

**Towards social cohesion: examining the role of racial diversity and inclusion
initiatives in promoting racial cohesion in the workplace**

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ABSTRACT

Social cohesion creates a sense of identity and belonging and is the basis for nation-building. It motivates groups to collaborate harmoniously and live together despite their differences. In South Africa, racial divisions hamper social cohesion. Racism, inequality and poverty exist along racial lines and racially polarising behaviours persist. Complex racial issues require stakeholders, including companies, to foster racial cohesion.

This exploratory qualitative study investigated how companies' racial diversity and inclusion initiatives promote social cohesion from the perspective of race. It examined the extent to which companies incorporate six elements of social cohesion drawn from the literature: social relations, a sense of identification, common good, shared values, equality and quality of life.

Eleven semi-structured with professionals, who have designed or implemented diversity and inclusion initiatives within South African companies, showed that racial diversity and inclusion initiatives were limited to legislative requirements. Compliance-related initiatives were essential for racial equality and quality of life. The other social cohesion elements were neglected. Initiatives fostering social relations, a sense of identification, common good and shared values were superficial.

Nurturing racial social cohesion requires diverse leadership, platforms for racial dialogue, frequent racial diversity training and culture change.

KEYWORDS

Social Cohesion, Diversity and Inclusion, Race, Racism, Diversity Initiatives

DECLARATION

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

Sydney Phiri

Date

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CHAPTER 1: DEFINITION OF PROBLEM AND PURPOSE

1.1 Introduction

Social cohesion is the glue that binds societies together, creating a sense of identity and belonging and is the basis for nation-building (Njozela et al., 2017). The concept concerns what motivates groups to work together in harmony and live together despite their differences (Dragolov et al., 2016; Fonseca et al., 2019). In the context of South Africa, given the racially divided past and the present racial discourses, the question of how to get different racial groups to work together in harmony remains an important and challenging one to explore. The challenge is that race is still a sensitive and emotive subject to talk about. The reluctance to talk about race, however, makes it challenging to address genuine issues of race and impairs the ability to engage meaningfully about differences and to challenge genuine instances of racism.

The 2021 South African Reconciliation Barometer (SARB) survey published by the Institute of Justice and Reconciliation revealed that racial divisions are one of the top two barriers to social cohesion in South Africa (Moosa, 2021). Incidents of racism still make headlines, and economic inequality and poverty are still experienced along racial lines (Gottschalk, 2019). While there is a general acknowledgement that race relations have improved since 1994, there is still a long way to go before South Africa becomes a racially cohesive society (Worthington & Cowden, 2017). These racial issues manifest themselves at a societal, individual and organisational level; therefore, promoting racial cohesiveness is a multi-stakeholder task, including the private sector (DAC, 2012; NAP, 2019).

The motivation for this study is precisely this phenomenon, the promotion or advancement of racial social cohesion. This study investigates how South African companies' racial diversity and inclusion initiatives promote social cohesion from the perspective of race in the workplace. To achieve this objective, firstly, this study unpacks racial diversity and inclusion initiatives that South African companies are implementing and their intended purposes. Secondly, it explores the extent to which these initiatives incorporate elements of social cohesion from the race perspective. Finally, it presents recommendations on how best companies can promote racial cohesion in the workplace.

1.2 Background to the Problem

The history of racial exclusion and discrimination in South Africa is well documented. However, since the dawn of democracy in 1994, progress has been made to reverse institutionalised racism and racial practices (Ntshoe, 2017; Posel, 2022). It is generally believed that race relations in South Africa have improved post-apartheid (Ntshoe, 2017; Seekings, 2008; Worthington & Cowden, 2017). However, as Seekings (2008) argues, these improvements do not necessarily mean that race relations are good. Indeed, the country is still grappling with racial divisions, such as racial discrimination and racism, although not as overtly as pre-1994 (Cilliers, 2021; Mashau, 2018; Ntshoe, 2017). The SARB survey revealed that racial divisions are still a significant social cohesion barrier, only second to economic inequality. The survey further revealed that there are still high levels of mistrust between people of different races in the country (Moosa, 2021). Furthermore, the South African Human Rights Commission report revealed that it is continually inundated with cases involving hate speech and harassment based on skin colour (SAHRC, 2021). These racial divisions have even caused some to question the success of the idea of the Rainbow Nation as envisioned by Archbishop Desmond Tutu (Montle, 2020).

It must be noted that only some race relations agencies agree that race issues are still a significant problem. For example, the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) 2020 poll found that only 3.3% of the respondents believe that racism remains a problem (Jeffery, 2021). Others believe that race issues are used for political mobilisation and as a distraction from the country's socioeconomic issues (Melber, 2018). Despite the debate, most of the academic literature reviewed suggests several contributing factors to racial divisions in South Africa. These factors are summarised as follows:

- economic inequality (Noyoo, 2020; SAHRC, 2021; Southall, 2018);
- the increase in racially charged messages on social media (Mashau, 2018; SAHRC, 2021);
- the highly publicised incidences of racism in public places (Geldenhuys & Kelly-Louw, 2020);
- the emergence of political parties and activists who use racially polarising expressions for political mobilisation (Southall, 2018);

- the culture of racism embedded in many institutions, including workplaces (Francis, 2020; Khumalo, 2018; Ndzwayiba et al., 2018; Stoermer et al., 2019) and
- racial stereotyping (Mashau, 2018).

The above factors show that the country remains culturally and socially racialised with deep economic inequalities despite all the progress made post-1994. Breakfast (2020) suggests that for democracy to be fully realised and social cohesion achieved, racial issues such as racism and other forms of racial prejudice must be addressed. Therefore, the study of racial cohesiveness is still relevant from the South African perspective.

Post-1994, the government introduced several affirmative action policies that address racial and other discrimination in the workplace. Amongst these are the Employment Equity Act of 1998 (EE Act) and Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE). The EE Act was designed to give people from previously disadvantaged designated groups equal employment opportunities (Nwosimiri, 2021). Similarly, the BBBEE was essentially implemented to help black people participate in South African economy and participate in businesses (Archibong & Adejumo, 2013).

To combat racial prejudice and racism and promote social cohesion and commitment to the United Nations Programme of Action, the government enacted the National Action Plan to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related Intolerance (NAP, 2019). The plan follows other pieces of legislation and strategic documents that were designed to promote social cohesion. These include the Presidency's Micro Social Report and the National Development Plan and National Strategy for Developing an Inclusive and Cohesive Society (DAC, 2012) promulgated post-1994 (Bidandi, Roman, Davids & Khaile 2016). Both the DAC and NAP documents identified the private sector as one of the critical stakeholders in combating racial prejudice and racism and advancing social cohesion (DAC, 2012; NAP, 2019).

The enactment of some of the abovementioned legislation was the catalyst for promoting diversity and inclusion practices in companies in South Africa (Archibong & Adejumo, 2013; Webber, 2017). South African companies' diversity and inclusion initiatives tend to be compliance-focussed, which results in limited progress beyond just compliance (Daya, 2014; Deloitte, 2020). According to Daya (2014), many companies focus on equity thresholds rather than organisational and individual change. This equity threshold is

typically done through recruitment policies designated groups, which includes Black people. Refinitive, a diversity and inclusion rating agency, noted that companies with successful diversity and inclusion programmes are typified by diverse and inclusive cultures incorporated into policies and codes of conduct and have diversified boards and executive members. They also go beyond compliance initiatives and tend to eradicate broader social injustices (Refinitive, 2021).

