com Email : sutherlandm@gibs.co.za

Participant Name: _____ Participant Designation _____

Signature of participant: _____

Date: _____

Signature of researcher: _____

Date: _____

9.3 Appendix 3: Extract of Content Data Analysis

Data Coding Extract - Respondent 4					
Respondent 4					
Research Questions	Question 1: Are managers able to adopt mutually exclusive autonomy or control management practices?	Question 2: What are the possible outcomes of adopting a mutually exclusive, autonomy or control management practice for employees and organisations?	Question 3: Are managers able to successfully combine combinations of autonomy and control management practices simultaneously to improve employee performance?	Question 4: What are the possible outcomes of simultaneously adopting autonomy and control type management practices for employees and organisations?	Question 5: What are the key determining factors that could influence a manager to adopt autonomy and/or control management practices?
Interview Questionnaire	If autonomy and control were on opposite sides of a management continuum, which of the two management approaches would be considered the most effective?	What are the possible outcomes of the various management practices for employees?	Are various combinations of autonomy and control possible – (as depicted in the four quadrants in the Management Grid below)?	What are the possible outcomes of the various management practices for employees? What are the possible outcomes of the various management practices for organisations? What are the possible tensions and trade off's between the two practices? Is it possible for a manager to effectively manage the management practice dilemma?	What are the factors (employee and / or manager) that may influence the choice of which management practice/s (autonomy and control) to employ? What are the organisational factors that may influence the choice of which management practice/s (autonomy and control) to employ? Which factors are the most dominant and why?
Responses		I also believe that people come with a certain level of energy, just for the sake of making the point let's say they come to work with 40% of their energy level in the morning, and most companies have crushed that to 20% by lunchtime.	So I think that the problem of striking this balance between control and autonomy is to have control which is defined by principles and values, as opposed to the rule book, but on the other hand you have a set of firm processes in the business which have been institutionalized to the point where they are not intrusive and then you can get on with running the business. And then we focus on what is our vision, where do we want to take this thing, are we all excited by the same destiny, etc.	So the orientation towards the unleashing of human energy is huge, and I believe too that discretionary effort comes from intrinsic motivation, not extrinsic motivation: the effort way and beyond the job description, way and beyond what is expected, does not come from how much people get paid or incentivized, it comes from the joy of fulfillment in the job they do, the self-actualization to use the jargon, that they experience in what they do.	Let me just back up and say that in the growth of any business I mean the ultimate control is the one man business where everything is in that person's head and they make all the decisions, and of course with the passage of time that is fine if you want to run a one man business but if you want to run a bigger business you have to start to delegate, you have to start to let other people do things and sometimes they are not going to do them as well as you think you can do them, and they are going to make mistakes. So with the growth of a business it tends towards chaos and what we do as businesses grow is to mitigate the chaos by imposing systems and controls and processes.
		So I think the old model, the control model, sees people as a disposable means to a corporate end.	I can say without any fear of contradiction, that the best playing I ever heard was when there was a constraint. So I come at things with a view that constraints enhance creativity, they don't suppress it.	Nothing sends out more powerful signals to the business than who you hire, fire and promote.	How do you inculcate a culture which gives you the processes and controls that people adhere to in a non-diverting way, but at the same time say 'hang on, how can I be creative?
		I think the command and control model by definition suppresses energy and I will come to the point in a moment but it doesn't for a moment suggest that control is not required.	Parameters focus people and make them bring out more than just having carte blanche. So I see the parameters of managerial control in a similar way.	Autonomy in a way is saying 'your opinion matters' – that is what autonomy really is, and to the extent that employees see that their opinion has had a positive impact on a business. That is huge in terms of motivation.	The starting point is who is the individual, because you can't soar with eagles when you are dealing with turkeys, I mean we understand that. So the first point is does this person have the inherent capability, the intellect, the judgement, the character.
		In essence the control and command approach of yesterday is antithetical to what I have just described; it can suppress energy, it attributes to leaders a power that they don't really have.	And that is the delicate balance that I think is very difficult to achieve.	If you give people the opportunity to make decisions and enhance that relationship it is hugely motivational for them and it is good for the company, provided they are the right people.	Have I made sure that they have the competencies required for this job?



Responses		But the kind of command and control that you saw, hierarchical command and control, I think that is just ignored by great people. Great people won't find themselves in that environment, they will just ignore it.	And that goes to the heart of your question and in a way it is situational; there are times when one is more directive and controlling and there are other times when one gives more autonomy.	So we have three strikes principle: if you make a mistake the first time that is fine, we try and make sure that the company has a safety net so that the company isn't damaged by that mistake, but you made a mistake once – fine, what was the learning. Move on.	It is a 40 billion rand business then. Why? And I have worked with him now for 12 or 13 years, I don't know of one situation that I have ever seen him encounter where he hasn't analyzed what happened, and built that into his own business model, his own mental model of the world. So he is constantly in a learning mode and he is saying 'this situation warrants me to think this way' and he can grow at that rate.
		In the process of imposing those controls we stifle entrepreneurship and by definition we stifle creativity and so on. So the balance to be struck is between the control that gives you predictability and mitigates risk, and on the other hand is not so great that it stifles creativity.	It is possible that I could move through all of those four phases in a day, depending on which employees you are talking about or which situation.	Well the real problem is you sometimes have pendulum activity because you give a bit of autonomy, somebody goes too far, the business loses money and then everybody says 'ooh' and they lock in again and then you just move into a control environment which is just so crazy and then a couple of your highly talented people say 'screw this I am not going to work here'. So the biggest tension is to stop this.	Well I think lots of things matter but I think things that risk the long term reputation and financial health of the business – the sustainability of the business.
			The control is a function of values and principles.	The visible outputs are performance.	Because forming that value based and principle based culture has got to do with who you hire, who you fire and who you promote.
			I think you are speaking about control as we have clarified, as value-based or principle-based control which I totally support.	Internal manifestations are high motivation, high energy, retention, able to attract great people. Organisations get a reputation, 'this is a great place to work, that is where I want to be'.	I think when you are dealing with a more mature manager, who has perhaps more refined judgement, a bit more experience then you will give a little bit more autonomy, even in the same job. That is the biggest determinant for me.
				So I think externally the most visible manifestation is performance.	The level of maturity of your subordinates.
				It tends to be multifaceted performance. Great companies are not uni-dimensional, they are not just good at their bottom line stuff. If you look at them there is a kind of a quest for excellence in almost everything that they do.	That is their own learning ability.
					I guess the biggest factor is risk.