



Aligning Employees' Objectives with the Organizational Goals

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Abstract: Aligning employees with the organization's strategic goals has become increasingly important as organizations strive to achieve the optimum levels in organizational performance, profitability and business sustainability. The aim of this study was to reveal the main barriers in the alignment process between employees' objectives and the organizational goals in a governmental corporation. Secondly, to propose a suitable and applicable course of action for better organizational alignment. To achieve optimum results; both qualitative and quantitative research methods (detailed questionnaire and personal interviews) have been applied in this paper. Gathered data have been analyzed by spread sheets and web-based models such as Google forms. The results show that there is a lack of effective communication throughout the corporation, knowledge and capabilities are not developed, employees are not involved or empowered, and finally people efforts are not rewarded or recognized. Furthermore, the results illustrate the satisfactory factors that affect employees' job performance and achieve the highest level of motivation. The recommended action plan in this paper is based on information gathered through an extensive literature review, and researcher experience in this field. This study is an attempt to establish the basic criteria to enhance leadership credibility, minimize wasted resources, and achieve the optimum utilization of human resources in the governmental sector.

Keyword: cascading and aligning goals; organizational alignment; strategic human resource management.

1. INTRODUCTION

An organization is strategically aligned when all employees understand what the organization wants to achieve in a certain period of time, makes decisions and takes actions based on that strategy, and align the department and individual goals with higher level organizational goals. Then they will be more satisfied with their objectives, and become more effective to achieve the optimum performance, profitability and business sustainability.

Prior literature defines alignment as a valuable and scarce resource that has significant consequences for organizational performance.[1] For example, Powell posits alignment as a dynamic capability that brings attention to both the internal and external organizational factors).[2] Other scholars have described alignment as an adaptive dynamic capability, an integrative capacity that is a "source of sustainable competitive advantage" to help organizations achieve their strategic potential.[3] Avison, Jones, Powell, Wilson identified six popular descriptions of alignment, which describes alignment as fit, integration, bridge, harmony, fusion and linkage[4].

Alignment can be described as "heading in the same direction".[5] Well aligned organizations apply effective leadership and Human Resource Development (HRD) processes to create a systematic agreement among strategic Goals, tactical behaviors, performance and reward systems, and the organizational culture. This agreement helps people to remove barriers to cooperation and performance and thereby increases the performance of individuals, processes, and the organization as a whole.[6] A recent study showed that "companies with large numbers of dissatisfied workers experience greater absenteeism and lower productivity-as well as a 51% higher employee turnover rate".[7]

This paper mainly focuses on identifying the gaps between employees' objectives and the organizational goals in a specific government-owned corporation in Sudan. This has been done through gathering data from different sub-organizations affiliated to the specific government-owned corporation by means of

Questionnaire and interviews, collecting responses, analyzing the data collected, then discussing the results, and recommending course of actions. This paper is organized as follows: Section II Methodology, Section III Results and Discussion, Section IV Conclusion and Recommendations and Section V Future Work.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Instruments

For most efficient results; both qualitative and quantitative research methods have been applied in this study. The study started by reviewing related literature and collecting related information. The survey covered a random selection of corporation employees, including top level management, middle level management, senior and junior staff.

An in-depth interview has been conducted with key persons in the corporation to discuss the current situation of the corporation, including the main barriers and recommendations to align both goals and objectives toward corporation sustainability and higher levels of performance.

2.2 Population

The targeted population was the permanent staff in a specific governmental corporation in Sudan. For confidential reasons related to the industry, in addition to the similar characteristics of all companies, the targeted population in this study was randomly selected from 15 companies that have a total number of 347 employees.

2.3 Sample size

The technique of sampling and determination of sample size have a crucial role in survey-based research problems in applied statistics.[8] One of the best methods to determine sample size is using published tables, which provide the sample size for a given set of criteria.

Glenn [9]has presented the following table for the selection of sample size.