Ely and Thomas (2020) called on business leaders to reject the idea that maximising shareholder value or business performance is of utmost importance regarding diversity and inclusion. The authors posit that diversity and inclusion initiatives should incorporate a broader vision that includes, amongst other things, learning, innovation, equity and human dignity. This study contends that promoting racial cohesion in the workplace falls within this broader vision. Furthermore, the importance of promoting racial harmony in South Africa, could not be more glaring in the wake of the July 2021 unrest in Phoenix, Durban. The rationale for including broader elements to the diversity and inclusion practices is captured eloquently in this quote:

Why should anyone need an economic rationale for affirming the agency and dignity of any group of human beings? We should make the necessary investment because doing so honours our own and others' humanity and gives our lives meaning. If company profits come at the price of our humanity, they are costing us too much. And if diversity initiatives fail to reckon with that trade-off, they will amount to little more than rearranging the deck chairs on a sinking ship (Ely & Thomas, 2020, p.122).

1.3 Academic Rationale for Research

This study investigates how South African companies' racial diversity and inclusion initiatives promote social cohesion from the perspective of race in the workplace. It also provides recommendations from diversity and inclusion experts on how companies can further promote racial cohesion in the work environment. There appears to be plenty of academic literature on how companies diversify the workplace to satisfy legislative requirements (Daya, 2014; Deloitte, 2020). There is also much academic literature on how diversity and inclusion drive business performance and improve or maximise shareholder value (Ely & Thomas, 2020; Joubert, 2017; Mazibuko & Govender, 2017; Sherbin &

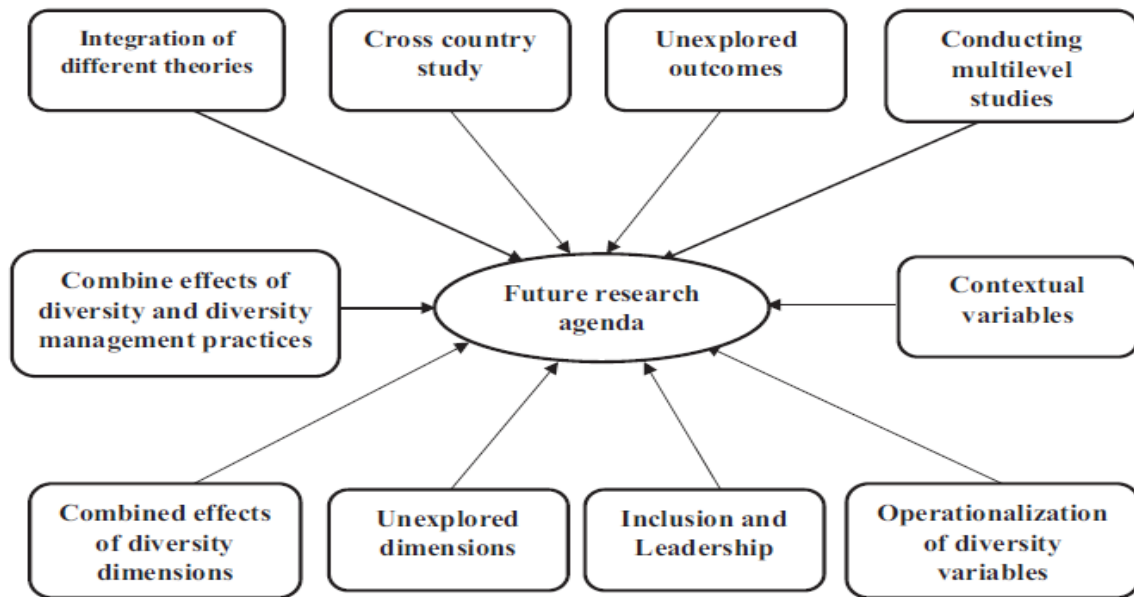
Rashid, 2017). However, do South African companies' racial diversity and inclusion initiatives exhibit more than just the legislative and business case? Considering the racial issues highlighted above, how do these initiatives contribute to racial cohesion in the workplace? Dover et al. (2020) suggest that the focus is on the business case rather than the moral and the social justice case, while Alhejji et al. (2016) posit that diversity and inclusion literature needs to provide more depth on social justice perspective. This study attempts to fill this gap.

There is little evidence in the literature as to what extent the diversity and inclusion initiatives incorporate elements of social cohesion from the perspective of race, i.e., the extent to which it promotes interracial social relations, feelings of identity, direction towards a common good, shared values, social equality and quality of life. Yadav and Lenka (2020) offered nine areas that future research on diversity can be steered towards, as reflected in [Figure 1.3.1](#). They highlighted social cohesion as one of the unexplored outcomes in diversity and inclusion studies. This study further heeds this call. Yadav and Lenka (2020) further suggested that researchers should test relationships between diversity and these unexplored phenomena (Yadav & Lenka, 2020).

Schiefer and van der Noll (2017) highlighted six social cohesion elements that are most prevalent in social cohesion literature. These elements are social relations, feelings of identity, direction towards a common good, shared values, equality and quality of life. It is precisely these elements that this study seeks to decipher whether they are incorporated in South African companies' diversity and inclusion initiatives. This study also contributes to diversity and inclusion literature by adding another dimension or lens - i.e., the aspect of social cohesion - from which company diversity and inclusion initiatives could be approached.

Figure 1.3.1

Future Research Agenda on Workforce Diversity



Note. From “Workforce diversity: from a literature review to future research agenda” by Yadav and Lenka, 2020, *Journal of Indian Business Research*, 12(4), 577–603. (<https://doi.org/10.1108/JIBR-08-2019-0243>)

1.4 Business Rationale for Research

Companies form part of broader society and cannot simply focus on making profits (Oketch, 2005). The attitudes prevalent in the society in which the company operates are bound to mirror individuals' attitudes within the company. Therefore, broader societal issues such as race cannot simply be ignored. As Oketch (2005) put it, companies have a social responsibility to fulfil (Oketch, 2005). A part of this responsibility is the awareness that the well-being of the community in which the business operates affects business success (Oketch, 2005). Since the workforce is part of this community and race is still one of the issues the country is still grappling with, it stands to reason that racial cohesiveness should form part of the company's focus. The insights of this study will help companies evolve their diversity and inclusion initiatives.

Gotsis and Kortezi (2013) suggest that organisations' diversity programmes should not be founded or designed only on the business motive (profit motive) but on ethical paradigms, i.e., the motive for the greater good. The findings of this study will help companies refocus their diversity and inclusion initiatives to improve racial relations within the companies and for the employees to become advocates of racial cohesion in their communities. This improvement would effectively be part of the response to the National Development Plan and National Strategy for Developing an Inclusive and Cohesive Society and the United Nations for the private sector to find solutions for the issue of racism and racial prejudice.

Mazibuko and Govender (2017) assert that race is one of the prevalent themes in workplace conflict. As already highlighted in the problem definition section, some literature highlights that racism is embedded in the culture of many institutions (Francis, 2020; Khumalo, 2018; Ndzwayiba et al., 2018; Stoermer et al., 2019). This study will assist companies in designing programmes to overcome racial conflict and create a culture free of racial prejudice.

1.5 Problem Statement

The South African Reconciliation Barometer (SARB) (Moosa, 2021) published by the Institute of Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) regards the divisions between rich and poor (inequality) as the primary obstacle to social cohesion in South Africa, with the divisions between race groups (racism and racial discrimination) in a very close second place. Despite the progress made post-1994 efforts, building a socially cohesive society remains challenging for South Africa (Njozela, Shaw & Burns, 2017; Moosa, 2021). Since racial issues affect every level of society, it stands to reason that for social cohesion to thrive, individuals, communities, institutions and organisations need to play a role in finding ways to foster racial cohesiveness. As such, this study seeks to understand how South African companies' racial diversity and inclusion initiatives promote social cohesion from the perspective of race in the workplace.

