

FUNDAÇÃO GETULIO VARGAS  
ESCOLA DE ADMINISTRAÇÃO DE EMPRESAS DE SÃO PAULO

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**MIDDLE MANAGERS STRATEGIZING PRACTICES AND ITS EFFECTS ON  
IMPLEMENTATION:**

The Moderating Roles of Relationship Quality with Top Managers

SÃO PAULO

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Tese de Doutorado apresentada à Escola de  
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obtenção de título de Doutor em Administração  
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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to Raquel, my girlfriend, fiancée, wife and the mother of Miguel, our son.

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Every end of a journey also brings the start of another journey. It is important then to be living the present moment with joy and gratefulness. That is how I have tried to behave during the course of my PhD. However, this mindful perspective was only possible because of many people and institutions, which deserve right now my recognition and thanks.

God is the beginning and the end of everything I do, and gave me grace as well discipline to accomplish this goal.

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“To love another person is to see the face of God”.

Victor Hugo

## **ABSTRACT**

This study explores implementation performance that derives from the conjoined manifestation of two different set of practices which middle managers (MMs) employ while participating in strategy, namely, involving and influencing. It draws on the notion of strategy as being a system of social exchanges to suggest that relationship quality between top managers (TMs) and MMs has a twofold moderating effect on implementation performance, based on the type of strategizing practices that MMs exhibit. Empirical evidence from MMs in a large-size Telecommunications Company support the hypothesis of having higher implementation performance when both MMs practices of involving and influencing exist. It also shows that the relationship quality between TMs and MMs has a moderating effect on implementation performance that is positive for MMs practices of involving, but negative for MMs practices of influencing. These findings contribute to the MMs perspective on strategy and to the stream of strategy-as-practice research focused on implementation, thus offering concrete implications for organizations and managers who want to leverage their impacts for strategy outcomes.

**Keywords:** Middle Managers; Implementation Performance; Strategy-as-practice; Top Managers; Relationship Quality.



## RESUMO

Este estudo explora o desempenho da implementação que deriva de uma manifestação conjunta de dois diferentes conjuntos de práticas utilizados pela média gerência enquanto participa da estratégia, denominados, envolver e influenciar. Ele baseia-se na noção da estratégia como um sistema de trocas sociais para sugerir que a qualidade do relacionamento entre a alta administração e média gerência possui um efeito moderador duplo sobre o desempenho da implementação, a depender do tipo de práticas estratégicas demonstradas pela média gerência. Evidências empíricas de indivíduos da média gerência operando uma empresa de grande porte do setor de telecomunicações sustentam as hipóteses de haver maior desempenho da implementação quando existem ambas as práticas de envolver e influenciar por parte da média gerência. Também demonstram que a qualidade do relacionamento entre membros da alta administração e indivíduos da média gerência possui um efeito moderador sobre o desempenho da implementação que é positivo para as práticas de envolver, mas negativo para as práticas de influenciar. Estes achados contribuem com a perspectiva da média gerência na estratégia e com o campo de pesquisas da estratégia como prática dedicado à implementação, oferecendo, portanto, implicações concretas para organizações e gestores que queiram alavancar seus impactos nos resultados estratégicos.

**Palavras-chave:** Média Gerência; Desempenho da Implementação; Estratégia como prática; Alta Administração; Qualidade do Relacionamento.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The middle management perspective on strategy is a developing field of research with several papers already published in top-tier journals (Floyd & Wooldridge, 2017; Wooldridge, Schmid, & Floyd, 2008). One of the conceptual foundations of this perspective is the recognition of multiple practices that middle managers (MMs) employ while participating in top-down and bottom-up strategy making (Bower, 1970; Burgelman, 1983; Mintzberg & Waters, 1985). In this view, MMs shape realized strategies by supporting quite a few strategic initiatives (Lechner & Floyd, 2012) and demonstrating a variety of autonomous behaviors (Mirabeau & Maguire, 2014).

Although studies continue to explore several practices that MMs utilize while participating in strategy (Heyden, Fourné, Koene, Werkman, & Ansari, 2017; Guo, Huy, & Xiao, 2017; Shi, Markoczy, & Dess, 2009), this stream of research has mainly focused on the consequences of disconnected MMs activities (e.g., Ahearne, Lam, & Kraus 2014; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1997), thereby neglecting how different MMs practices can, when taken all together, reinforce specific strategy outcomes.

Because of this oversight, we currently miss key knowledge about what MMs practices actually produces better implementation performance. This is an important strategy outcome, since implementation performance denotes how strategy actually materializes (Thomas & Ambrosini, 2015), and it is defined as MMs political acceptability regarding the achievement of deliberate plans and the eventual emergence of novel decisions (Miller, Hickson, & Wilson, 2004). Some studies have explored implementation through the lenses of MMs (e.g., Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Huy, 2011, 2014; Lê & Jarzabkowski, 2015), but these have comprehended implementation more as a context or process driven by MMs that leads to other strategy outcomes and not implementation performance. For that reason, this study contributes to the literature by analyzing the effects of MMs on implementation performance as derived from two MMs practices--involving and influencing.

These practices have certain particularities (Miller, Hickson, & Wilson, 2008; Wolf & Floyd, 2017) that can represent new opportunities for developing the current research on middle management further. Involving happens mostly when top managers (TMs) encourage MMs to participate in planning practices and give input to decision-making (e.g., Canales, 2013; Currie & Procter, 2005; Raes, Heijltjes, Glunk, & Roe, 2011;

Schilit, 1987; Wooldridge & Floyd, 1990). Under other conditions, influencing relates to the MMs own agency in determining organizational continuity and change (e.g., Balogun & Johnson, 2005; Burgelman, 1983; Mantere, 2008). Whereas those specific characteristics are noticeable, that distinction is normally not recognized by studies on the middle management perspective, as many studies tend to use both terms interchangeably as synonyms (e.g., Ahearne, Lam, & Kraus 2014; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992; Watson & Wooldridge, 2005). This confusion regarding MMs practices reinforces a critique made by Wooldridge, Schmid and Floyd (2008: 1211), according to which “the lack of consistency in describing the roles has frustrated the development of cumulative research into the origins and consequences of middle manager strategic behavior”. Thus, another contribution that the current study brings to the literature is the acknowledgement of a necessary differentiation between MMs practices of involving and influencing.

I am also suggesting here that relationship quality between TMs and MMs has a moderating effect on implementation performance that is twofold, depending on the kind of practices undertaken by MMs. There is a growing academic interest on the relationships that exist between TMs and MMs in terms of strategy (Castañer & Yu, 2017; Glaser, Fourné, & Elfring, 2015; Heyden, Fourné, Koene, Werkman, & Ansari, 2017; Huy, Corley, & Kraatz, 2014; Vuori & Huy, 2016). Scholars have demonstrated so far that the consequences of these relationships can be positive (Canales, 2013; Ketokivi & Castañer, 2004; Mangaliso, 1995; Raes, Heijltjes, Glunk, & Roe, 2011), or negative (Currie & Procter, 2005; Laine & Vaara, 2007; Sillince & Mueller, 2007; Vuori & Huy, 2016). Based on these contradictory perspectives, it appears that studies have not yet explored in sufficient detail the inherent complexities associated with such relationships, which result from social exchanges based on reciprocal obligations TMs and MMs have with each other (Floyd & Lane, 2000). Relationship quality with TMs will possibly exert a dual effect on MMs practices, since the multiple roles that MMs play can be hindered or enacted by both the TMs expectations and their actions (Mantere, 2008). Consequently, relationships can favor specific kinds of participation of MMs in strategy, while at the same time inhibiting others (Ahearne, Lam, & Kraus, 2014; Wooldridge & Floyd, 2017).

Following these arguments, two central questions thus emerge as a basis for the set of hypothesis developed in this study. First, what are the isolated and conjoint effects of MMs influencing and MMs involving on implementation performance? Second, how do these effects vary according to the relationship quality between TMs and MMs? I tested this hypothesis using survey data from a sample of 104 MMs at a large-size

telecommunications company. My results confirm the implementation performance benefits that arise from the coexistence of MMs practices of involving and influencing. Additionally, it proves that MMs practices of involving in particular leads to higher implementation performance when a good quality of relationship between TMs and MMs does exist.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

My theoretical assumptions draw from the MMs perspective on strategy (Wooldridge, Schmid, & Floyd, 2008). Research has demonstrated precisely how this group of individuals is relevant to resource allocation (e.g., Bower, 1970; Burgelman, 1983; Maritan, 2001; Noda & Bower, 1996), strategic change (e.g., Heyden, Fourné, Koene, Werkman, & Ansari, 2017; Huy, Corley, & Kraatz, 2014; Laine & Vaara, 2007), organization performance (e.g., Floyd & Wooldridge, 1997; Ahearne, Lam & Kraus, 2014), and other aspects. Here, I concentrate on their strategizing practices that drives implementation (Balogun & Johnson, 2004, 2005; Huy, 2002, 2011; Lê & Jarzabkowski, 2015; Sillince & Mueller, 2007; Thomas & Ambrosini, 2015), based on the lenses of strategy as a system of social exchanges (Floyd & Lane, 2000). In doing so, I expect to investigate how MMs interactions with TMs actually relates to strategy (Canales, 2013; Castañer & Yu, 2017; Glaser, Fourné, & Elfring, 2015; Raes, Heijltjes, Glunk, & Roe, 2011; Vuori & Huy, 2016).

Understanding strategizing practices is a central aspect on strategy-as-practice research (Vaara & Whittington, 2012; Floyd, Cornelissen, Wright, & Delios, 2011; Jarzabkowski, Balogun, & Seidl, 2007). The concept of strategizing emphasizes the micro-level processes and practices involved as organizational members work to construct and enact organizational strategies, through both formal and informal means (Whittington, 1996, 2001). In this sense, strategizing reflects the ‘doing of strategy’ (Johnson, Melin, & Whittington, 2003) and comprises those actions, interactions and negotiations of multiple actors as well as the situated practices that they draw upon in accomplishing activities (Jarzabkowski, 2005).

Similarly, focusing in MMs as practitioners’ matches with the emphasis of different strategy-as-practice studies (Balogun & Johnson, 2005; Mantere, 2005, 2008; Rouleau, 2005; Rouleau & Balogun, 2011). From a strategy-as-practice perspective, practitioners are the actors; those individuals who draw upon practices to act (Jarzabkowski, Balogun, & Seidl, 2007). Studying MMs strategizing practices therefore means highlighting what MMs actually do, and how they do it (Balogun & Rouleau, 2017; Rouleau, Balogun, & Floyd, 2015).