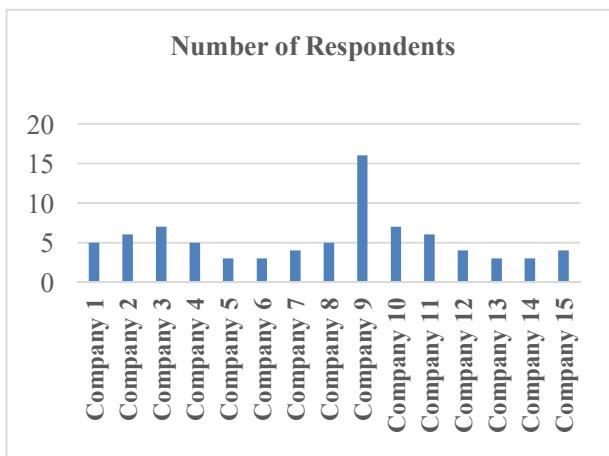
Table 1. Sample Size for Different Precision Levels where Confidence Level is 95%.

Size of Population	Sample Size (n) for Precision (e) of	
	5%	10%
100	81	51
125	96	56
150	110	61
200	134	67
250	154	72
300	172	76
350	187	78
400	201	81
450	212	82

From the table, for a target population of 347 employees and Precision Level of $\pm 10\%$ using interpolations, the result is a sample size of 77.88 respondents. Nevertheless, the survey sample size was **81 respondents**. This has been calculated into percentage for each company as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Number of sample size in each company

Company Number	Size of Population	Sample Size	Sample or Population
Company 1	20	5	25.0%
Company 2	24	6	25.0%
Company 3	18	7	38.9%
Company 4	22	5	22.7%
Company 5	23	3	13.0%
Company 6	21	3	14.3%
Company 7	24	4	16.7%
Company 8	17	5	29.4%
Company 9	56	16	28.6%
Company 10	21	7	33.3%
Company 11	23	6	26.1%
Company 12	22	4	18.2%
Company 13	18	3	16.7%
Company 14	22	3	13.6%
Company 15	16	4	25.0%
Total Number	347	81	23.3%

**Fig. 1.** Number of respondents from each company

The researcher endeavored to get a proportional sampling of each company; when comparing the number of respondents in a graphical way as shown in **Fig. 1**. An atypical number of respondents in the chart concerning **company 9**, which has 56 employees. However, with very little sample size, the tendency of

survey results will vary greatly, thus a higher number of respondents were required, such that **16 employees** (28.5% of the staff) were surveyed to achieve the desirable level of precision.

2.4 Data Collection

2.4.1 Primary Data

The questionnaire was given to 79 respondents in the governmental corporation who were at least 20 years old and able to answer a questionnaire effectively.

The questionnaire was written in English and translated into Arabic for some respondents to ensure clear understanding and precise answers. Furthermore, the researcher has conducted personal interviews with **5** managers from the top-level management, **7** managers from the middle management level, **12** from the senior staff, and **15** junior employees.

2.1 Research Design

Questionnaire and interviews were designed to identify and measure the gaps and barriers to achieve the alignment, in addition to the optimal solutions for each problem.

2.1.1 Secondary Data

This data has been gathered from related literature reviews, preceding researches, best practices in human resource management from articles, press, textbooks and related topics in the internet to complete the study.