CHAPTER 2: THEORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides review of the academic literature on the constructs of this research. The first section provides the context of race and race relations in South Africa. It elaborates on the context in which South African companies implement racial diversity and inclusion interventions. The second section presents the theory on diversity and inclusion in the workplace, specifically focusing on the race dimension. The section further elaborates on South African companies' racial diversity and inclusion approaches. The last section presents the social cohesion conceptual framework, which forms the theoretical underpinning of this study.

2.2 The Context of Racial Issues in the South African Environment

2.2.1 Clarification of Race Concepts

This research investigates how South African companies' racial diversity and inclusion initiatives promote social cohesion from the perspective of race in the workplace. Various academic disciplines, such as social psychology and social sciences, have explored issues of race and have used different definitions of terms such as race, racism and racial discrimination concerning racial studies (Heyer & Reynaud-Paligot, 2021). As already seen in the first chapter, such terms have been used to define the problem and purpose. In light of this, it is necessary to define such concepts for this study.

From the critical race perspective, race is generally described as the social construct that categorises humans by their biological markers or physical features, such as skin colour (Carrim & Moolman, 2022; Kirkinis et al., 2021). From the South African perspective, the entrenchment of this racial categorisation was exacerbated by Apartheid laws which classified South Africans into White, Blacks, Coloureds and Indians. This categorisation is how many South Africans classify themselves and fellow Africans South Africans today (Carrim & Moolman, 2022). These laws further entrenched racism, racial discrimination and economic exclusion of non-White South Africans.

Racism, on the other hand, is a contested term, with different groups from different political, cultural and social backgrounds contesting the term. The anti-racist perspective is that racism is a form of oppression where one race dominates the other (Carrim & Moolman, 2022). Roberts and Rizzo (2021) capture the concept more broadly as a "system of advantage based on race that is created and maintained by an interplay between psychological factors i.e., biased thoughts, feelings, and actions and socio-political factors i.e., biased laws, policies, and institutions" (pg.2). Reference to racism in this study aligns more with this broad definition. It is essential to highlight that racism for this study also refers to everyday racism, which refers to instances of racial injustices that happen every day, especially in the South African workplace, such that they are taken for granted (Carrim & Moolman, 2022).

Racial discrimination is the behaviour associated with racial dominance and oppression and usually manifests itself by being denied access to resources and opportunities based on race (Kirkinis et al., 2021). From a South African perspective, the history of racial discrimination was the catalyst for enacting some of the legislation, such as the Employment Equity and BBBEE Acts, upon which diversity is primarily driven. Other attributes of racial discrimination include avoidance, demeaning, and communicating in inferior status based on race.

2.2.2 Race Discourses in South Africa

Racial divisions, polarisation and tensions are still prevalent in South Africa (Mashau, 2018) and continue to be one of the barriers to social cohesion despite the progress made post-1994 (Njozela et al., 2017). Racism, in particular, is still experienced by many people and communities despite the country's internationally lauded constitution (Steyn et al., 2019). Recent literature on racial relations highlights several drivers of racial discourse observed in South Africa since the dawn of democracy in 1994.

Mashau (2018) argues that private individuals' racial remarks, such as those of Penny Sparrow, who labelled Black South African holidaymakers as monkeys in her Facebook post, exacerbate racial tensions in South Africa. Numerous other highly publicised racial slur incidents involving private individuals, including Benny Morota, who labelled White South Africans as cockroaches, and Vicky Momberg, who was recorded racially abusing

a police officer (Geldenhuys & Kelly-Louw, 2020). Furthermore, issues of race in South Africa are fuelled by some political leaders and activists using racially polarising remarks for political mobilisation (Southall, 2018).

Economic inequality is also a driver of racial discourse in South Africa (Noyoo, 2020; SAHRC, 2021; Southall, 2018). The country remains one of the most unequal in the world, with Black Africans at the bottom of the economic spectrum and the minority dominating the economy (Southall, 2018). These inequalities are partly attributable to the country's past policies of economic exclusion based on race under the Apartheid system (Noyoo, 2020) and misgovernance, lack of service delivery, patronage and corruption experienced under the current government (Southall, 2018). Southall (2018) cautions that failure to address economic inequalities could lead to further animosity between different races in South Africa.

South African workplaces have also been the subject of racism and racial discrimination (Khumalo, 2018; Ndzwayiba et al., 2018; Stoermer et al., 2019). Ndzwayiba et al. (2018) found racial discrimination to be one of the major causes of job hopping amongst black professionals in corporate South Africa, while a study by Stoermer et al. (2019) indicates that black employees experienced more racial harassment than other racial groups. Furthermore, local and international corporations have also faced public backlash over claims of racism, particularly in advertising (Francis, 2020).

It must be emphasised that not all literature emphasises race as one of the main issues in South Africa. A report from the Institute of Race Relations of South Africa revealed that racism is not a major issue in South Africa. It further argued that political parties exaggerate racial divisions to excuse their shortcomings (Jeffery, 2021). Worthington and Cowden's (2017) research indicates that race relations have improved since 1994 but progress is often hindered by political remarks and individual actions, which tend to represent the entire group. However, some studies do acknowledge the need for bridging the racial divide for the country to move forward. Lowery (2017) emphasises the need for more cross-racial dialogue in institutions such as universities and schools, the importance of training for facilitators who facilitate these dialogues and the need for investment in cross-race dialogue projects. Other studies suggest that acknowledgement of the reality of racism is essential as this leads to engagement on the issues of race (Laskowski-Jones, 2020; Worthington & Cowden, 2017).

The barriers to racial cohesion show how broad the issue of race is and that it affects all levels of society. Therefore, multiple stakeholders, including companies, must proactively address racial issues to advance social cohesion. The following section explores the diversity and inclusion theory and unpacks how companies implement racial diversity and inclusion initiatives to address race-related issues.

2.3 Diversity and Inclusion

2.3.1 Diversity and Inclusion theory

Diversity generally refers to work group composition and demographic differences in the work environment, such as race, gender, ethnicity and disability (Nair & Vohra, 2015). However, the concept of diversity has evolved to include invisible differences, such as personality traits and ways of thinking. Hays-Thomas and Bendick (2013) offer a contemporary definition of diversity and describe it as "the mixture of attributes within a workforce that in significant ways affect how people think, feel, and behave at work, and their acceptance, work performance, satisfaction, or progress in the organisation" (p.6).

Diversity literature further evolved, and scholars started pairing the term diversity with inclusion after it had emerged that employee characteristics alone did not stick without inclusion in managing diversity in the workplace (Garg & Sangwan, 2021; Hays-Thomas & Bendick, 2013). While diversity focuses on the characteristics of the workforce, inclusion emphasises the attributes of the organisation, such as culture and environment, whether it accepts and values the contributions of people from different backgrounds within the workplace (Carrim & Moolman, 2022; Garg & Sangwan, 2021).

Socio-cultural factors, globalisation and changing stakeholder demands are some elements that have led many global organisations to diversify their workforce (Yadav & Lenka, 2020). International companies invest heavily in diversity programmes, with the top 50 Fortune 500 companies establishing diversity initiatives and investing more than \$16 billion annually in these programs (Dobbin & Kalev, 2018; Dover et al., 2020; Gündemir & Galinsky, 2017). In the case of South Africa, the elements highlighted above,

together with the history of inequality and racial discrimination, have forced companies to include people from different backgrounds in the workforce, especially those previously marginalised pre-1994 (Carrim & Moolman, 2022). However, challenges such as differences in cultures and backgrounds brought about by these changes forced companies to adopt diversity management initiatives.

Diversity and inclusion in the workplace results in better decision-making, innovation and creativity (Yadav & Lenka, 2020). Indeed, over the past three decades, much research in diversity and inclusion explored the impact of diversity on various aspects of organisational growth, such as performance improvement, innovation, problem-solving and decision-making (Kaur & Arora, 2020; Yadav & Lenka, 2020). Nevertheless, diversity has some negative aspects, such as the cost of diversity training, conflict as a result of ignorance or intolerance, loss of productivity resulting from misunderstanding, and increased staff turnover since a person who does not feel a part of the group will be the first to leave (Srivalli & Rajesh, 2013).