## **2.1.Middle Managers' strategizing practices**

Traditional research into strategy has not recognized the central role of MMs. To the contrary, strategy was mainly focused on the shoulders of TMs and, noticeably, the CEOs who were in charge of creating a desirable future and giving employees directions to make that future happen in the present time. Accordingly, the MMs task was narrow and strongly focused on promoting the achievement of deliberate plans (Andrews, 1971; Ansoff, 1965; Chandler, 1962).

Two seminar studies published in the 1970s started to change this notion by emphasizing MMs practices of participation in strategy. First, Joseph Bower (1970) revealed how MMs demonstrate political activities in those bottom-up processes that drive corporate resource allocation and, consequently, push strategic investments. Second, Henry Mintzberg (1978) came up with the idea of patterns in strategy formation, shedding new light on how realized strategies can result from emergent initiatives conducted by MMs and others at multiple organizational levels. These findings were the starting point for the development of a different MMs perspective on strategy.

Participation practices of MMs in strategy began afterwards to be analyzed as a basis for corporate entrepreneurship (Burgelman, 1983, De Clercq, Castañer, & Belausteguigoitia, 2011; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1999; Lechner & Floyd, 2012; Mirabeau & Maguire, 2014; Ren & Guo, 2011; Reitzig & Sorenson, 2013; Shimizu, 2012). These individuals articulate discursive practices (Mirabeau & Maguire, 2014) and champion projects in new business fields (Burgelman, 1983), displaying bottom-up autonomous behaviors that are central for strategic renewal and the ongoing performance of strategic initiatives (Lechner & Floyd, 2012). Likewise, they regulate organizational attention to entrepreneurial initiatives that are closer or distant from the current strategy, thus convincing TMs about the promising areas for future development (Ren & Guo, 2011).

Such political practices do not always occur in consonance with institutional mandates, since MMs strategic participation also relies on the pursuit of individual interests (Brauer, 2009; Guth & MacMillan, 1986; Meyer, 2006; Schilit, 1987). This focus is especially true when divergent interests exist between groups of MMs (Meyer, 2006), as well as in those cases where MMs face threats to their own status quos (Brauer, 2009). Top-down strategy making henceforth may be challenged by MMs' showing resistance within coalitions and favoring alternative options, or even totally sabotage (Guth & MacMillan, 1986).

A broader classification of the ways through which MMs participate in strategy arises in the research of Floyd and Wooldridge (1992). Their results indicate a typology of four strategic roles wherein both action and cognition are intertwined, thereby comprising MMs behaviors taking place upward or downward in the organization hierarchy, in addition to the MMs ideas integrating or altering the organization's strategy concept. For example, in bottom-up processes, MMs can act by giving TMs input and championing alternatives, namely, a persistent and persuasive communication of strategic options, or even by synthesizing information, which they afterwards interpret and evaluate (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992). On the contrary, MMs commonly proceed in top-down processes by implementing deliberate strategies in an attempt to align organizational action with strategic intentions, along with facilitating adaptability, so as to foster flexible organizational arrangements (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992). These different strategic roles were found subsequently to be dependent on MMs positions in both formal and informal structures (Pappas & Wooldridge, 2007), with significant consequences accruing to organizational performance (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1997; Ahearne, Lam, & Kraus, 2014).

Moreover, what if organizations are portrayed as pluralistic marketplaces of ideas where issues are "sold" via the persuasive efforts of MMs and "bought" by those TMs who set the strategic direction? (Dutton, Ashford, O'Neill, & Lawrence, 2001). This movement made by MMs is called "issue-selling", and it is the focus of a notable group of studies (Ashford, Rothbard, Piderit, & Dutton, 1998; Dutton & Ashford, 1993; Dutton, Ashford, Lawrence, & Miner-Rubino, 2002; Ling, Floyd, & Baldrige, 2005; Piderit & Ashford, 2003). Issue-selling movements are particularly connected to MMs because they are closer to actual customers and other stakeholders and consequently, they are more knowledgeable about the strategic issues that require attention (Dutton, Ashford, & O'Neill, 1997). Due to the cumulative research in this area, scholars have been able to explore detailed characteristics of issue selling movements along with the factors that can create either a more or less favorable context for MMs to raise strategic issues (Ashford, Ong, & Keesee, 2017).

Finally, last but not least, MMs strategizing practices can also be more subjective and related to how these individuals deal with emotion (Huy, 2002, 2011; Huy, Corley, & Kraatz, 2014; Vuori & Huy, 2016) as well as the meanings that appear with thorough top-down strategic change (Balogun, Bartunek, & Do, 2015; Balogun & Johnson, 2004, 2005; Rouleau, 2005; Rouleau & Balogun, 2011). For instance, MMs balance the emotional states of their employees (Huy, 2002), and they may demonstrate negative

emotional reactions depending on how they judge the TMs legitimacy to drive strategic change (Huy, Corley, & Kraatz, 2014). Sensemaking and sensegiving practices conducted by MMs during planned change can likewise affect the achievement of intended and even unintended outcomes (Balogun & Johnson, 2005). These earlier studies henceforth contribute by illustrating how MMs social and cognitive aspects can alter the course of any change strategies.

In conclusion, these different groups of studies illustrate a variety of MMs strategizing practices that take place in both top-down and bottom-up processes. In top-down strategy making, MMs can act by implementing deliberate strategies (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992, 1997), but also by helping other people to make sense of the TMs plans (Balogun & Johnson, 2005; Rouleau & Balogun, 2011) and balancing various emotions during radical change (Huy, 2002, 2011). On the other hand, bottom-up processes rely on MMs to sell up the chain of command strategic issues and solutions on which TMs lack information (Ahearne, Lam, & Kraus, 2014; Alt & Craig, 2016; Ashford & Detert, 2015; Tarakci, Ates, Floyd, Ahn, & Wooldridge, 2018). This practice also forces strategic initiatives to gain greater impetus in corporate entrepreneurship settings (Lechner & Floyd, 2012; Mirabeau & Maguire, 2014; Ren & Guo, 2011). Removed from the perspective of tradition research in strategy, MMs have still been gaining “momentum” as the central agents that balance an organization’s demands for continuity and change.

## **2.2.Differentiating among MMs strategizing practices of involving and influencing**

Even acknowledging for these multiple activities comprised by MMs, previous studies do not recognize that there is an essential distinction for MMs strategizing practices. This distinction is related to MMs practices of involving, when they are invited or included by TMs in actual decision-making, and also to MMs practices of influencing, when MMs affect top-down or bottom-up strategy processes, irrespective of TMs prior approval (Miller, Hickson, & Wilson, 2008; Wolf & Floyd, 2017). These dimensions are respectively associated with how much contribution MMs have for strategic decision-making and the extent of authority they demonstrate for new responsive initiatives, without asking for permission higher up in the organizational hierarchy (Andersen, 2004).

It is important to observe the ambiguities in the way that previous studies reference both terms. For example, Floyd & Wooldridge (1992) first conceptualized their typology as “MMs involvement in strategy”, but later they used the same model and refer to it as “MMs influence” (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1997). In both cases, such terms were employed interchangeably as synonyms, a pattern that is also found in other studies (e.g., Ahearne, Lam, & Kraus 2014; Watson & Wooldridge, 2005). It is possible then to organize the current research in two groups, by applying these same notions of involving and influencing to previous publications on the MMs perspective on strategy (see Table 1).

The first group of studies focuses on MMs practices of involving (e.g., Canales, 2013; Collier, Fishwick and Floyd, 2004; Currie & Procter, 2005; Hodgkinson, Whittington, Johnson, & Schwarz, 2006; Ketokivi & Castaner, 2004; Mack & Szulanski, 2017; Vila & Canales, 2008; Wooldridge & Floyd, 1990; Westley, 1990). The studies here show that involvement in strategy allow MMs to engage in interactions and interlocking rationales with TMs (Canales, 2013), prompting shared understandings (Guth & MacMillan, 1986; Dess, 1987) along with commitment to plans (Vila & Canales, 2008; Wooldridge & Floyd, 1990) that foster coordination (Hodgkinson, Whittington, Johnson, & Schwarz, 2006) and the pursuit of organizational goals (Ketokivi & Castaner, 2004). These consequences ultimately assists with better strategic decisions and higher implementation quality (Collier, Fishwick, & Floyd, 2004; Raes, Heijltjes, Glunk, & Roe, 2011).

Following the general description used by this group of studies concerning MMs strategizing practices of involving, these can be conceptualized as “MMs enabled practices of delivering integration through strategic planning”. Such practices are “enabled” because they can be constrained or allowed depending on role expectations placed by TMs on MMs (Mantere, 2008). Additionally, “delivering integration through strategic planning” means that MMs engage in active negotiations and compromises with TMs (and other organizational members) while participating in formal decision-making (Jarzabkowski & Balogun, 2009).

In a different manner, the second group of studies is oriented toward the MMs practices of influencing (e.g., Ahearne, Lam, & Kraus 2014; Andersen, 2000; Balogun & Johnson, 2005; Burgelman, 1991, 1994; Dutton & Ashford, 1993; Dutton, Ashford, O’Neil, Hayes, & Wierba, 1997; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992, 1997; Huy, 2011; Rouleau, 2005; Rouleau & Balogun, 2011; Pappas & Wooldridge, 2007; Shi, Markoczy, & Dess, 2009; Watson & Wooldridge, 2005). These studies contribute to the MMs perspective on

strategy by demonstrating that reactions and interpretations MMs have concerning top-down interventions make them either support or resist change (Huy, 2011). Accordingly, MMs display influence in bottom-up processes, directing the attention of TMs to new initiatives that are both inside and outside the scope of current strategy (Burgelman, 1991; Dutton & Ashford, 1993; Dutton, Ashford, O'Neil, Hayes, & Wierba, 1997; Dutton, Asford, O'Neil, & Lawrence, 2001; Ling, Floyd, & Baldrige, 2005). Implementation then emerges as an adaptable process where MMs incentivize both idea generation and experimentation (Wooldridge, Schmid, & Floyd, 2008), key conditions for employees to handle for unforeseen situations (e.g., Mintzberg & Waters, 1985). As a result, the empirical evidence suggests that MMs' influencing connects to higher organizational performance (Ahearne, Lam, & Kraus 2014; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1997) and indeed leads to deliberate and emerging consequences (Balogun & Johnson, 2005).