2.2 Data analysis

2.2.1 Questionnaire

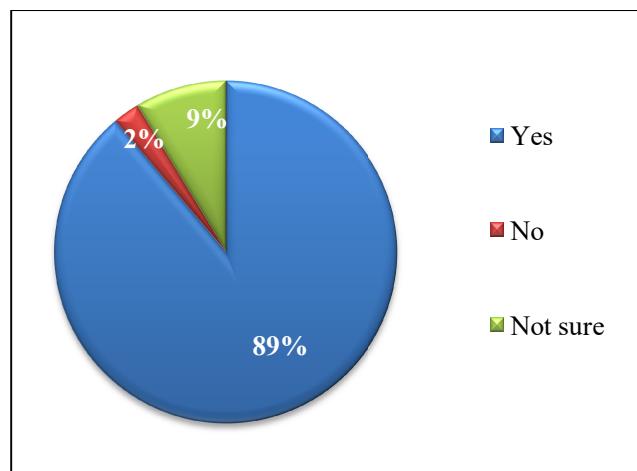
There are many types of online-based survey tools. “Google Forms” was used in this paper; as it is free and do not have any limitations on how many questions one can have in the survey and can have any number of polls. It is mobile friendly and can be done by the computer, mobile phone, etc. Another advantage of “Google Forms” is that all the responses are automatically collected in an excel spreadsheet and that makes it easier to analyze large sets of data using charts and other complex spreadsheet functions. It also supports a wide range of question types including comments, yes or no questions, scale and grid.

2.2.2 In-depth interview

The data were analyzed by content analysis; where frequencies and percentages were used.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The survey results were discussed as follows:

**Fig.2.** Degree of employees' understanding to their corporation's strategic goals

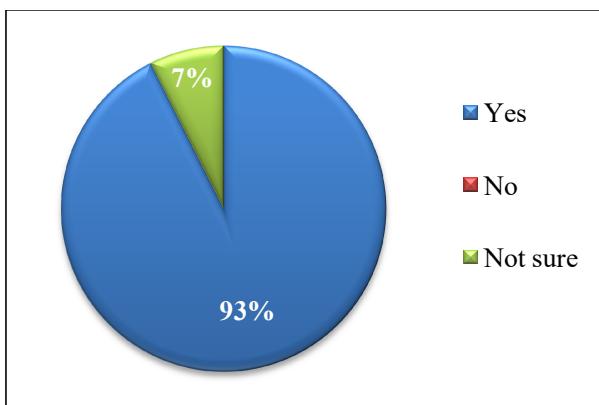


Fig. 3.Degree of employees' understanding to their business units' objectives

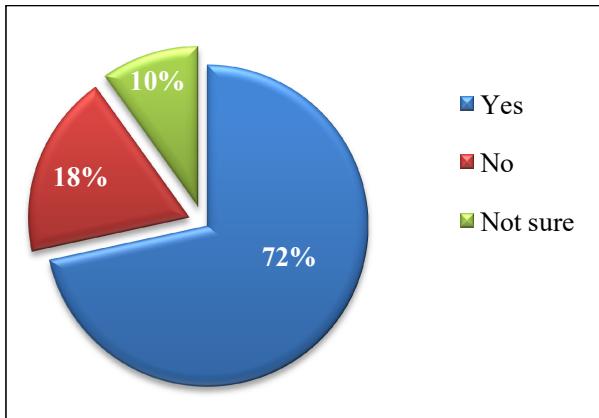


Fig. 4.Degree of employees' satisfaction of achieving their personal and professional goals

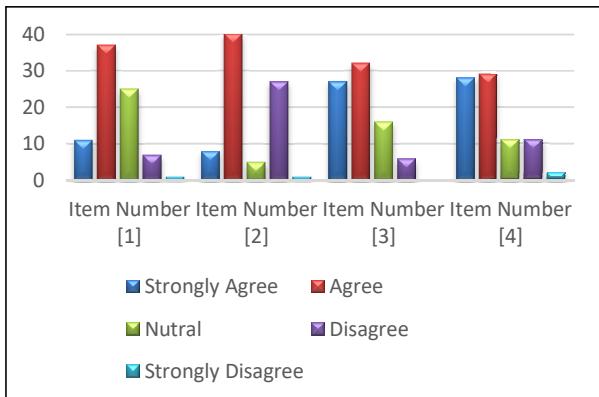


Fig. 5.Level of agreement with corporation issues

Level of agreement with the following items:

Item Number [1] Corporation policies

Item Number [2] Team work alignment

Item Number [3] Supervisors' capability of translating the organization's goals into meaningful assignments and objectives to their subordinates

Item Number [4] Employees' capability of achieving corporation's goals.