Many studies have also focussed mainly on gender and racial disparities in the workplace and related causes (Berrey, 2013). However, contemporary discussions and analysis of racial diversity and inclusion have been criticised for not placing racism at the forefront of workplace racial diversity discussions (Richeson & Sommers, 2016). As one of the recommended research agendas for the next decade, Richeson and Sommers (2016) urged diversity researchers to invest in studying overt racial bias, such as the persistence of racial stereotyping and dehumanisation and to integrate recent research on implicit bias. Furthermore, outcomes such as social cohesion have not been explored in diversity and inclusion literature (Yadav & Lenka, 2020)

2.3.2 Racial Diversity and Inclusion

Race is one of the most researched dimensions in diversity literature, alongside gender. Studies on racial diversity have shown both positive and negative consequences of racial diversity. For example, a study by Stahl and Maznevski (2021) suggested that culturally and racially diverse teams are less cohesive than homogeneous teams. Furthermore, racial diversity can make individuals feel different from members of a group's values,

beliefs, skin colour and language barriers (Yadav & Lenka, 2020). However, other research suggests that racial diversity promotes interracial interpersonal contact, which is likely to reduce racial stereotypes and attitudes (Richeson & Sommers, 2016). There is also a strong suggestion of a positive relationship between group performance and racial diversity (Richeson & Sommers, 2016).

Companies adopt various approaches in terms of managing racial diversity in the workplace. Multiculturalism and colour blindness are some of the ways companies adopt to promote racial unity in the workplace (Richeson & Sommers, 2016). Multiculturalism is described as a “behavioural pattern that appreciates, tolerates and promotes multiple cultures and identities situated within the confines of a particular community” (Jackson & Van De Vijver, 2018, p.3). Multiculturalism attracts more support from groups, and companies adopting multiculturalism are often preferred by minority groups (Jackson & Van De Vijver, 2018).

Plaut et al. (2018) also highlighted that multiculturalism leads to less stereotyping and lower levels of prejudice. Another study found that racial minorities who worked in multicultural environments had a greater sense of belonging and acceptance (Meeussen et al., 2014). However, Plaut et al. (2018) caution that over-emphasis on multiculturalism may lead to pigeonholing and may also have a negative impact if employees feel that they are mostly valued for their racial classification.

The colour-blind approach offers a view that racial advancement will be achieved by minimising the focus on racial classification and instead focusing on human similarities and sometimes encouraging assimilation (Plaut et al., 2018; Richeson & Sommers, 2016). It implies that race does not matter. This approach has come under criticism for failing to recognise racial disparities. Plaut et al. (2018) posit that this approach to racial diversity undermines the occurrence of racism and therefore reduces the opportunity to address it. It has also been suggested that colour blindness is associated with negative attitudes toward affirmative action and anti-discrimination policies (Awad et al., 2005).

Despite the positive and negative outcomes of the above approaches to racial diversity, Plaut et al. (2018) make a case that these approaches need not be mutually exclusive and

that organisations can apply both approaches to an extent. The authors make an example that "instructors can be conscious of marginalised identities in designing curricula to enhance learning and belonging while employing a blind grading system to decrease bias" (Plaut et al., 2018, p.204).

The literature reviewed suggests, that multiculturalism fosters social relations and a sense of belonging and identification, which are some of the elements of social cohesion. However, it needs to be clarified which approaches better promote social cohesion from the South African point of view.

2.3.3 Companies' Compliance Approaches to Racial Diversity

Racial diversity management in South Africa is done mainly under transformation (Carrim & Moolman, 2022). The concept of transformation in the South African context is not clearly defined. However, it usually refers to the social change project framed by the ANC government when it came to power in 1994. The idea of this transformation from a South African company's point of view is done through post-1994 government policies such as Employment Equity Act (EE) and the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act (BBBEE) (Carrim & Moolman, 2022).

The Employment Equity Act seeks to promote equal opportunity and unfair discrimination in the South African workplace and requires the implementation of affirmative action to redress past discrepancies experienced by the designated groups (Joubert, 2017; Wöcke & Sutherland, 2008; Wood & Bischoff, 2022). Many organisations focus on targeted recruitment targeting designated groups (Mazibuko & Govender, 2017). Designated groups refer to Black people, women and people with disabilities (Carrim & Moolman, 2022). Webber (2017) distinguishes between compliance-based and voluntary-based racial diversity initiatives. Compliance-based refers to the initiatives implemented to comply with legislation such as EE Act. Voluntary-based includes initiatives such as the promotion of inclusiveness, cultural training, diversity training and bias training. Many South African companies' diversity and inclusion approaches are compliance and pragmatic-focused (Deloitte, 2020). There has been criticism against South African

companies' diversity and inclusion interventions that they ignore organisational culture change (Carrim & Moolman, 2022).

While employment equity-based racial diversity interventions are necessary, they do not provide an idea of what a racially inclusive place looks like (Carrim & Moolman, 2022). Similarly, these initiatives do not provide an idea of social cohesion between racial groups in the workplace.

2.3.4 Companies' Voluntary Approaches to Racial Diversity

Companies in South Africa and worldwide also implement voluntary diversity management measures such as diversity training. Diversity training refers to those programmes that companies implement to raise awareness about employees' differences (Thakur et al., 2021). While companies use different terms, such as inclusive training or cultural training, the main goals of these initiatives are raising awareness about personal differences or similarities, reducing prejudices, stereotypes, or ignorance-based prejudices and promoting inclusive behaviour (Thakur et al., 2021). With regards to the race dimension of diversity, companies typically do cultural training, conscious and unconscious bias training, anti-racism or similar programmes to address racism, racial stereotypes, racial prejudice and discrimination (Dover et al., 2020; Gündemir & Galinsky, 2017; Joubert, 2017; Mazibuko & Govender, 2017). For example, Nike has a policy requiring its managers to do anti-bias training, whereas Starbucks provides anti-racism training in all its locations worldwide (Sonjica, 2020).

Some studies argue that there is little evidence that programmes such as anti-racism training actually result in less racial prejudice (Dobbin & Kalev, 2018; Dover et al., 2020; Paluck et al., 2021). Further, such training may lead to unintended consequences (Dover et al., 2020). For example, by initiating anti-racism training, some people may believe that a company is less discriminatory against one group and more discriminatory against the other. They found that racial bias training in the United States has had a modest positive impact on those with low bias levels and less on those with high bias levels (Dover et al., 2020).

Dobbin and Kalev (2018) argue that bias training alone has minimal impact on attitude and behavioural change. The authors mention several challenges facing training, such as

anti-racism training. Firstly, the training programmes are often short-term and therefore unlikely to change attitudes. Secondly, it has been argued that training people to suppress prejudice may actually strengthen it. Other challenges mentioned by Dobbin and Kalev (2018) are that white trainees generally feel excluded in training programmes such as multiculturalism and that some people may resist these training programmes if it is mandatory. Dover et al. (2020) agree that voluntary training tends to have more positive effects than enforced training. Another study on the outcomes of diversity strategies used by South African financial institutions found that diversity programmes are often forced on employees, and those employees found this a drawback (Joubert, 2017). Another study by Delene et al. (2002) on the impact of a two-day diversity awareness training programme done by a large accounting firm in South Africa showed little statistical significance that such training was impactful.

However, many studies suggest a positive impact of diversity training, as Bezrukova et al. (2012) acknowledged in their in-depth review of diversity training literature. Holladay and Quiñones (2008) found that diversity training was much more impactful when it focused on trainees' commonalities than the one that was focused on differences. Furthermore, a field experiment done by Hill and Augoustinos (2001) three months after a public service organisation conducted an intercultural training programme showed that knowledge of cross-cultural awareness increased and old-fashioned racism beliefs decreased. However, it showed no significant decrease in modern racism and stereotyping.