Synthesizing the description applied by this group of studies to analyze MMs strategizing practices of influencing, I conceptualize these practices as "MMs autonomous and reflexive practices affecting the demands of continuity and change expressed by themselves, their groups or the organization". The "autonomous" aspect of this practice reinforces the fact that influencing result from local problem solving and is usually initiated by MMs outside the top management group (Burgelman, 1983; Mirabeau & Maguire, 2014). Having reflexivity likewise suggests that influencing expresses the knowledgeability possessed by MMs about their own role-set (Giddens, 1984). Therefore, strategizing practices of influencing reflects that MMs are agents and through their agency, they are capable of transforming cognitive and structural conditions happening in different levels (Mantere, 2008).

Especially, this concept of MMs influencing might share certain similarities with what Wooldridge, Schmid and Floyd (2008) termed "MMs strategic roles". However, their literature review does not explicitly differentiate between the concepts of MMs influencing (e.g., MMs strategic roles) and MMs involving. To some extent, my conceptualization also parallels the MMs when executing or initiating change, as proposed by Heyden, Fourné, Koene, Werkman and Ansari (2017). Nevertheless, complementing the point of view of these authors, I further consider that MMs influencing can happen before and after the TMs initiate change, without their consent.

In brief, I believe these notions of involving and influencing can contribute to the development of research on middle management, for three reasons. First, the concepts helps to organize the different array of terms and definitions already presented in previous

studies. Second, it indicates two viable avenues for cumulative investigations in this area that is somewhat fragmented (Wooldridge, Schmid, & Floyd, 2008). Third, it sheds further light on the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion taking place in the interactions between TMs and MMs that have significant implications for managerial agency (e.g., Westley, 1990; Mantere, 2008).

Table 1. Classification of studies according to MMs' strategizing practices

<b>Studies / Year</b>	<b>Concepts of MMs strategizing practices</b>	<b>Description of practices</b>	<b>Classification</b>
Westley, 1990	Inclusion in strategic conversations	Specific, micro-level interactions between superior and subordinate	Involving
Wooldridge & Floyd, 1990	Involvement in strategy	Identifying problems and proposing objectives, generating options, evaluating options, developing details about the options, and taking the necessary actions to put the changes into place	Involving
Burgelman, 1991, 1994	Autonomous strategic initiatives	Engagement in activities that are outside of the scope of a current strategy.	Influencing
Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992	Involvement in strategy	Influence actions and cognitive ideas that are unique to the position of the MMs.	Influencing
Dutton & Ashford, 1993; Dutton, Ashford, O'Neil, Hayes, & Wierba, 1997	Issue-selling	Individuals' behaviors that are directed toward affecting others' attention to and understanding of issues	Influencing
Floyd & Wooldridge, 1997	Strategic influence activity	Specific middle management activities that influence organizational strategy.	Influencing
Andersen, 2000	Autonomous actions	Managers' abilities to make independent decisions.	Influencing
Collier, Fishwick & Floyd, 2004	Involvement in strategic decisions	Involvement increases managers' tendency to see desirable attributes in the strategy process and decreases the tendency to see negative attributes.	Involving
Ketokivi & Castaner, 2004	Participation in a strategic planning process	Analyzing the performance of past strategies and the organizational environment and propose goals, as well as strategies, plans, and budgets for achieving those goals.	Involving
Currie & Procter, 2005	Strategic contributions	Role of middle managers for implementing deliberate strategy	Involving
Balogun & Johnson, 2005	Sensemaking	Change recipients' making sense of change events, whose interactions and new negotiated group understandings shape and change outcomes.	Influencing

Rouleau, 2005	Strategic Sensemaking and Sensegiving	How managers interpret and enact a new orientation during their interactions and conversations	Influencing
Watson & Wooldridge, 2005	Upward influence on the formulation of corporate strategy	Identifying problems and proposing objectives, generating options, evaluating options, developing details about options, and taking the necessary actions to put changes into place	Influencing
Hodgkinson, Whittington, Johnson, & Schwarz, 2006	Inclusion in strategy workshops	Participation of MMs in strategy workshops.	Involving
Pappas & Wooldridge, 2007	Divergent Strategic Activity	Activities that challenge the ‘dominant logic’ of the firm help organizations enter new markets and spark the development of new capabilities	Influencing
Vila & Canales, 2008	Involvement in strategic planning	MMs’ clear appreciation of priorities and goals, thereby contributing to subsequent coordinated action during implementation	Involving
Shi ,Markoczy, & Dess, 2009	Brokerage roles	Mediations between unconnected actors, divisions, or small business units.	Influencing
Huy, 2011	Social identities and group-focus emotions	Individual emotions felt on behalf of a group or fellow group members who experience a specific event.	Influencing
Rouleau & Balogun, 2011	Strategic sense-making and discursive competence	The social process of meaning construction and reconstruction through which managers understand, interpret, and create a sense of themselves and others about their changing organizational context and surroundings	Influencing
Canales, 2013	Involvement in strategy-making	Involvement of managers across the organization is promoted by redirecting their attention structures.	Involving
Ahearne, Lam, & Kraus 2014	Adaptive strategy implementation behaviors	Upward and downward influence to propose, accommodate, and embrace adjustments in planned functional level strategies.	Influencing
Mack & Szulanski, 2017	Open strategy-making	Inclusiveness and transparency in strategy-making	Involving

Source: The Author



### **2.3.Relationship quality between TMs and MMs**

An aspect that is situated in the concepts of MMs practices of involving as well as MMs practices of influencing is the relationship between TMs and MMs (e.g., Canales, 2013; Ling, Floyd, & Baldrige, 2005), so this relationship may represent an interface where complexities arise (Raes, Heijltjes, Glunk, & Roe, 2011; Simsek, Heavey, & Fox, 2017).

This focus on social interactions connecting TMs and MMs has its roots in the idea that successful firms are those who are able to combine deliberate and emergent qualities in their strategy process (Andersen 2000, 2004; Bourgeois & Brodwin, 1984; Burgelman 1991; Burgelman, Floyd, Laamanen, Mantere, Vaara, & Whittington, 2018; Hart, 1992; Hart & Banbury, 1994; Mintzberg & Waters, 1985; Thomas & Ambrosini, 2015; Wolf & Floyd, 2017). These approaches have different decision-making dimensions that are inextricably linked through social and hierarchical relationships between those involved in the strategy work (Dean & Sharfman, 1993; Langley, 1989; Lê & Jarzabkowski, 2015), especially TMs and MMs. TMs are central to deliberate strategies, with their rational attempts to be exhaustive or inclusive in making and integrating strategic decisions (Fredrickson & Mitchell, 1984). In contrast, MMs create emergent strategies by displaying autonomous behavior for local problem solving and mobilizing support for the impetus of strategic initiatives (Mirabeau & Maguire, 2014). Fostering the relationship and interactions between TMs and MMs is, therefore, critical to the existence of a strategic context that conciliates the achievement of intended actions with the pursuit of entrepreneurial opportunities.

Previous studies have indeed demonstrated that MMs' contributions to strategy depend on their relationship with TMs (Canales, 2013; Ketokivi & Castañer, 2004; Laine & Vaara, 2007; Mantere, 2005, 2008; Sillince & Mueller, 2007; Westley, 1990). The relationship quality between TMs and MMs is higher when that relationship is perceived as trusting, friendly, close, cordial, and open (Ashford, Rothbard, Piderit, & Dutton, 1998). This relationship quality instigates the MMs practices of influencing (Ling, Floyd, & Baldrige, 2005), as individuals are more likely to join collective action when there is trust and support (Leana & Van Buren, 1999). This quality of relationship represents a salient contextual factor that reduces the image risks and increases the probability of success perceived by MMs for raising issues (Ashford, Rothbard, Piderit, & Dutton, 1998; Dutton, Ashford, O'Neill, Hayes, & Wierba, 1997). Change is generally enacted within

positive working relationships (Balogun & Jonhson, 2005), so TMs try to implement change by maintaining productive relationships with MMs (Stensaker & Langley, 2010). This suggests that TMs have to demonstrate enabling conditions for MMs display strategic agency and fulfill the role expectations placed on them (Mantere, 2008). At the same time, relationship quality can favor the good judgments of MMs concerning TMs strategic intentions (Huy, Corley, & Kraatz, 2014), thus decreasing resistance to change (Ford, Ford, & D'Amelio, 2008). This relationship quality expands the cognitive flexibility and integrative bargaining of TMs and MMs (Raes, Heijltjes, Glunk, & Roe, 2011), thereby creating a virtuous cycle where a new set of issues and answers does receive organizational priority (Canales, 2013).

While these findings illustrate many positive consequences for strategy associated with relationship quality between TMs and MMs, sometimes TMs use relationships to limit the MMs strategic role (Currie & Procter, 2005) and propagate strategy discourses in an attempt to gain control (Laine & Vaara, 2007). These relationships are additionally a channel used by MMs to engage in talking down implementation responsibilities, particularly when strategic initiatives are failing and TMs show any ambivalence on strategy (Sillince & Mueller, 2007). Therefore, the relationship quality with TMs possibly has a twofold effect on MMs strategizing practices and their contributions to strategic outcomes, in that way shaping the routes of MMs' involving and MMs' influencing in very particular ways.

Only a few studies have recognized this complex nature of the relationship between TMs and MMs for the strategy and gone beyond focusing on their positive or negative aspects. For example, Ahearne, Lam and Kraus (2014) demonstrated that social capitals, such as reputational and informational, just increase the impacts on organization performance stemming from specific MMs behaviors. Other empirical evidence has come from the research by Stensaker and Langley (2010). Their results indicate that TMs as change agents may have stronger or weaker relationship concerns with MMs, based on how much resistance is expected. By using a dynamic and continuous assessment of resistance, TMs, therefore can display specific change management trajectories, based on the varied levels of relationship building with MMs (Stensaker & Langley, 2010). Both studies illustrate a blurred and complex representation of how informal relationships between TMs and MMs do take place thorough the strategy work, an approach that is still underdeveloped. Thus, it is essential to find conceptual and theoretical alternatives that offer the potential to provide a base for future investigations.