The above graph illustrated the reason behind employees' dissatisfaction with achieving their personal and professional goals; which concerns with supervisors' capability of translating the organization's goals into meaningful assignments and

The recommended solution is to adopt the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) as a sector-wide management system in this governmental corporation, because it enables organizations to translate the vision and strategy into action.

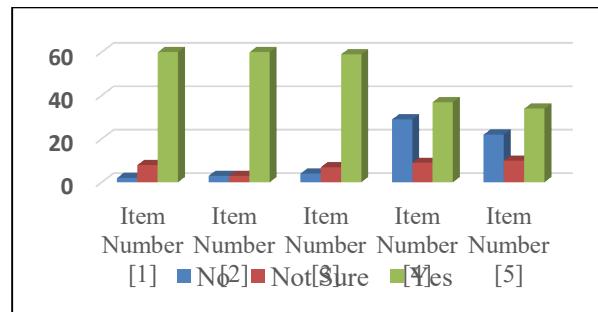


Fig. 6.Business unit strategic alignment of accountability, capabilities, and rewards

Availability of the following items:

Item Number [1]: Availability of an agreed-on strategy and goals that very clear to employees.

Item Number [2]: Availability of Strategic measure or a balanced scorecard.

Item Number [3]: Alignment of the strategic measure to business functions

Item Number [4]: Linking of the strategic measure to individual accountability and capabilities.

Item Number [5]: Linking of the strategic measure with rewards:

The above graph confirmed that the strategic goals and targets are not properly linked with individual accountability, capabilities, and rewards. The optional solution for such a barrier is to apply a SMART goals setting, and assign accountability measures with documented key performance indicators (KPI) and reward accomplishments or/and outstanding performance.

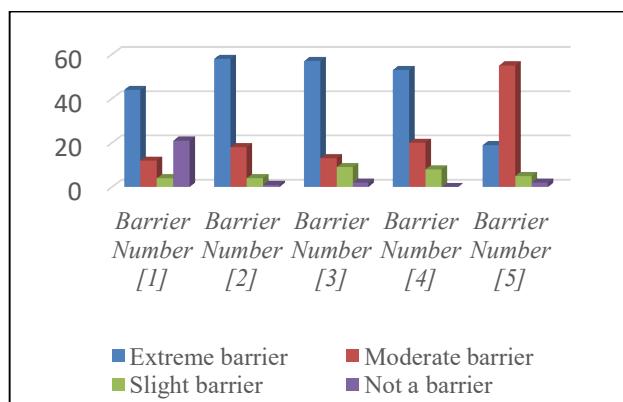


Fig. 7.Main barrier to organizational goals alignment

Identifying availability of the following barrier to organizational goals alignment:

Barrier Number [1]: People plans do not support the corporation strategic objectives.

Barrier Number [2]: People's knowledge and capabilities are not developed.

Barrier Number [3]: People do not communicate effectively throughout the corporation.

Barrier Number [5]: People are not rewarded, recognized and cared for.

This graph clearly recognized that the main obstacles behind organizational misalignment that available in this governmental corporation. The **interviews** literally confirmed the same four barriers (barriers number 1, 2, 3 and 4).

Furthermore, **EFQM** excellence model exactly indicates these five barriers as the most common ones. However, four of them have been indicated in this corporation.

The question for this chart has been derived from Maslow's hierarchy of needs, and motivation factors have been well-arranged from the highest motivation factor to the lowest factor, as follows:

1. Trustworthy leadership
2. Knowledge and career development
3. Higher salary and more benefits
4. Authorities and Power