Despite the shortcomings of diversity training programmes, it remains common in companies to address different forms of racial prejudice (Ameri et al., 2021; Dobbin & Kalev, 2018). Ameri et al. (2021) make several recommendations to advance diversity training. The authors recommend ongoing learning instead of one-session programmes. Secondly, internal leadership needs to visibly support the message for the training to be seen as legitimate. This needs to be balanced with bringing in external experts, for example, anti-racism experts. Thirdly, it should be an active learning experience, which may include conversations, role plays and scenarios. Lastly, Ameri et al. (2021) recommend that diversity training works best through storytelling and in this way, empathy is invoked, and rapport is developed.

On the other hand, Dover et al. (2020) suggest the use of allyship, which establishes support for marginalised groups. The authors also emphasise using some elements of

intergroup contact theory, which includes emphasising the group's similarities and highlighting differences. The elements include encouraging positive rather than negative emotions. Group activities, where friendships might develop between members of different groups, are also encouraged.

Companies adopt diversity training programmes with different explicit outcomes. Alhejji et al. (2016) describe three perspectives or outcomes which motivate businesses to initiate diversity programmes: the business case, social and learning perspectives. The business case is primarily concerned with the positive impact the training will have on the business and business profits. The social justice perspective concerns the organisations' responsibility to address social issues such as racism and other social ills. The learning perspective is more concerned with developing employees' knowledge and skills in a phenomenon being addressed.

There is limited literature on the extent to which diversity training interventions include elements of social cohesion from the perspective of race, such as social relations, identification and common good. It is unclear how these interventions promote racial cohesion. This study attempts to fill this gap. In line with the social justice motive, Gotsis and Kortezi (2013) suggest that diversity programmes be founded on moral or ethical paradigms, one of which is organisational virtues. Virtues emphasise "individual and social betterment through its emphasis upon the quality of human Interactions" (Gotsis & Kortezi, 2013, p.13).

2.3.5 New Approaches to Racial Diversity and Inclusion

Roberts and Mayo (2019) argue that while compliance-based diversity and inclusion initiatives are necessary, there are still racial inequalities in the workplace. These inequalities, in turn, negatively affect social cohesion. They suggest a diversity and inclusion strategy that involves shifting the exclusive focus from the business case to the moral one. The first step is to give previously marginalised groups airtime in the C-suite and resources to realise their potential. Secondly, encourage conversation about race. The authors suggest that although many people talk about diversity and inclusion, their inclination to participate drops when the subject is about race. The study posits that conversations about race are not comfortable in the beginning but, over time, improve.

When organisations encourage a culture of such conversations, they start to happen informally at all levels of the organisation. This, in turn, encourages cross-race relationships.

The third step is to revamp diversity and inclusion approaches. Roberts and Mayo (2019) critique the current diversity and inclusion interventions in that they are mainly a human resource function lacking executive support. Others limit it to diversity training and focus heavily on recruiting diverse employees but fail to support them past mid-level management. South African companies have also been criticised for lacking Black people's representation at top-level management (Daya, 2014). Furthermore, Roberts and Mayo (2019) criticise current diversity and inclusion programmes that they encourage previously disadvantaged groups to fit into the existing company culture instead of expanding it. The authors recommend that diversity and inclusion interventions should have sustained executive support and be rewarded.

A study by Carter (2020) also makes three recommendations for advancing racial justice in the workplace. The first is investing in employee education. This includes educating employees about inequalities experienced by racial groups and also about equity policies. Secondly, organisations need to build connections and a community where everyone feels a sense of belonging. Lastly, the author recommends that organisations need to go beyond recruiting and hiring to advance racial justice. The author posits that getting black employees into the organisation is as important as keeping them and grooming them into leadership roles.

Another study by Janssens and Zanoni (2021), which makes a case for diversity and inclusion for social change, makes recommendations about group cohesiveness. They recommend social change through "knitting" together, which is about creating semi-curated spaces where interracial interaction and socialisation might occur. It posits that multicultural connections may be better fostered in these spaces. Ely and Thomas (2020) also emphasise that diversity and inclusion should be about the business case and human dignity, among other things. The authors further argue that if teams are racially cohesive, there is a better chance of high performance. The study further suggests four steps: build

trust, actively work against discrimination, embrace diverse styles and voices and make cultural differences a resource for learning.

A study by Derven (2014) revealed the diversity and inclusion practices of six US companies that were widely regarded as the best in diversity and inclusion. The trends driving diversity and inclusion in these companies were creating an inclusive environment, globalisation, talent/skills shortages and changing demographics. Notably, these six companies had created employee resources groups to promote a friendly and welcoming workplace for minority groups. These groups designed support networks that gave people confidence and affinity to help them assimilate, created forums for employees to network and belong and promoted learning from one another.

2.4 Social Cohesion as a Conceptual Framework

In social cohesion literature, there is yet to be a unified definition of social cohesion (Njizela et al., 2017), and there is criticism about the lack of uniformity in the theorisation of the concept (Schiefer & van der Noll, 2017). Fonseca et al. (2019) reviewed the commonly used definitions of social cohesion. The authors concluded that it is best described as "the ongoing process of developing well-being, sense of belonging, and voluntary social participation of the members of society, while developing communities that tolerate and promote a multiplicity of values and cultures and granting at the same time equal rights and opportunities in society" (p.246).

The lack of consensus in the theorisation of the construct presents a problem regarding measuring social cohesion initiatives (Njizela et al., 2017). However, Schiefer and van der Noll (2017) reviewed the literature on social cohesion since the 1990s and identified six common elements in various publications: social relations, sense of identification, orientation towards a common good, shared values, quality of life and equality/inequality. These dimensions will form the basis of the analysis of the proposed study.

The social relations dimension is about the level of relationships members of different community groups have with one another. It specifically involves the degree of social interaction, the level of trust and solidarity between different groups. This dimension is essential in addressing racial divisions in the South African context. The South African Reconciliation Barometer (Moosa, 2021) survey shows that the level of trust amongst

members of different racial groups is very low compared to that of members of their own race. The report further asserts that this lack of trust is exacerbated by the lack of social interaction outside of commercial spaces, which stems from the legacy of segregation in the era of Apartheid.

From an organisational point of view, to advance racial cohesion, it may be necessary to design activities that foster interracial interactions and solidarity amongst racial groups. For example, Dover et al. (2020) suggest that companies might actively encourage those activities where members of different groups work together for a common goal. Hogg et al. (2017) encourage sustaining and celebrating differences while highlighting commonalities the group shares. Furthermore, positive social contact is encouraged for groups (Hogg et al., 2017). Hogg et al. (2017) further highlight that effective leadership is at the core of building mutual trust between groups. Intergroup relations need to be inspired by leadership.

The second dimension to consider in advancing racial cohesion is identification. This dimension is about those activities that foster the individual's sense of belonging and their importance as community members. The SARB (Moosa, 2021) survey further shows that South Africans value the notion of shared national identity and that being identified as a South African is most important. The survey also shows that South Africans believe that there is more that unites different races than what divides them. In designing programmes that foster racial cohesion, companies may consider encouraging those activities that unite racial groups. This is also in line with intergroup theory, which emphasises group commonalities.

In a study by Casad et al. (2018), three types of interventions were found to help foster a sense of belonging for underrepresented or minority groups, i.e. value affirmation, belonging and role models interventions. Value affirmation involves reaffirming a group's self-worth. This could be in the form of noting their religious beliefs or promoting their language. Casad et al. (2018) describe belonging interventions as those that aim to increase an individual sense of fit in a group. Such interventions could come in the form of mixing minorities or underrepresented groups in projects. Lastly, the authors recommended role model interventions to foster a sense of belonging. This involves hiring diverse people in leadership roles to serve as role models for underrepresented or minority groups.