Social exchange theory has insightful notions that could be a good source to analyze relationships between TMs and MMs during the course of strategy. Based on the principle of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), this perspective holds that each part of a relationship is obligated to compensate for any benefits received and likewise not over-benefiting from its socially supportive interactions (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). This exchanges stems from successive rounds of individual movements and reciprocal reactions that create self-reinforcing cycles and, subsequently, a pattern of interdependence between the parties involved in a relationship. This ongoing process reduces then the risks and encourages cooperation during social exchanges (Molm, 1994). However, it might exist some power dependence in these social exchanges connecting TMs and MMs over the practice of strategy, since the mutual dependence of actors provide the structural basis for their power over each other (Emerson, 1976). This structurally determined dependence sometimes is a source of power imbalance, which can make less dependent (more powerful) actors receive greater benefits, at lower costs, than more dependent actors (Molm, 2003). Actors that are more powerful can produce these inequalities in social exchanges by means of excluding less power actors from transactions (Molm, 1990). It follows that not rare TMs use their power base to exclude or limit the MMs strategic roles (Currie & Procter, 2005; Laine & Vaara, 2007; Westley, 1990).

Floyd & Lane (2000) applied social exchange theory to develop a conceptual model that incorporates these contradictions and tensions that are associated with the relationships between TMs and MMs in strategizing, thereby understanding strategic renewal as a system of social exchanges. Their main application of social exchange theory was analyzing strategic renewal as a role-making system that defines a group's expectations and establishes possible sources of role conflict. Hence, MMs strategizing practices rests on cycles of social interactions with TMs, which then creates expectations regarding the actual roles each group has to demonstrate (Floyd & Lane, 2000).

Building on these discussions from the social exchange theory, the relationship quality with TMs might interfere with the dynamics of MMs strategizing practices and its resulting level of contributions to strategic outcomes. Considering the complex nature of such social relationships, it is possible to find evidence supporting a twofold effect that is contingent on the kind of strategizing practice displayed by MMs. This aspect is especially true since MMs practices of involving and influencing are both based on different patterns of social interactions with TMs. The first is conjoint and aligned, while

the second is relatively more isolated and divergent. Therefore, the relationship quality between TMs and MMs may indeed reinforce specific social exchanges to the detriment of others, thereby affecting the related strategy outcomes.

#### **2.4.Driving implementation performance**

The dynamics associated to MMs strategizing practices and their relationships with TMs may also be particularly relevant to implementation, as MMs are recipients that try to make sense of TMs change interventions using the social processes of interaction to model actual realized outcomes in an emergent and unpredictable way (Balogun & Johnson, 2004, 2005). Depending on the MMs emotional commitment to change, implementation can lead to organizational inertia or adaptation (Huy, 2002). So TMs must deal with these social-emotional factors, otherwise, MMs can reinforce social identities and generate group-focus emotions that dismiss particular strategic initiatives (Huy, 2011). In situations such as these, MMs may perhaps reframe their implementation responsibilities and play with certain expectations during the strategy process (Sillince & Mueller, 2007). Different patterns of conflict between TMs and MMs thus explain how a strategy emerges and is implemented (Lê & Jarzabkowski, 2015).

Implementation, as the strategy-as-practice perspective understands it, includes much more than meets the eye, going beyond merely achieving deliberate plans. It relies on MMs' previous experiences, political acceptability and perceptions of the strategic decisions (Miller, Wilson & Hickson, 2004). Similarly, strategy-as-practice scholars do not see formulation and implementation as two opposites of a continuum and linear process (Whittington, 2007; Jarzabkowski, Balogun, & Seidl, 2007); since implementation can be a consequence of modifications or even major changes in strategy content (Vaara & Whittington, 2012). Henceforth, implementation denotes the "communication, interpretation, adoption, and enactment of strategic plans" (Noble, 1999: 120).

Building on this definition, implementation performance embodies a real time figure of strategy and represents MMs individual perceptions about potential sources of failure present on the strategy route (Nutt, 1999). Along the same lines, it indicates how much MMs are in accord with what has been done, as well as how far MMs believe

specific strategy implementation was placed ahead of other commitments (Miller, Wilson, & Hickson, 2004).

It is worth mentioning that I am following here the argument that implementation performance is a reflection of how strategy materializes (Leonardi, 2015; Raes, Heijltjes, Glunk, & Roe, 2011; Thomas & Ambrosini, 2015). Materiality expresses the combination of ‘making’ and ‘using’ and it is frequently explored at studies of technology in organizational action, following the idea that social and material components of a technology are constitutively entangled (Orlikowski, 2007, 2010). Based on this understanding, a blurry line also exist between ‘formulating’ and ‘implementing’ strategies, as “you don’t really have a strategy if it only exists in your head and no one can execute it” (Leonardi, 2015: S20). This means that the effects of strategic decisions “depend on the success with which their content materializes in the organization—that is, on their implementation” (Raes, Heijltjes, Glunk, & Roe, 2011: 105). Implementation performance therefore is a good indicator for the materialization of strategy, as it relies on MMs interpretation of the strategy context, stemming from both emergent processes and planned rational design (Thomas & Ambrosini, 2015).

This notion of implementation performance is especially present in studies that adopt an interpersonal process view, where MMs arise as central agents (Noble, 1999). Higher implementation performance exists when MMs display a shared understanding of strategic decisions (Dooley, Fryxell, & Judge, 2000). Coalitions, interactions, and communication between MMs may also explain the reasons for the success or failure of certain implementation efforts. According to Hambrick and Canella (1989), MMs’ importance relies on the job of “selling” the strategy to different organizational members and interacting both laterally and vertically with the formal and informal structures. Thus, MMs strategizing practices might be a consistent base of explanation to demonstrate the actual quality of any implementation.

Still, previous studies have not yet properly explored implementation performance derived from the MMs strategizing practices. This continues to be a gap, since the existing research generally does not analyze implementation as the main dependent variable. To the contrary, implementation is usually a context or pathway that affects other strategy outcomes (e.g., Balogun & Jhonson, 2005; Huy, Corley, & Kraatz, 2014). The few studies that have considered implementation performance as their main dependent variable associate it with other MMs aspects, such as commitment (Dooley, Fryxell, & Judge, 2000) and their perceptions of planning practices (Thomas & Ambrosini, 2015). We still

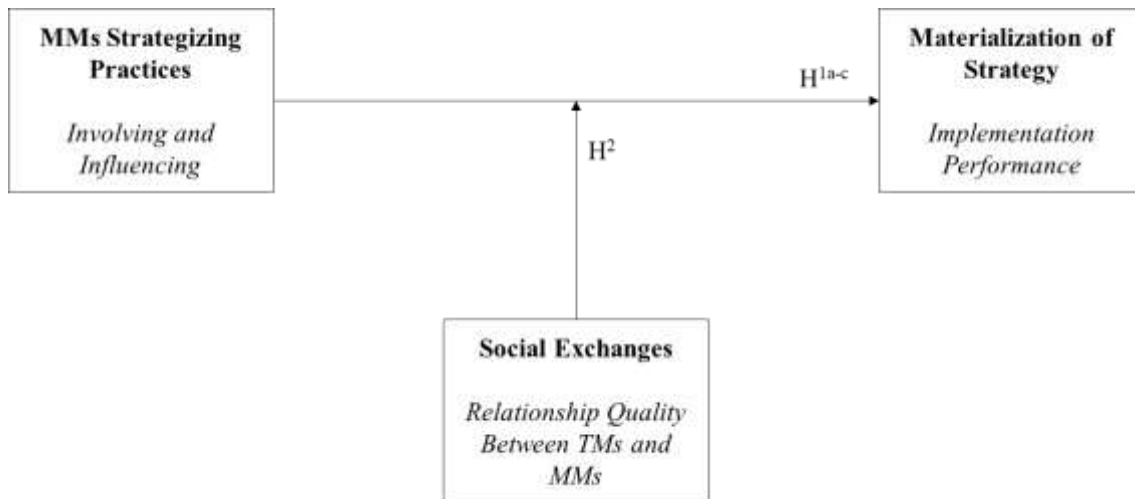
lack enough evidence on the direct upshot of MMs strategizing practices in implementation performance. At the same time, it is essential to provide further considerations about how this dynamic might differ based on the relationship quality between TMs and MMs.

Because implementation performance reflects overall perceptions concerning the quality of strategy, it is also necessary to explore how these perceptions are shaped by the combination of strategizing practices that MMs use. Nevertheless, previous studies tend to analyze strategy outcomes that results from disconnected MMs behaviors. Even the typology of MMs strategic roles has so far been only applied to check their isolated effects on organizational performance (e.g., Ahearne, Lam, & Kraus 2014; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1997). Hence, this gap is an opportunity developed here to contribute to the overall middle management perspective on strategy, by demonstrating that MMs, as practitioners, mobilize a set of practices, which have conjoint and significant implications for implementation performance.

### 3. HYPOTHESIS

I present my conceptual framework in figure 1. This framework shows that the relationship between MMs strategizing practices and the materialization of strategy is contingent on social exchanges linking TMs and MMs. I am using implementation performance to understand the materialization of strategy as it affords the examination of both deliberate and emergent aspects of strategy formation (Thomas & Ambrosini, 2015). There is also a connection of MMs strategizing practices to such materialization of strategy. This connection is essential for me to explain “how the activities in which managers engage during strategizing are related to the ways strategy is actually implemented within their organizations” (Leonardi, 2015: S17-S18). Finally, the contingent nature of this connection on social exchanges reinforce the lenses of strategy as a system of reciprocities and expectations that takes place in interactions between managers situated in different organizational levels (Floyd & Lane, 2000).

Figure 1: Conceptual framework



Source: the author.

The influencing practices employed by MMs can represent perceptible support for implementation performance. This adaptive strategy implementation behavior helps MMs to propose, accommodate, and embrace adjustments to planned strategies so they fit the operational situations (Ahearne, Lam, & Kraus, 2014). In doing so, MMs act as translators of strategies, adjusting them to actual local contexts (Balogun & Johnson,

2004) and negotiating personal interests (Jarzabkowski & Balogun, 2009; Huy, 2011). It is additionally a channel that MM's can use to help people make sense of and cope with change, thus fostering smoother implementation (Huy, 2002). As a source of the MMs voice, influencing has a positive relationship to role performance, creativity and the implementation of new ideas (Ng & Feldman, 2012). It also guides the performance of strategic initiatives (Lechner & Floyd, 2012) and overall organization performance (Ahearne, Lam, & Kraus, 2014; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1997). All together, this influencing relies on MMs directing the amount of time and attention that TMs devote to new issues (Dutton & Ashford, 1993), thereby helping autonomous initiatives to gain impetus and consequently guiding the evolution of strategy (Burgelman, 1991).