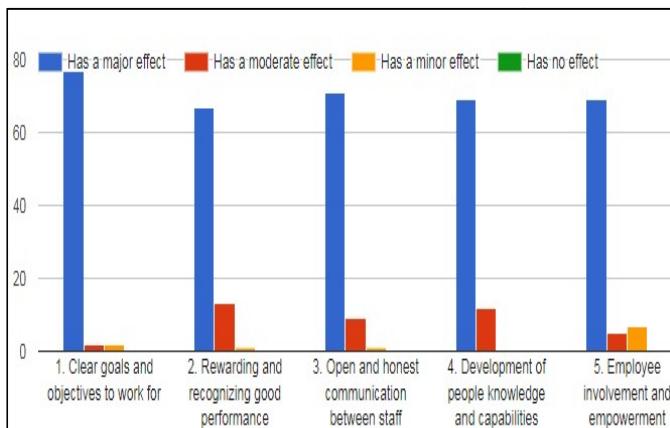


Fig. 8.Factors that affect individual performance

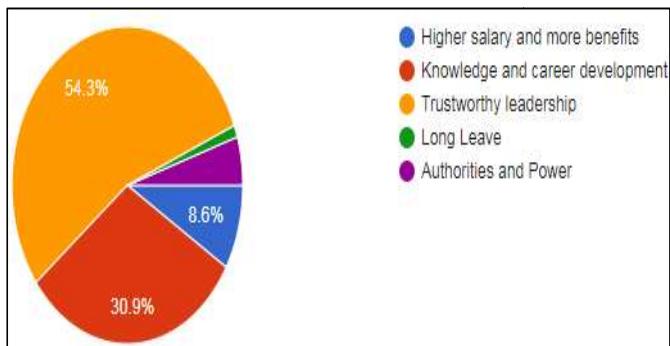


Fig. 9.Factors that motivate employees

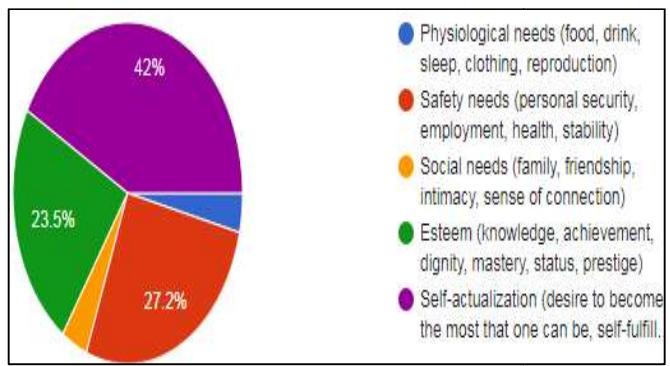


Fig. 10.Respondents' classification Maslow's hierarchy of needs

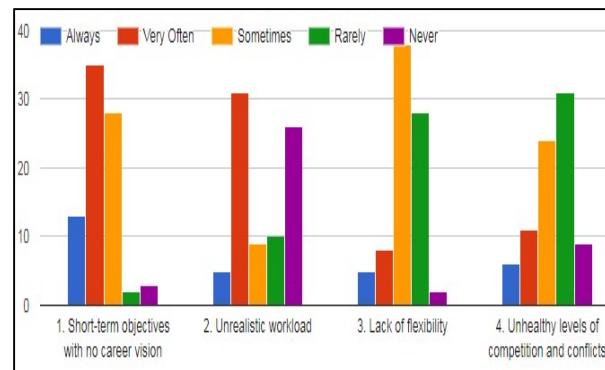


Fig. 11.Frequency of activities that discourage employees

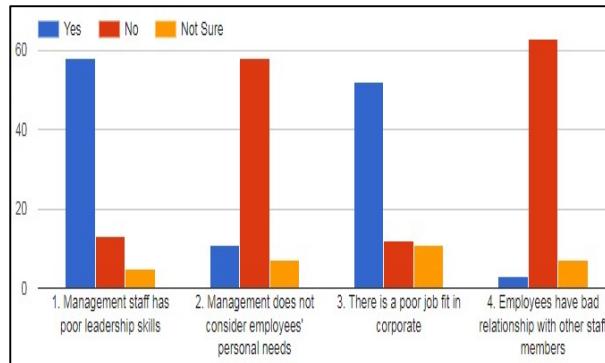


Fig. 12.Degree of employees' satisfaction with the communication levels

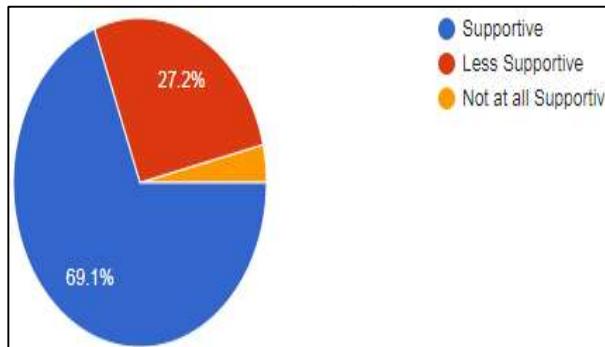


Fig. 13.Describing the overall atmosphere and its supportiveness to employees

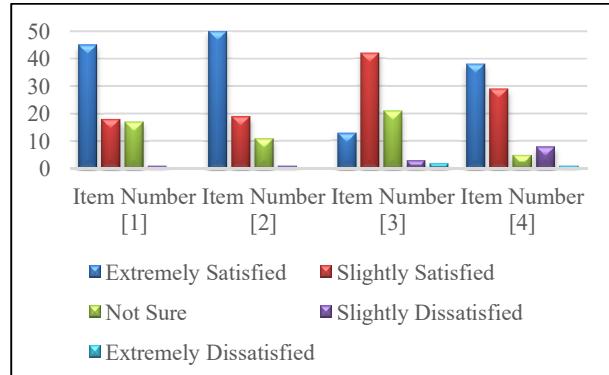


Fig. 14.Degree of management satisfaction with their employees' performance

Item Number [1]: Executive management's satisfaction with departmental plans.

Item Number [2]: Line manager's satisfaction with subordinates' plans.

Item Number [3]: Respondent's satisfaction with communication done by the line manager (supervisor) about your personal and professional needs.

Item Number [4]: General description of the overall atmosphere existing in the corporation regarding the exchange of information and ideas.