The third dimension of social cohesion is the orientation towards a common good. Schiefer and van der Noll (2017) frame this as the group's level of commitment to the welfare of the community and one another. The authors also refer to this as the degree to which members of different groups share interests and sympathy toward a common good. An example of this solidarity from a community perspective is how communities came together to share information for overcoming Covid-19, raising awareness and supporting those who lost their livelihoods (Igwe et al., 2020). Companies might consider encouraging those activities that combine employees from different racial groups to support community courses or social environments. Frémeaux (2020) also advocates fostering common good as a way to promote solidarity between groups. The author recommends that organisations should encourage members of diverse groups to work together for community good.

The fourth dimension is shared values, which is related to the previous dimension, orientation towards a common good. Shared values help members of different groups identify common goals (Schiefer & van der Noll, 2017). There are two schools of thought in this regard. One is concerned with how groups forge co-existence if values differ. The other is concerned with finding and nurturing common values. Nolte and Downing (2019) believe that Ubuntu is one of the values that South Africans commonly share. In designing strategies to advance racial cohesion, companies might consider South Africans' values and implement strategies that foster co-existence.

The fifth dimension is the level of (in)equality between groups. This dimension is composed of economic and socio-cultural inequalities. It concerns the degree of disparities in wealth and income between groups and the degree of inclusion and exclusion in opportunities. The authors suggest that for social cohesiveness to be present in a group, issues of inequality must be actively addressed. Livingstone (2020) advocates for several steps organisations can take to improve racial equality. First is acknowledging racism and racial inequality and understanding the root causes. Secondly, increase empathy through awareness programmes and education. Lastly, take corrective action by levelling the playing field and addressing existing racial barriers.

The last dimension is the objective and subjective quality of life of members of different groups, which Schiefer and van der Noll (2017) describe as the psychological well-being

of those members. As mentioned in the first section of the literature review, economic inequality is already addressed as one of the causes of racial divisions in South Africa, with black people at the bottom of the economic spectrum (Southall, 2018). Therefore, companies, in their quest to advance racial cohesion, may consider implementing strategies to look after the psychological well-being of their group members.

2.5 Conclusion

Although race relations in South Africa have improved since 1994, racial tensions are still prevalent in South Africa (Mashau, 2018) and remain barriers to social cohesion (Njozela et al., 2017). Instances of racial abuse, such as name-calling, hate speech and racially polarising remarks made by politicians, still abound (Geldenhuys & Kelly-Louw, 2020; Southall, 2018). Economic inequality remains a driver of racial discourse, with Black Africans remaining at the bottom of the economic spectrum. These inequalities are partly attributable to misgovernance, lack of service delivery, patronage, corruption experienced in recent times, and past policies of economic exclusion based on race under the Apartheid system. There are still incidences of racial discrimination in the workplace, making it one of the causes of job hopping among Black employees (Noyoo, 2020; Southall, 2018). It is essential, therefore, to determine how companies address issues of racial social cohesion in the workplace.

The issues mentioned above erode racial social cohesion (Mashau, 2018). Post-1994, The South African government introduced legislation such as the Employment Equity Act and Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act to address the legacy of racial discrimination in the workplace. Companies' diversity management in South Africa is largely done under the ambit of such pieces of legislation (Carrim & Moolman, 2022). Apart from legislation compliance, companies often use voluntary interventions such as diversity training to create awareness about personal differences, including racial differences (Thakur et al., 2021). However, it is unclear how these racial diversity and inclusion interventions promote social cohesion from the perspective of race in the workplace. It is particularly important to address this now, as there is a strong call for bridging the racial divide through cross-racial dialogue and engagement on issues of race amid constant racial tension (Laskowski-Jones, 2020; Worthington & Cowden, 2017).

The conceptual framework of social cohesion is used as the theoretical underpinning of this study. The concept has not yet been fully theorised by researchers (Schiefer & van der Noll, 2017), nor has it been heavily used in diversity and inclusion research (Yadav & Lenka, 2020), leaving a research gap to be addressed in this study. Yadav and Lenka (2020) further emphasise the need for this study. The authors listed social cohesion as one of the unexplored outcomes of workforce diversity and as a future research agenda. Six elements are most prevalent in the literature on social cohesion. These are social relations, feelings of identity, direction towards a common good, shared values, social equality and quality of life (Schiefer & van der Noll, 2017). Therefore, the main question driving this study investigates how companies' racial diversity and inclusion programmes promote social cohesion from the perspective of race.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study aims to investigate how South African companies' racial diversity and inclusion initiatives promote social cohesion from the perspective of race in the workplace. The study has a main research question and three sub-research questions that seek to unpack the purpose of the study.

3.1 Main Research Question: How do South African companies' racial diversity and inclusion initiatives promote social cohesion from the perspective of race in the workplace?

This is the main research question that this research seeks to unpack. Three sub-research questions are presented to answer the main research question.

3.1.1 Sub-Research Question 1: What are the key characteristics or elements of South African companies' racial diversity and inclusion initiatives?

This researcher seeks to understand as to what are the typical racial diversity and inclusion that are prevalent in South African companies and what is the purpose of these initiatives. The literature states that there are compliance-driven initiatives (Carrim & Moolman, 2022; Joubert, 2017; Sutherland & Wöcke, 2011) and voluntary initiatives (Dover et al., 2020; Gündemir & Galinsky, 2017; Thakur et al., 2021). The researcher further seeks to understand how racial diversity and inclusion initiatives get support from top-level management. The literature reviewed states that these initiatives receive little support from senior management (Roberts & Mayo, 2019).

3.1.2 Sub-Research Question 2: To what extent do these racial diversity and inclusion incorporate elements of social cohesion from the perspective of race?

This researcher seeks to understand the extent to which South African companies' racial diversity and inclusion initiatives include elements of social cohesion from the perspective of race. These elements identified from social cohesion literature are social relations,

identification, orientation toward a common good, shared values, quality of life and equality/inequality (Schiefer & van der Noll, 2017). The literature reviewed further shows there are other scholars who advocate that these elements are crucial for group cohesion (Casad et al., 2018; Dover et al., 2020; Frémeaux, 2020; Hogg et al., 2017; Igwe et al., 2020)

3.1.3 Sub-Research Question 3: What do diversity and inclusion experts think companies can do to promote racial cohesion effectively?

The research seeks to inquire from diversity and inclusion experts about their recommendations or views on how best to promote racial cohesion in the workplace. The literature review revealed plenty of recommendations from various scholars, many of whom advocated for interventions over and above legislation compliance (Carter, 2020; Derven, 2014; Janssens & Zanoni, 2021; Roberts & Mayo, 2019)

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate how racial diversity and inclusion initiatives implemented by companies in South Africa promote social cohesion from the perspective of race in the workplace. Six elements prevalent in the literature on social cohesion will be used as the basis for this investigation. These are social relations, feelings of identity, direction towards a common good, shared values, social equality and quality of life (Schiefer & van der Noll, 2017). Although there has been much research in racial diversity and inclusion, there has been a few studies that have used social cohesion as a conceptual framework (Yadav & Lenka, 2020). Furthermore, there is still no consensus in defining social cohesion concept in literature, although prevalent elements of the concept have been identified (Schiefer & van der Noll, 2017). This research should help to understand better the extent to which companies' racial diversity and inclusion programmes incorporate the identified elements of social cohesion. A qualitative exploratory approach was chosen for this study.