Involving practices of MMs in strategizing has similarly already been associated with many aspects that relate to implementation performance. For instance, early involvement in strategy allows MMs to anticipate possible gaps and adjustments that usually take place during implementation (Noble, 1999). By being part of such decision-making processes, MMs can help build consensus, which leads to commitment and ultimately favors the quality of implementation (Dooley, Fryxell, & Judge, 2000). This MMs consensus and acceptability was already found to be significantly correlated to the achievement of strategic goals (Miller, Wilson, & Hickson, 2004). Accordingly, managers who are more involved in strategy not only see the process in a more favorable light (Collier, Fishwick & Floyd, 2004), but also pursue organizational goals (Ketokivi & Castañer, 2004), develop a shared framework, and gain awareness of key principles (Vila & Canales, 2008). Asking MMs to be involved in strategy likewise engenders a shift in the strategic issues that will receive higher priority during implementation (Canales, 2013). Along the same lines, this involvement in strategy increases information availability, which further positively shapes MMs perceptions about implementation performance (Thomas & Ambrosini, 2015).

Apart from their main individual effects, the results from studies investigating MMs practices of involving and MMs practices of influencing frequently do share positive consequences for strategy. Thus, it is reasonable to suppose that implementation performance will be higher when both types of MMs strategizing practices coexist. For example, Noble (1999) indicates there are two key factors that determine potential implementation performance, namely, early involvement in strategy and a fluid ability to adapt to changing environmental conditions. Greater involvement facilitates the activation of strategic context determination processes (Burgelman, 1991), wherein MMs



exert influence by convincing TMs that the concept of strategy needs to accommodate successful initiatives that were bottom-up championed through the organization hierarchy (Ahearne, Lam, & Kraus, 2014; Burgelman, 1983, 1991; De Clercq, Castañer, & Belausteguigoitia, 2011; Lechner & Floyd, 2012; Tarakci, Ates, Floyd, Ahn, & Wooldridge, 2018). This reminds one that TMs empower MMs influencing by inviting and expecting MMs to participate in planning (Mantere, 2008). In doing so, MMs tend to engage in shaping behaviors at the planning process, actively negotiating and influencing the rules of the game (Wolf, 2017). Commitment is, therefore, established when individuals are able to be involved in decisions and at the same time raise and receive attention on their issues (Mohrman, 1979).

It is also worth mentioning that MMs and TMs adopt different strategic activities because the two are respectively located at the organizational contexts of periphery and center (Regnér, 2003). MMs are situated in a different group with different flows of information (Burt, 2000), so involvement in strategy gives these individuals access to new sources of information that are valuable for their strategic influence, i.e., providing novel insights and collaboration (Choi, 2002; Krackhardt & Stern, 1988). Hence, mobilizing political support is indeed a central exercise for successful strategy implementation (Mintzberg, 1983), and for effectively driving action is necessary to have a fine-tuned balance of power and influence (Pfeffer, 1994).

After considering these possible effects on implementation performance that can come from MMs strategizing practices of influencing and involving, both isolated and jointly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

*Hypothesis 1a: MMs strategizing practices of influencing relates positively to implementation performance.*

*Hypothesis 1b: MMs strategizing practices of involving relates positively to implementation performance.*

*Hypothesis 1c: MMs strategizing practices of influencing and involving complement one another to further improve implementation performance beyond their individual main effects.*

Yet, how does relationship quality between TMs and MMs moderate these effects on implementation performance that derive MMs strategizing practices of involving and influencing? Involvement in strategy is a consequence of TMs including and inviting

MMs to be part of the decision-making process (Canales, 2013; Currie & Procter, 2005; Raes, Heijltjes, Glunk, & Roe, 2011; Schilit, 1987; Wooldridge & Floyd, 1990). In exchange, MMs tend to conciliate and seek mutual interests (Canales, 2013), prioritize organizational goals (Ketokivi & Castañer, 2004), exhibit commitment (Vila & Canales, 2008), feel energized about intended actions (Westley, 1990), and promote coordination between the different groups and units (Hodgkinson, Whittington, Johnson, & Schwarz, 2006). There exists then some agreement on the reciprocities of form and even content when the actors (e.g. TMs and MMs) engage in conversation (Goffman, 1967; Hochschild, 1979). Therefore, relationship quality can indeed reinforce the positive effects of MMs involving in implementation performance, by sustaining a pattern of social exchange between TMs and MMs that is based on mutual trust and joined support (Floyd & Lane, 2000).

To the contrary, however, MMs influencing relies mostly on individual interests (Guth & MacMillan, 1986), business unit goals (Ahearne, Lam, & Kraus 2014), flexibility and adaptation of plans (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1994), and an incentive to have individual experimentation (Nonaka, 1988, 1994), thus representing divergent strategic behaviors that usually are not formally encouraged by TMs (Floyd & Lane, 2000). Particularly when the relationship quality between TMs and MMs increases, their motivations will move from self-interest to mutual-interest (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Liden, Sparrowe, & Wayne, 1997). Consequently, the pattern of social exchanges favors implementation performance that is related to MMs involving to the detriment of the MMs influencing.

Trust is the basis of high quality relationships and rests on transparency (Schnackenberg & Tomlinson, 2016); however, MMs influencing sometimes relies on choices that concern hiding facts (Bower & Gilbert, 2007; Dutton, Asford, O'Neil, & Lawrence, 2001; Rouleau, 2005). Correspondingly, strategic influence represents a source of non-consensus and conflict that can weaken social exchanges and interpersonal trust, making people become worried about damaging relationships and thus remaining silent on certain issues (Milliken, Morrison, & Hewlin, 2003). MMs influencing is especially necessary when the organizational context is not suitable for the clear emergence of entrepreneurial initiatives that diverge from the current strategy (Burgelman, 1983, 1991; Mirabeau & Maguire, 2014). Still, trust that embedded in high quality relationships can lead to effective knowledge sharing (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998) and reflect an organizational context that is appropriate for the exploitation of

entrepreneurial opportunities (De Clercq, Dimov, Thongpapanl, 2010; Kim & Mauborgne, 1998). When experiencing this level of trust and relationship quality with TMs, MMs involvement in strategic planning happens through a jointly development of ideas that concern adapting to changes and achieving goals (Wolf, 2017). Therefore, relationship quality with TMs can make MMs exert greater efforts on the strategizing practices of involving, thereby reducing the impacts of MMs influence attempts that occur before or after the planning processes.

These arguments indicate that the same pattern of relationship quality that strengthens implementation performance associated with MMs involving will diminish implementation performance associated with MMs influencing. As a result, the following hypothesis is offered:

*H2: The moderation effect of TMs-MMs relationship quality on implementation performance will be positive for MMs involving (H2a), and negative for MMs influencing (H2b).*

#### 4. METHOD

I address the hypotheses by using survey data from MMs of “A-Telecom<sup>1</sup>”, a large size telecommunications company operating in Brazil. A-Telecom had a tradition of making investments in autonomous projects bottom-up championed by MMs. However, this was until 2011 when a new group of hired TMs reoriented their strategy process, giving more emphasis to MMs involvement in the strategic decision-making. This organizational context seems consequently suitable for the purposes of the current study since it conciliates MMs practices of involving and influencing. Likewise, the focus here in the telecommunications industry is appropriate, considering the long tradition of strategy research related to MMs in this environment (Boyett & Currie, 2004; Burgelman, 1994, 1996; Burgelman & Grove, 1996; Noda & Bower, 1996; Marginson, 2002; Mirabeau & Maguire, 2014; Vuori & Huy, 2016). To ensure positive comparability of my findings to this prior work, I secured privileged access to the company, indeed, a potentially valuable research site because A-Telecom is one of the fastest growing companies in its market, and thus offers a suitable context where successful strategy implementation has key relevance.

A-Telecom has more than 60 years and about 4 thousand employees, with divisions spread thorough 15 states of Brazil. Being an entrepreneur and selling ideas higher up the hierarchy are two values strongly encouraged and supported inside the organization, which is characterized by its focus on technical and engineering skills along with attention to the people. This context creates the demand for MMs to balance different competences, facing a strong organizational culture and acting to coordinate physical and virtual teams that are located in a vast territory. Therefore, it does exist a great expectation and value placed on MMs strategizing practices to drive implementation performance.

However, at the same time, the main office of A-Telecom is located in a mid-sized city of Brazil, with limitations regarding the quality and supply of professionals in the labor market. While there is a corporate university at A-Telecom continuously investing in their employees’ training and development, it does exist a gap between the skills of TMs and MMs. For example, members of the top management team came from a successful career at A-Telecom multinational competitors, or had the opportunity to

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<sup>1</sup>I use a fictitious name for this company for non-disclosure reasons.

attend to executive development programs offered by some of the best business schools of the world. In a different manner, MMs usually developed their careers inside of A-Telecom, dedicating a huge part of their time and attention to operational processes and thus having a disparity in their strategic skills. Because of this gap, some of the A-Telecom strategy workshops and meetings are dominated by TMs, and only a few MMs are invited, depending to how close they are to their superiors and how much trust they were able to develop over time. Such element of the A-Telecom organizational context consequently suggests that relationship quality between TMs and MMs may perhaps exert an important influence on the implementation performance benefits stemming from MMs strategizing practices.

It is also worth mentioning that I am investigating strategy at the business level and collecting data from one company, a process that is in line with recent research that analyzed MMs' practices of influencing (Ahearne, Lam, & Kraus, 2014; Tarakci, Ates, Floyd, Ahn, & Wooldridge, 2018). Similarly, I focus my analysis on MMs perceptions (Atuahene-Gima & Li, 2004; Thomas & Ambrosini, 2015) as managers may have different interpretive schemes (Dutton & Ashford, 1993) and the salient features of each environment are only those that are "enacted" by the perceptions of its decision-makers (Weick, 1969).

To identify MMs for the sample, I gained assistance from the human resources area at A-Telecom, applying two main criteria. First, we analyzed job descriptions (Wooldridge & Floyd, 2017) and considered managerial positions that were operating at two or three levels below the CEO (Wooldridge & Floyd, 1990). This aspect is important because structure and formal positions are associated with certain factual or logical antecedents of MMs practices of influencing, such as boundary-spanning activities (e.g., Brass, 1984; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1997; Pappas & Wooldridge, 2007), awareness of strategic issues (e.g., Hambrick, 1981) and knowledge about the firm (e.g., Ireland, Hitt, Bettis, Porras, & Auld, 1987). Secondly, we asked senior managers to find MMs who have access to TMs, coupled with their knowledge of operations (Wooldridge, Schmid, & Floyd, 2008). Doing so allowed me to get deeper comprehension of certain other aspects related to MMs practices of influencing, such as informal structures (Shi, Markoczy, & Dess, 2009) along with social and informational capital (Ahearne, Lam, & Kraus, 2014). I thus identified 169 MMs from A-Telecom that fulfilled the selection criteria for this research.