The result from the above graph indicated that some employees are not satisfied with line managers' communication about their personal and professional needs. Furthermore, some of the employees are slightly dissatisfied with the atmosphere in the corporation regarding to the exchange of information and ideas.

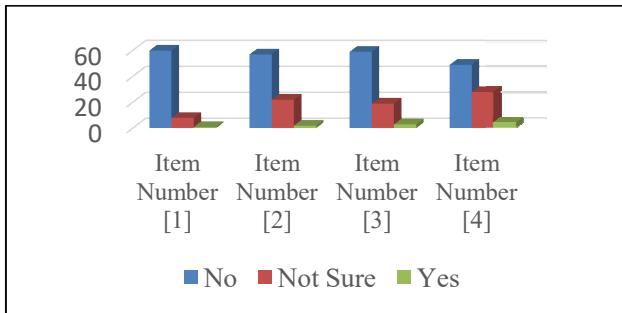


Fig. 15. Effectiveness of performance evaluation process

Following graph illustrates the agreement of respondent with the following items:

Item Number [1]: Respondent's business unit has a performance evaluation form.

Item Number [2]: Respondent's line manager clearly plans objectives and job duties.

Item Number [3]: Respondent's line manager periodically reviews the progress towards meeting these objectives.

Item Number [4]: At year-end, the respondent's line manager compares subordinates' actual performance with the predetermined objectives.

As shown in this figure, the performance evaluation procedure is ineffective; since a considerable number of managers do not clearly plan their subordinates' objectives, moreover, they do not quarterly review (QR) or even compare the actual performance with subordinates' objective east year-end. From the interviews, the justification of the presence of such gaps was referred to the fact that there is no documented job description (JD); therefore, there is no standard benchmark to compare with.