4.2 Choice of Research Design

This research is exploratory and qualitative in nature. This route was followed because firstly there is not much literature in the field of racial diversity and inclusion that shows how racial diversity and inclusion initiatives promote social cohesion from the perspective of race. Secondly, concept of social cohesion concept, on which the study was underpinned, is not yet fully theorised and researchers are still exploring the concept (Schiefer & van der Noll, 2017). The researcher's rationale for choosing exploratory and qualitative is supported by Saunders and Lewis (2012), who recommend the use of exploratory and qualitative designs for studies with a purpose to gain insights on a phenomenon that is not clearly defined or understood.

The study sought to understand the characteristics or elements of the companies' racial diversity and inclusion initiatives and investigated the extent to which these initiatives incorporated elements of racial social cohesion. Finally, it sought recommendations from experts on how best companies can promote social cohesion in the workplace, from the

perspective of race. The objective was not to collect quantifiable data or establish relationships between variables, as would have been the case in descriptive or explanatory research (Abutabenjeh & Jaradat, 2018; Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

An inductive approach was followed for this study because the aim was to observe patterns from the data provided by the study participants, generalise the result to the broader population and provide recommendations on how best companies can promote racial cohesion in the workplace. There was no intention to provide confirmatory conclusions. The results of this study can be used to form future hypothesis or propositions. An inductive approach involves generalising results from specific data observation (Abutabenjeh & Jaradat, 2018; Ryan, 2018; Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Studies aimed at gaining insight into a phenomenon that is not clearly defined or understood are usually inductive in nature (Casula, Rangarajan & Shields, 2021; Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

An interpretive philosophical paradigm was selected as it allowed an in-depth inquiry about the characteristics of companies' racial diversity and inclusion initiatives, such as what they were, how they were implemented, what the drivers were, and how they promoted racial cohesion. A positivist philosophy would not have allowed for this depth as it aims to identify the existence or absence of casual relationships without necessarily explaining specific ways or context in which those relationships occurred (Chowdhury, 2014; Lin, 1998). Interpretivism goes beyond what took place to further explain how it took place (Chowdhury, 2014).

Interpretivism takes a relativist, rather than an objectivist view, adopts the values of subjectivity and suggests that truth and knowledge are based on people's experiences and how they interpret those experiences (Harrison et al., 2017; Ryan, 2018). Following these principles data was collected from practitioners or professionals in the field of diversity and inclusion, human resources and transformation who had experience in consulting to or working for South African companies. The experiences of these practitioners were collected to answer the research questions. Carminati (2018) describes interpretivist research as the perception of the social world.

This study followed a qualitative mono-method because of its exploratory and inductive nature – to observe patterns from the data provided by the study participants, generalise the result to the broader population and provide recommendations on how best companies can promote racial cohesion in the workplace. An inductive approach is fundamental to qualitative research (Bansal et al., 2018) and exploratory research is associated with qualitative research (Casula et al., 2021; Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Qualitative research is appropriate as a social science that collects data with a view to interpret people's perceptions of social events (Mohajan, 2018).

A phenomenological strategy was used because the research drew from the participants' experiences of designing or implementing diversity and inclusion initiatives within companies in South Africa. Phenomenology seeks to uncover knowledge about a phenomenon from the perspective of those who experienced it and seeks to answer the what and how of those experiences (Mhatre & Mehta, 2022; Neubauer et al., 2019). This study specifically used the interpretative phenomenology as described by Mhatre and Mehta (2022), which has a focus on in-depth experiences of the participants and how they interpret their experiences of a phenomenon. As such, participants shared their experiences through semi-structured interviews and the researcher interpreted these experiences, as discussed in the data analysis section.

The study was cross sectional, with data having been collected at one point in time (Connelly, 2016; Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Interviews occurred between August and October 2022 after the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS) ethical clearance committee had approved the application.

4.3 Population

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with individual professionals or practitioners who specialised in either diversity and inclusion, human resources management or transformation; and had experience consulting to or working for South African companies. The professionals targeted were those that had specifically been involved in designing or implementing diversity and inclusion initiatives. The population from which the sample was drawn was all diversity and inclusion, human resources or transformation practitioners or practitioners who had worked in South African companies and had been involved in designing or implementing diversity and inclusion initiatives. There were no

specific industries targeted as the intention was not to generalise the findings to any specific industry.

4.4 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis for this research was the racial diversity and inclusion initiatives or interventions that were undertaken by South African companies. This was in line with the aim of this study which is to investigate how racial diversity and inclusion promote social cohesion from the perspective of race in the workplace. The unit of observation was the individual diversity and inclusion, human resources or transformation practitioners or professionals sampled and is described in the next section. The views and experiences of these professionals were used to investigate how racial diversity and inclusion initiatives in the workplace promote social cohesion from the perspective of race. The unit of analysis refers to the “who” or “what” is being studied, for which analysis is drawn and conclusions made (Kumar, 2018; Sedgwick, 2014). Units of analysis could be individuals, groups, organisations and social artifacts and interactions (Kumar, 2018).

4.5 Sampling Method and Size

A combination of purposive and snowball non-probability sampling was used to identify diversity and inclusion, human resources or transformation practitioners for this research. Purposive non-probability sampling was chosen because the researcher did not have a complete list of the targeted population. Furthermore, the aim of the research was to make logical generalisations about the findings and not confirmatory conclusions. This is in line with the recommendations of Saunders and Lewis (2012) who expressed that purposive sampling is suitable if the researcher wanted to understand the phenomenon and draw logical generalisation. Purposive sampling is suitable for exploratory research (Ridder, 2017; Taherdoost, 2016).

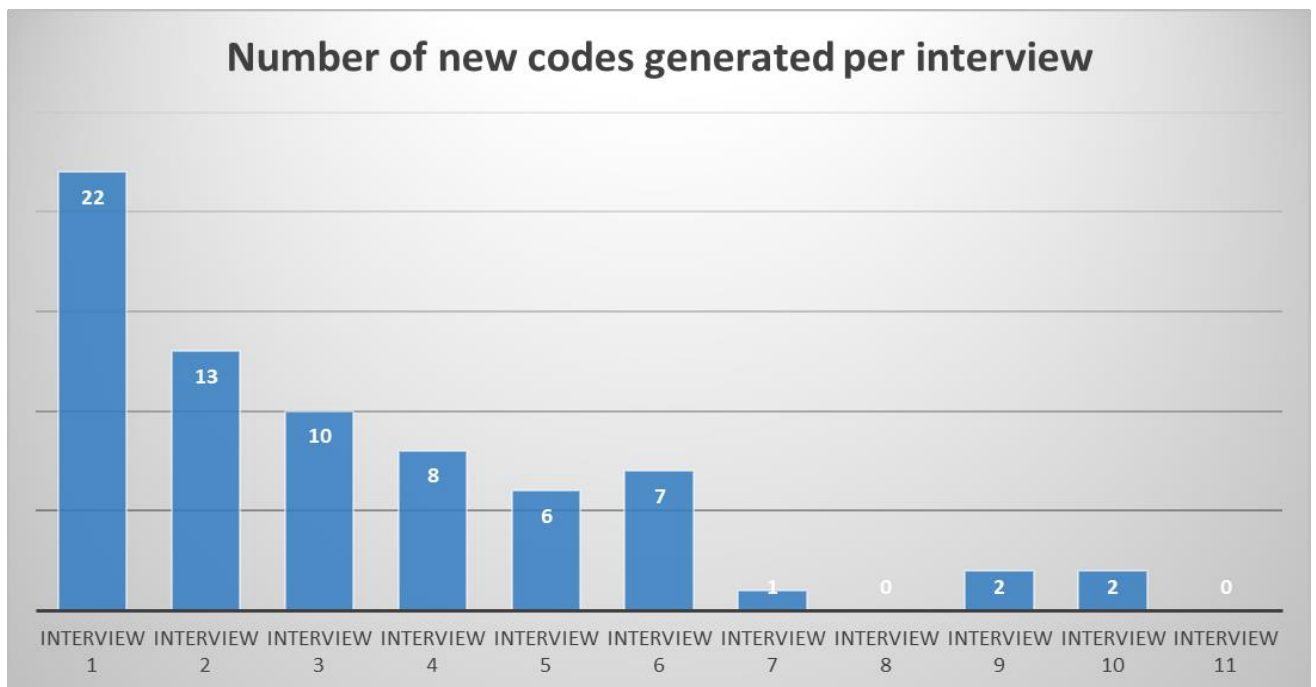
In purposive sampling researchers use their judgement to choose participants who best suit the objective of the research (Moser & Korstjens, 2018; Saunders & Lewis, 2012). A purposive sampling strategy for selecting cases that meet a pre-defined criteria is called criterion strategy (Palinkas et al., 2015). In line with this, diversity and inclusion, human resources or transformation practitioners or professionals were best suited to answer the

research questions. These practitioners or professionals typically play a role in South African companies' diversity and inclusion interventions from the point of view of design, implementation and maintenance. The researcher's own experience in working for South African companies helped in making this decision.