#### **4.1.Data Collection**

Whereas I used standardized scales from prior research to measure my constructs of interest, I conducted pilot interviews with three TMs from A-Telecom to ensure that the questionnaire items were relevant for their specific context. The survey was pretested with five key MMs to make the questions more relevant and include language commonly used in the company. To detect any potential translation biases, the original items written in English were first translated into Portuguese and then translated back into English. The final Portuguese version considered these procedures.

Some survey items explicitly mention A-Telecom TMs, so I used one picture with photos of the nine members from the top management team to make sure that MMs respondents were considering the right people and their positions inside the company.

I sent an e-mail invitation to all identified MMs. It included a link to the online survey and messages' reinforcing the point that participation in the research would be anonymous and voluntary. Two reminders were sent respectively 10 days and 20 days after the original invitation. Messages from the human resources area that reinforce the importance of the research for academic purposes assisted me in achieving a final data group of 104 MMs (a 62% response rate), 83% male and 81.3% with a Bachelor's degree or higher. On average, respondents were 40.15 years old, had 13.86 years of tenure with the industry (S.D. = 8.38), 10.85 years of tenure with the organization (S.D. = 8.06), and 3.42 years of tenure in their current positions (S.D. = 3.43).

To account for any possible non-response bias associated with early-late respondents, additional testing was performed using Fisher (Agresti, 2018) and Kruskal-Wallis (Hollander & Wolfe, 1999). These results reported no bias in this respect, as early-late respondents did not differ significantly in their answers.

#### **4.2.Measures**

*Implementation performance.* Implementation performance was measured using six items from previous studies (Menon, Bharadwaj, Adidam, & Edison, 1999; Miller, Wilson, & Hickson, 2004; Noble & Mokwa, 1999; Thomas & Ambrosini, 2015). These items consisted of MMs' perceptions on the overall success of strategy and embodying the enactment of deliberate plans and the emergence of strategic initiatives.

*MMs practices of influencing* ( $KS^2=0.61$ ;  $MW^3=0.12$ ;  $ICC1^4=0.40$ ;  $ICC2^5=0.57$ ;  $Rwg(\text{mean})^6=0.76$ ). Divergent strategic behavior was considered to measure MMs practices of influencing (Ahearne, Lam, & Kraus, 2014; Tarakci, Ates, Floyd, Ahn, & Wooldridge, 2018; Pappas & Wooldridge, 2007), with a focus on facilitating adaptability for three reasons. First, MMs divergent strategic behavior challenge the “dominant logic” of the firm (Pappas & Wooldridge, 2007) that is usually sustained by TMs, representing, therefore, risks to the relationship between these two groups. Second, facilitating adaptability is downward in nature (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992) and provides a smoother implementation, as it helps employees cope with emerging market trends not accounted for during the planning processes. Third, facilitating adaptability was found to have a monotonic and positive relationship with objective business unit performance, with calls to remain a priority for all MMs (Ahearne, Lam, & Kraus 2014).

I asked each respondent to rate their own facilitating adaptability efforts along with their ratings of two co-workers whose day-to-day job activities they are familiar with (Pappas & Wooldridge, 2007). I did this in an attempt to decrease possible effects of common method bias and improve overall data reliability. This process lead to 67 respondents being rated by at least one co-worker. I afterwards averaged peer ratings and compared then to the self-assessment values using the Kolmogorov Smirnov and Wilcoxon tests (Hollander & Wolfe, 1999). After considering the results of these tests, I was able to obtain the five items of facilitating adaptability construct by using the means of self-evaluation and peer evaluation answers.

*MMs practices of involving.* Strategizing practices of involving were measured through the MMs perceptions of TMs participative leadership. I believe this specific construct captures the idea of MMs involving, since participative leadership is associated with TMs’ seeking MMs input on strategy making (Edmondson, Roberto, & Watkins, 2003) and also involving their subordinates in decisions (Lam, Huang, & Chan, 2015; Miao, Newman, Schwarz, & Xu, 2003; Somech, 2006). Recent evidence suggests as well that MMs involving is an aspect that is situated inside of the dimension of TMs participative leadership (Raes & van Vlijmen, 2017). Hence, three items of participative leadership were adapted from the subsequent concepts developed by Raes, Heijltjes,

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<sup>2</sup> Kolmogorov–Smirnov.

<sup>3</sup> Mann-Whitney.

<sup>4</sup> Interclass correlation

<sup>5</sup> Inter-rater reliability

<sup>6</sup> Statistical significance for interrater agreement

Glunk, and Roe (2011: 113) as follows: '*TMT puts a high value on MM information, seeks frequent interaction with MMs to obtain this information, and uses the MMs' information as a basis for strategy formulation*'.

*Relationship quality between TMs and MMs.* I measured the relationship quality between TMs and MMs using the six items developed by Ashford, Rothbard, Piderit, and Dutton (1998) in their study on MMs influencing through issue selling. Thus, each middle manager evaluated their relationship with TMs for several dimensions, such as "cordial," "friendly," and "close".

*Control variables.* Finally, I controlled for different variables mentioned in previous studies as being associated with MMs contextual knowledge, strategic understanding, or perceived power inside the organization, all of them relevant for MMs strategizing practices. These variables were tenure with the industry (De Clercq, Castañer, & Belausteguigoitia, 2011; Dutton, Asford, O'Neil, & Lawrence, 2001), tenure with the organization (Ahearne, Lam, & Kraus, 2014; Tarakci, Ates, Floyd, Ahn, & Wooldridge, 2018), tenure in position (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992; Schilit, 1987), job title (Thomas & Ambrosini, 2015), and age (Pappas & Wooldridge, 2007).

Most of my measures were adapted from the published literature, using five-point Likert scales anchored by 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree. Since collecting data from the same questionnaire and the same source potentially can lead to common method biases, I performed Harman's single-factor test measurement (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). These analyses indicated that common method variance did not have any impact on my results.

I tested convergent and discriminant validity using the approach suggested by Fornell and Larcker (1981). Accordingly, I considered convergent validity for all variables with values for average variance extracted (AVE) higher than 0.5. As shown in Table 2, these values were in excess of the shared variances between constructs, thereby suggesting discriminant validity. I also applied the cross-factor loading method (Barclay, Higgins, & Thompson, 1995), which indicates discriminant validity when the factorial load of the item is greater than all its cross-factor loads. To verify construct dimensionality, I used the criteria of parallel lines (Hoyle & Duval, 2004). Results from the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin tests (KMO) revealed adequate factor loadings for all the variables (higher than 0.50). Additionally, I used Cronbach's alpha (CA) and composite reliability (CC) to measure reliability (Chin, 1998), indeed finding all scores were higher than 0.7 (Tenenhaus, Vinzi, Chatelin, & Lauro, 2005).



Table 2. Reliability, convergent and discriminant validity of variables

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b>AVE</b>	<b>CA</b>	<b>CR</b>	<b>KMO</b>	<b>Dim.</b>	<b>SV</b>
MMs practices of involving	3	0.78	0.85	0.85	0.71	1	0.48
Relationship quality	6	0.65	0.86	0.87	0.82	1	0.48
Implementation performance	6	0.67	0.93	0.91	0.87	1	0.40
MMs practices of influencing	5	0.69	0.88	0.87	0.80	1	0.30

AVE = Average variance extracted, CA = Cronbach's alpha; CR = Composite reliability; KMO = Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin; Dim = Dimensionality; SV = Shared variance

Table 3. Principal components analysis results and measures

Measures and sources	Description	Factor loading
MMs practices of involving (Raes, Heijltjes, Glunk, & Roe, 2011; Raes & van Vlijmen, 2017)	Directors puts a high value on information they receive from me and my peers	0,911
	Directors seeks frequent interaction with me and my peers to obtain information	0,850
	Directors use the information they receive from me and my peers as a basis for strategy formulation	0,889
Relationship quality between TMs and MMs (Ashford, Rothbard, Piderit, & Dutton, 1998)	My relationship with directors is cordial	0,882
	My relationship with directors is friendly	0,909
	My relationship with directors is distant	0,485
	My relationship with directors is open	0,889
	My relationship with directors is trusting	0,800
	My relationship with directors is close	0,798
MMs practices of influencing (Ahearne, Lam, & Kraus, 2014; Tarakci, Ates, Floyd, Ahn, & Wooldridge, 2018; Pappas & Wooldridge, 2007)	I (or this person) encourage informal discussion and information sharing	0,744
	I (or this person) relax regulations to get new projects started	0,846
	I (or this person) buy time for experimental programs	0,860
	I (or this person) locate and provide resources for trial projects	0,891
	I (or this person) provide a safe haven for experimental programs	0,818
Implementation performance (Menon, Bharadwaj, Adidam, & Edison, 1999; Miller, Wilson, & Hickson, 2004; Noble & Mokwa, 1999; Thomas & Ambrosini, 2015)	Our strategies are examples of effective strategy implementation	0,791
	Strategy implementation efforts are generally considered a success in this firm	0,825
	I personally think that the implementation of strategies have been a success in this firm	0,810
	The implementation of strategies is considered a success in my area	0,839
	The right kind of resources is allocated to strategy implementation efforts	0,847
	Adequate resources are allocated to strategy implementation efforts	0,828

Source: The Author

## 5. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The means, standard deviations, and correlations between the variables are presented in Table 4. Correlations between the independent variables of MMs practices of involving and influencing were slightly higher than the threshold value of 0.50. To mitigate any possibility of having a multicollinearity problem, I examined whether the variance inflation factors (VIFs) were higher than 10, and that was not the case.

My hypotheses were tested using multiple regression analysis. Applying the recommendations of Hair, Anderson, Tatham, and Black (1998), I centered all variables (excepting the dummies related to job title) and proceeded in a hierarchical approach. Table 5 contains the results for each model with the standardized  $\beta$ -coefficient estimates, adjusted coefficient of determination, F-values, as well as any changes in the R-squared.

Model 1 includes the controls (age, job title, tenure with the organization, tenure with the industry, and tenure in position). Age was the only significant predictor for perceived implementation performance. The addition of MMs influencing in Model 2 added 25.5% to the explained variance in Model 1 ( $F = 7.12, p \leq 0.01$ ). So hypothesis 1a was supported ( $\alpha = 0.55, p \leq 0.01$ ).