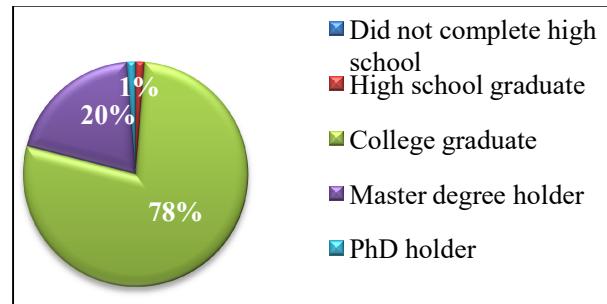
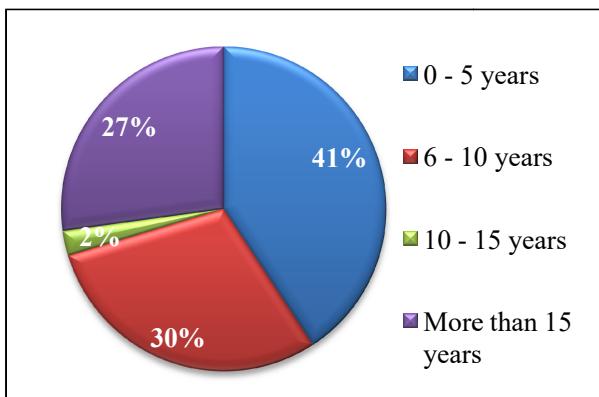


Fig. 17. Respondent's level of education

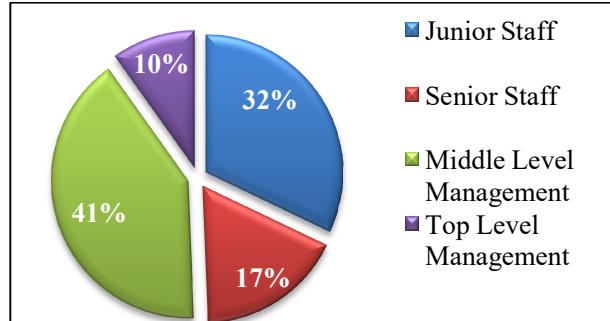


Fig. 18. Respondent's Level in the Organization Structure

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The survey confirmed that, the main obstacles behind organizational misalignment were identified, as follows:

Firstly, there is a gap in translating the organizational goals into actionable objectives and activities. The recommended solution to eliminate such a gap is to facilitate the adoption of the balanced scorecard as a sector-wide management system in this governmental corporation; since it enables organizations and employees to translate the vision and strategy into action, in addition to set an applicable framework that enable corporation staff to successfully realize the organizational goals.

Secondly, the corporation's strategic targets are not properly linked with individual accountability, capabilities, and rewards. In addition to the gap in the development of individuals' knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA).

Again, without SMART goals setting and an effective performance evaluation process, it is very difficult to indicate the weak areas that should be developed.

A communication gap has been acknowledged throughout the corporation. Another gap is lack of employees' involved and empowerment.

The optimum solution for these gaps is to initiate a form or annual conference for all employees to share the corporation strategic goal for the next year or the next five years, in addition to involve the staff by giving them opportunities to ask questions or suggest innovative ideas to advance the Overall performance and achieve the optimum results of its strategic goals.

For better organization alignment, top level management must strive to resolve the issues that affect job performance, specifically to provide the following:

- Clear goals and objectives to work for.
- Rewarding and recognizing good performance.
- Open and honest communication between staff.
- Development of people, knowledge and capabilities.
- Employee involvement and empowerment

5. FUTURE WORK

Further investigations and in-depth exploration of the key issues behind the inconsistency in organizational performance within the same corporation, and conducting a **SWOT** (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis to recommend an appropriate and effective Solution for the corporation.

Further researches might also compare between governmental companies and peer-companies in the private sector regarding the best practices in strategic human resource management, performance appraisal review, and different approaches to attract, develop, reward and retain employees to contribute towards enhancing profitability and realizing business sustainability.

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