Accordingly, Model 3 presents the results for Hypotheses 1b and 1c. MMs practices of involving had a significant and positive relationship with implementation performance ( $\alpha = 0.34, p \leq 0.01$ ), confirming Hypothesis 1b. The presence of MMs practices of involving also added 11.3% to the explained variance in Model 2 ( $F = 9.83, p \leq 0.01$ ). Therefore, it complements MMs practices of influencing and further improves implementation performance beyond their individual main effects, thereby supporting Hypothesis 1c.

Hypothesis 2 suggests there is a moderating effect of relationship quality between TMs and MMs on implementation performance, thus exerting a dual impact that is positive for MMs practices of involving (H2a) and negative for MMs practices of influencing (H2b). Before testing for this dual impact, I had to verify if such a pattern would also occur for these two independent variables separately. The results for Model 4 and Model 5 demonstrated no moderating effect in these particular circumstances. This is because the moderating effect of relationship quality between TMs and MMs on implementation performance is not present for MMs practices of influencing, and is only slightly present for MMs practices of involving ( $\alpha = 0.05, p \leq 0.1$ ). On the contrary, Model

6 reveals that the presence of relationship quality jointly moderating implementation performance associated with MMs practices of involving and influencing added 5.4% to the explained variance in Model 3 ( $F=9.55, p \leq 0.01$ ). These results confirmed Hypothesis 2a because the moderating effect is positive for MMs practices of involving ( $\alpha = 0.20, p \leq 0.01$ ). The result additionally support Hypothesis 2b since there is a negative moderating effect for MMs practices of influencing ( $\alpha = -0.16, p \leq 0.05$ ).

Table 4. Means, standard deviations, and correlations

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.MMs practices of involving	3.97	0.8	1.00							
2.Relationship quality	4.05	0.76	0.70**	1.00						
3.Implementation performance	4.19	0.6	0.63**	0.52**	1.00					
4.MMs practices of influencing	3.81	0.64	0.55**	0.42**	0.52**	1.00				
5.Age	40.15	7.65	0.20*	0.30**	0.19*	0.11	1.00			
6.Tenure with the organization	10.85	8.06	0.30**	0.17†	0.08	0.20*	0.13	1.00		
7.Tenure with the industry	13.86	8.38	0.20*	0.19†	0.03	0.18†	0.39**	0.38**	1.00	
8.Tenure with the position	3.42	3.43	-0.03	0.01	-0.05	0.00	0.22*	0.29**	0.21*	1.00

†p ≤ 0.1; \*p ≤ 0.05; \*\*p ≤ 0.01.

Table 5. Results of regression analyses

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Age	0.01*	0.01**	0.01*	0.01*	0.01*	0.01†
Tenure with the organization	0.00	0.00	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00
Tenure with the industry	-0.01	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00
Job title 1	0.01	-0.11	-0.25*	-0.26*	-0.27*	-0.25*
Job title 2	0.22	-0.17	-0.31*	-0.36*	-0.38*	-0.36*
Tenure with the position	-0.00	-0.01	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00
MMs practices of influencing		0.55**	0.35**	0.18	0.34**	1.01**
MMs practices of involving			0.34**	0.258*	0.00	-0.50†
MMs influencing x Relationship quality				0.04		-0.16*
MMs involving x Relationship quality					0.05†	0.20**
R <sup>2</sup>	9.7%	34.4%	45.5%	46.9%	48.6%	50.9%
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	4.1%	29.6%	40.9%	41.8%	43.6%	45.6%
F	1.72	7.12**	9.83**	9.13**	9.78**	9.55**
VIF	1.56	1.56	1.76	-	-	-

†p ≤ 0.1; \*p ≤ 0.05; \*\*p ≤ 0.01

## 6. DISCUSSION

This study does contribute to the current knowledge on the antecedents of implementation performance (Thomas & Ambrosini, 2015; Wilson & Hickson, 2004), indicating there are indeed benefits related to the coexistence of two different set of practices which MMs use while participating in strategy. These practices are involving and influencing. Distinctions between both kinds of MMs strategizing practices were not considered by previous research, thereby suggesting a clarification was needed for the middle management perspective on strategy (Floyd & Wooldridge, 2017; Wooldridge, Schmid, & Floyd, 2008).

My study also shows that when there is good relationship quality between TMs and MMs, the effects on implementation performance coming from the MMs strategizing practices of involving and influencing can be, respectively, both stronger and weaker. Hence, how a system of social exchanges actually shape strategy outcomes is emphasized (Floyd & Lane, 2000).

These results are in line with the empirical evidence displaying positive outcomes associated with MMs practices of involving (Canales, 2013; Ketokivi & Castaner, 2004; Vila & Canales, 2008; Wooldridge & Floyd, 1990; Westley, 1990). Indeed, I reinforce that shared understanding, coordination and other factors associated with MMs practices of involving as it relates to better implementation efforts (Dooley, Fryxell, & Judge, 2000; Hodgkinson, Whittington, Johnson, & Schwarz, 2006; Raes, Heijltjes, Glunk, & Roe, 2011; Vila & Canales, 2008). This finding additionally typifies another positive consequence of participative leadership that happens along with others presented in the literature, including employee performance (Lam, Huang, & Chan, 2015), team effectiveness (Edmondson, Roberto, & Watkins, 2003), team reflection (Somech, 2006), team creativity (Li, Liu, & Luo, 2018) and organizational commitment (Miao, Newman, Schwarz, & Xu, 2013).

Finding a positive connection between MMs practices of influencing and implementation performance also appears to have relevant implications for theory. The main outcome from MMs practices of influencing, as explored by studies thus far, has been firm performance (Ahearne, Lam, & Kraus 2014; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1997). Implementation has been considered more as a context or process through which MMs employ strategic influence, resisting (Guth & MacMillan, 1986), dealing with emotions

(Huy, 2002, 2011, 2014), responding to conflict (Lê & Jarzabkowski, 2015), and making sense of plans (Balogun & Johnson, 2004). For that reason, the current study contributes to the research by presenting implementation performance as a direct upshot of MMs practices of influencing. Facilitating adaptability moreover seems to be a central strategy implementation behavior being performed by MMs, supporting the findings of Ahearne, Lam and Kraus (2014).

This study likewise provides evidence of the stream of research that has investigated the role played by social relationships between TMs and MMs in strategy (Canales, 2013; Castañer & Yu, 2017; Floyd & Lane, 2000; Glaser, Fourné, & Elfring, 2015; Raes, Heijltjes, Glunk, & Roe, 2011; Vuori & Huy, 2016). I show that relationship quality between TMs and MMs positively moderate implementation performance associated with MMs practices of involving. In this respect, I provide further evidence that relationship quality promotes complementary interactions that are valuable to TMs and MMs engage in interlocking rationales about new attention structures (Canales, 2013). Relationship quality associated with TMs therefore allows MMs to have a certain further dominance in strategic conversations, making them feel more energized and capable of sustaining their energy over long periods of time (Westley, 1990), both essential aspects leading to implementation performance.

However, since this moderating effect on implementation performance was negative for MMs practices of influencing, I further show a side of relationship quality with TMs that is underdeveloped in the current literature. Previous studies actually suggest that relationship quality with TMs tends to be a contextual factor increasing MMs intentions of displaying strategic influence by using issue selling (e.g., Ashford, Rothbard, Piderit, & Dutton, 1998; Ling, Floyd, & Baldrige, 2005).

I discuss two possible explanations for this negative moderating effect of relationship quality between TMs and MMs on implementation performance coming from MMs practices of influencing. First, involving can represent a preferential practice employed by MMs while participating in strategy, mostly whenever they have good relationships with TMs. In contexts like these, raising issues may already be part of the designated and accepted formal strategic practices, thereby making less prominent the implementation benefits that stream from MMs practices of influencing. Second, MMs practices of influencing represents a form of political behavior (Guo, Huy, & Xiao, 2017; Guth & MacMillan, 1986) which often appears in response to conflict (Pettigrew, 1977; March, 1962) and works as a mechanism of strategy implementation (Lê & Jarzabkowski,

2015). As MMs' perceptions of their good relationship quality with TMs may illustrate an organizational context that is facing less conflict, it is reasonable to expect less implementation performance coming from this source of MMs practice of influencing. Hence, finding this negative moderating effect reinforces the inherent complexities embedded in the TMs and MMs interface (Raes, Heijltjes, Glunk, & Roe, 2011; Simsek, Heavey, & Fox, 2017).

It is worth mentioning that TMs' power plays a key role in strategy (Finkelstein, 1992) and that this power can be used to harm the strategic roles of MMs (Currie & Procter, 2005; Laine & Vaara, 2007; Westley, 1990). As a result, social exchanges between TMs and MMs taking place in the practice of strategy may perhaps be those that are strongly negotiated, in which actors "increase their chance of making a better agreement by bargaining harder and making fewer concessions" (Molm, Peterson, Takahashi, 1999: 881). These negotiations allow the most powerful actors to increase possible inequalities happening in social exchanges (Molm, 2003). Therefore, such inequalities could explain why the relationship quality between TMs and MMs only has a positive moderating effect on implementation performance as derived from MMs strategizing practices of involving, that are negotiated with TMs and enabled by them.

These results instigate the need for more debate on the strategy implementation contexts wherein the social exchanges that are based on good relationship quality may have some extent negative consequences on individual behavior. For example, according to the study by Anand, Vidyarthi, Liden and Rousseau (2010), individuals with enhanced employment arrangements demonstrate less citizenship behavior when they are face with a higher quality of workplace relationships with their supervisors, colleagues, and the organization. This happens because employment arrangements can act as substitutes for relationship quality, so they can be two alternative forms of support that compensate for the other's absence (Anand, Vidyarthi, Liden, & Rousseau, 2010). Along the same lines, by reinforcing the reciprocity norm (Gouldner, 196), high quality relationships may serve as a contingency mechanism that constrains the task performance benefits that arises from individuals' expressions of personality (Kamdar & Van Dyne, 2007). It is thus important to understand that relationship quality between TMs and MMs is as a resource which can complement, compete or even replace many others resources that coexist and evolve during the course of strategy, either hindering or enacting actual implementation performance.



Such discussion does not mean that managers should avoid having a good quality of relationship with their superiors. Actually, is an understanding of tensions and contradictions that can exist in interactions between TMs and MMs. These paradoxical elements will possibly be more evident in organizational contexts that are facing change, such as turnaround (Tangpong, Abebe, & Li, 2015) and executive succession (Ma & Seidl, 2018), which have time constraints that limits an appropriate relationship building around TMs and MMs. In situations such as these, far from solving the possible problems and dilemmas derived from the relationship quality between people from different managerial levels, it might be more useful to develop “workable certainties” upon which TMs and MMs would be constantly making sense (Lüscher & Lewis, 2008).

This twofold product that encompasses relationship quality between TMs and MMs also suggests that patterns of social exchanges may produce and then orient specific interpersonal implementation routes, as distinguished by particular combinations of the ways that MMs participate in strategy efforts. Here I illustrate some of the valuable implications for actual practice. For example, organizations that are facing a great proximity between TMs and MMs will have higher implementation performance if they emphasize MMs’ involvement in conjoined strategic planning. On the other hand, a balance of MMs practices of involving and influencing will be more suitable for those organizations whose social contexts have a moderate to lower closeness between TMs and MMs. Consequently, for these organizations, fostering the quality of the relationship between people from different managerial levels can further power the benefits of open and shared strategic-decision making.

Irrespective of such patterns of social exchanges between TMs and MMs, implementation performance is higher when MMs strategizing practices of involving and influencing coexist. Thus companies who want to be relatively successful over long periods of time have to build the quality of both forms of practices which MMs use while participating in actual strategy.

But what could explain the positive connection between MMs age’ and their perceptions about implementation performance? Although age was treated here as a control variable, it is appealing to discuss about this specific result. Age is a demographic characteristic commonly tested as an antecedent that favors organizational commitment, i.e. the degree an individual intent to stay with the organization because of a desire or a belief (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Cohen & Lowenberg, 1990; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Previous empirical evidence demonstrates that such organizational commitment leads to

higher job satisfaction (Bateman & Strasser, 1984; Vandenberg & Lance, 1992). Therefore, this might indicate that aged MM's have higher levels of organizational commitment, job satisfaction and will consequently perceive implementation performance as well as other strategy outcomes in a more favorable light.

My results also suggest two opportunities for MMs who want to develop their strategizing practices and resulting contributions to implementation. First, MMs have to be flexible and able to engage in involving and influencing strategic activities, and understand them as complementary channels to use to leverage implementation performance. Second, the relationship quality with TMs can be evaluated by MMs as a contextual factor that directs MMs choices of contributing to implementation through involving and / or influencing. These opportunities can become viable trajectories for the development of more strategic MMs.

## **7. CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

Analyzing 25 years of research about the middle management perspective on strategy, Wooldridge, Schmid and Floyd (2008) suggest that future studies should establish links between MMs activities and broader outcomes. Based on gathered survey data from 104 MMs in a telecommunications company, I answer this call by exploring implementation performance. This effort contributes to the literature by concluding that implementation performance is higher when two different types of MM strategizing practices coexist: involving and influencing.

Another important conclusion reinforced by this study is an acknowledgment of the complex moderating effect of relationship quality between TMs and MMs. Different from the perspective held by previous studies, I provide solid evidence that patterns of social exchanges between TMs and MMs are at the same time both good and bad for MMs strategizing practices. Indeed, the moderating effect on implementation performance was found to be positive for MMs practices of involving, but negative for MMs practices of influencing.

Regarding social exchange theory, this study also reveals a valuable conclusion concerning its application in interactions between TMs and MMs thorough the practice of strategy. It appears that the reciprocity and negotiated rules might incite, to some extent, power use and less equality (e.g., Molm, 1997; Molm, Peterson, & Takahashi, 1999). This is because the relationship quality among TMs and MMs favors implementation routes that are based on MMs strategizing practices of involving, exactly those that are more close to TMs and expected by them.

Although this study can have many possible implications for both theory and practice, my results must be interpreted in light of its limitations. Since cross-sectional Data was used, it is not possible to be fully certain about causality. Still, this view has to be balanced with the evidence that all effects match with the theorized direction and passed the checks to display and confirm the robustness of my findings. These data additionally come from one company in a single industry. Whereas this approach was also used by previous studies (e.g., Ahearne, Lam, & Kraus, 2014; Tarakci, Ates, Floyd, Ahn, & Wooldridge, 2018), it compromises the generalizability of these results for other contexts. Having only MMs respondents is another limitation of this study. Subordinates at the operational management level and superiors from the top management team could

increase the reliability of the variables. However, after applying Harman's single-factor test, it appears common method variance is not present. All reliability scores of the variables are also at acceptable levels. Finally, while my data comprise a representative sample of all MMs within this company, it is noticeably still a small sample, thereby making more difficult to identify the true effects that are hidden by soft statistical power.

Future research can be designed by considering the noted limitations of this study. Applying a processual and longitudinal approach has likewise the potential to shed further light on how the dynamics of MMs strategizing practices of involving and influencing relate to each other and evolve over time. This research would be even more fruitful if the studies analyze different strategic initiatives having particular patterns of social exchanges between TMs and MMs. At the same time, facilitating adaptability is downward by nature, so further investigations may perhaps analyze the effects of other MMs strategizing practices of influencing that happens in different directions, like upward and lateral directions inside the organization, or even related to external stakeholders.

Another possible avenue for research is based on the power use and equality embedded in those social exchanges. Since relationship quality with TMs has a dual effect on implementation performance that relates to MMs strategizing practices, how does power use and equality further explain this ambiguity? Finally, future studies could explore the possible variances of MMs practices of involving and influencing based on the degree of strategic change faced by their organizations.

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## APPENDIX

### SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

#### Pesquisa FGV

Olá, seja bem-vindo(a) ao questionário sobre Envolvimento Estratégico na A-Telecom.

O tempo médio de resposta é de 10 minutos.

Lembramos que suas respostas serão utilizadas para propósitos acadêmicos e tratadas de maneira confidencial.

Sua participação é voluntária e você pode deixar de participar a qualquer momento, sem acarretar nenhum prejuízo.

Para começar a responder o questionário, clique abaixo em "Próximo":

As perguntas a seguir envolvem os diretores da A-Telecom ilustrados na figura abaixo:

Responda se você discorda ou concorda com cada uma das afirmações abaixo sobre esses diretores da A-Telecom, considerando uma escala que vai de 1 (discordo totalmente) a 5 (concordo totalmente).

Os diretores valorizam muito as informações que recebem de mim e de meus pares

Os diretores interagem frequentemente comigo e com meus pares para obter informações

Os diretores utilizam as informações que recebem de mim e de meus pares como base para a formulação da estratégia

O meu relacionamento com os diretores é cordial

O meu relacionamento com os diretores é amigável

O meu relacionamento com os diretores é distante

O meu relacionamento com os diretores é aberto

O meu relacionamento com os diretores é confiável

O meu relacionamento com os diretores é próximo

A lista abaixo contém afirmações sobre a implementação de estratégias na A-Telecom.

Responda se você discorda ou concorda com cada uma dessas afirmações, considerando uma escala que vai de 1 (discordo totalmente) a 5 (concordo totalmente).

Nossas estratégias são um exemplo de implementação eficaz

Os esforços de implementação das estratégias geralmente são considerados um sucesso nesta empresa

Eu pessoalmente penso que a implementação de estratégias tem sido um sucesso nesta empresa

A implementação de estratégias é considerada um sucesso na minha área / diretoria

O tipo certo de recursos é alocado para esforços de implementação de estratégias

Recursos adequados são alocados para esforços de implementação de estratégias

A lista abaixo contém afirmações sobre a maneira como você se envolve com a estratégia na A-Telecom.

Responda se você discorda ou concorda com cada uma dessas afirmações, considerando uma escala que vai de 1 (discordo totalmente) a 5 (concordo totalmente).

Eu justifico e defino novos programas

Eu avalio os méritos de novas propostas

Eu procuro novas oportunidades

Eu proponho programas ou projetos para os diretores

Eu incentivo a discussão informal e o compartilhamento de informações

Eu flexibilizo regras e normas para que novos programas tenham início

Eu ganho tempo para programas experimentais

Eu localizo e forneço recursos para projetos experimentais

Eu forneço um porto seguro para programas experimentais

Identifique abaixo o nome e sobrenome de uma pessoa da A-Telecom que você conheça bem e que esteja no mesmo nível hierárquico que você está no organograma da empresa.

A lista abaixo contém afirmações sobre a maneira como essa pessoa identificada por você se envolve com a estratégia na A-Telecom.

Responda se você discorda ou concorda com cada uma dessas afirmações, considerando uma escala que vai de 1 (discordo totalmente) a 5 (concordo totalmente).

Essa pessoa justifica e define novos programas  
Essa pessoa avalia os méritos de novas propostas  
Essa pessoa procura novas oportunidades  
Essa pessoa propõe programas ou projetos para os diretores  
Essa pessoa incentiva a discussão informal e o compartilhamento de informações  
Essa pessoa flexibiliza regras e normas para que novos programas tenham início  
Essa pessoa ganha tempo para programas experimentais  
Essa pessoa localiza e fornece recursos para projetos experimentais  
Essa pessoa fornece um porto seguro para programas experimentais

Identifique abaixo o nome e sobrenome de outra pessoa da A-Telecom que você conheça bem e que esteja no mesmo nível hierárquico que você está no organograma da empresa.

A lista abaixo contém afirmações sobre a maneira como essa outra pessoa identificada por você se envolve com a estratégia na A-Telecom.

Responda se você discorda ou concorda com cada uma dessas afirmações, considerando uma escala que vai de 1 (discordo totalmente) a 5 (concordo totalmente).

Essa pessoa justifica e define novos programas  
Essa pessoa avalia os méritos de novas propostas  
Essa pessoa procura novas oportunidades  
Essa pessoa propõe programas ou projetos para os diretores  
Essa pessoa incentiva a discussão informal e o compartilhamento de informações  
Essa pessoa flexibiliza regras e normas para que novos programas tenham início  
Essa pessoa ganha tempo para programas experimentais  
Essa pessoa localiza e fornece recursos para projetos experimentais  
Essa pessoa fornece um porto seguro para programas experimentais

As perguntas abaixo dizem respeito a você e sua experiência na A-Telecom.

Qual é o seu nome e sobrenome?

Qual é o seu gênero?

Masculino



Feminino

Outro. Por favor, especifique:

Você tem quantos anos? Por favor, responda em números.

Qual é o seu nível de escolaridade?

Ensino Fundamental

Ensino Médio

Ensino Superior

Pós-graduação

Mestrado

Doutorado

Você trabalha na A-Telecom há quantos anos e/ou meses?

Você trabalha neste setor / indústria há quantos anos e/ou meses?

Qual é o seu cargo atual na A-Telecom?

Você ocupa este cargo a quantos anos e/ou meses?

Você está subordinado(a) à qual diretoria executiva da A-Telecom?

Para finalizar o questionário, clique abaixo em "Concluído".