The criteria that were used to select the participants was that they must have had experience in designing or implementing diversity and inclusion initiatives in South African companies, whether in their capacity as employees or specialist consultants of that company. Since the study involved racial diversity, racial bias could play a role in how participants shared their experience. Therefore, the participants that were sampled were racially diverse to enhance the credibility of the research. Since the results of the study was going to be generalised to South African companies, it was important to have some participants who had worked diversity and inclusion consulting firms, because of their broader experience. Two participants were founders of diversity and inclusion consulting firms in South Africa.

Participants were sourced primarily through the LinkedIn social media platform. This allowed the researcher to have an idea of the experience profile before the contact was made. Each participant that was sourced was asked to recommend other specialists in the field. Twelve to eighteen participants were suggested for phenomenology (Myres, 2022). According to Saunders and Lewis (2012) a sample between four to twelve participants was likely to be sufficient in instances of homogeneous population and between twelve to thirty for heterogeneous populations. In line with these recommendations, the researcher had planned a sample of twelve, however eleven interviews were conducted, after one participant withdrew due to illness. The researcher did not pursue further participants as data saturation had been reached, as evidenced by [Figure 4](#), which shows that few new codes were being generated after the 7th interview.

Figure 4
Number of New Codes Generated per Interview



4.6 Measurement Instrument

Semi-structured interviews were conducted because they allowed for flexibility and versatility in an in-depth inquiry on how companies' racial diversity and inclusion initiatives promoted social cohesion from the perspective of race. Semi-structured interviews provide flexibility in qualitative research and are useful for studies where people's experiences are sought on complex and sensitive issues (Kallio et al., 2016). The steps recommended by Kallio et al. (2016) were followed to develop a semi-structured interview guide ([Appendix 2](#)).

The first step was retrieving and using previous knowledge. This involved gaining an understanding of the work that was previously done in the subject being investigated. This was done by reviewing academic literature on racial diversity and inclusion, social cohesion, South African companies' approaches to racial diversity and inclusion initiatives and racial discourses in South Africa. This academic literature review assisted in developing the research questions discussed in chapter 3, the interview guide, and the conceptual basis for the research.

The second step was the actual development of the interview guide ([Appendix 2](#)). The questions were carefully developed to ensure that they directed the conversation to the themes of the research topic. The questions were drafted in such way that they were open ended to generate in depth data. The guide consisted a of main theme with follow-up questions (Kallio et al., 2016). The themes were: The key characteristics of companies' racial diversity and inclusion initiatives, the extent in which these initiatives incorporated elements of social cohesion, and recommendations. The probing questions were developed around these themes.

The interview with Participant one was used as a pilot for the study. After the pilot interview, academic conceptual terms were clarified especially in questions relating to research sub-question 2.

4.7 Data Gathering Process

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews conducted online using video communication technology software, Microsoft Teams (MS Teams). Upon invitation to participate in this study, most participants requested online interviews, citing time constraints and convenience on their part. This trend resonates with de Villiers et al. (2021), who mention that researchers are increasingly using video technologies – a trend accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic. The majority of participants were still working from home since the Covid-19 pandemic and online meetings were convenient for them.

The interviews were conducted between August and October 2022 after the ethical clearance approval ([Appendix 3](#)). Participants were requested to sign a consent form ([Appendix 4](#)) confirming their understanding of the interview process and indicating that their participation was voluntary. Interviews were recorded and transcribed using Otter software. The participants were verbally notified of and consented to the recording and transcription of the interviews.

The participants largely left their video cameras on during the interviews except for a few instances where the cameras had to be switched off to improve connectivity. The use of video cameras allowed for the researcher to build the rapport with the participants much more quickly and proved helpful in getting the conversation to flow and easing tension. The interview with participant 10 was affected by online connectivity issues due to power

outages. The interview began on MS Teams but was eventually completed telephonically, which affected the flow of the conversation. Nevertheless, the transcripts for both the online and telephonic conversations with the participant were combined and used for data analysis. The interviews lasted between 45 minutes to 60 minutes. The real-time transcription tool was augmented by taking notes throughout the interviews.

4.8 Analysis Approach

This study used a thematic analysis. There is no one right way of doing data analysis for phenomenological studies (Miller et al., 2018), but phenomenology focuses on the patterns of experiences of the participants and thematic analysis is aimed at identifying themes or patterns across qualitative data sets (Cassell & Bishop, 2019; Lester et al., 2020). The analysis was conducted through the seven phases suggested by Lester et al. (2020): Data preparation and organising, data transcription, data familiarisation, generate memos, data coding, moving codes to categories and categories to themes and making analytical process transparent.

Phase 1 and 2: All interviews were transcribed in real time using Otter software, which produces verbatim transcripts of participant's exact words as well as audio recordings. The transcripts and recordings were supplemented with written notes of each interview. These notes were a summary of the major points made during the interview. Immediately after each interview, Microsoft word transcripts and interview audio files were downloaded from Otter and saved in an interview folder. Each interview had a separate folder for ease of identification.

Phase 3 and 4: The written notes that were taken during interviews served as light analysis and gave an indication of what was described by the participants. During this phase, transcripts were prepared for qualitative analysis by ensuring consistent spelling and freedom of typographical errors. Transcripts were imported into Atlas.ti software for data coding, categorising, and theme generation.

Phase 5: coding was done by identifying statements or phrases of analytical importance from the participants' responses on each research question, as suggested by Lester et al.

(2020). What was notable from the initial coding phase was how much rich information was contained by the transcripts that was not captured in handwritten notes. The first phase of coding produced many codes, some of which were similar. In the second phase of coding, similar codes were merged. Once similar codes were merged, the coding process resulted in 71 codes ([Appendix 5](#)) which contained 282 quotations from interview transcripts.

Phase 6: Codes that were related conceptually were grouped into categories. 17 categories ([Appendix 5](#)) were generated in total. Once the categories were generated, 5 themes were generated that are aligned to analytical objectives. They were Drivers of Diversity and Inclusion, Racial Diversity and Inclusion Interventions, Personnel Driving and Business Units Driving D&I, Social Cohesion Interventions and Experts Recommendations.

4.9 Limitations of the Study

The subject of race and racial diversity is a sensitive and sometimes a politicised subject. There was a risk that the participants' responses were influenced by their racial identity, past experiences of racial discrimination or even political persuasions, as some politicians use racially polarising remarks for political mobilisation (Southall, 2018). As such, there was a risk of reliability in terms of the information provided. However, A sample of racially diverse participants was drawn to minimise this risk.

Some participants tended to over-emphasise the experience of racial diversity and inclusion from the perspective of the companies they were working for at the time of the interview, rather than their experiences with multiple companies. At times they would suggest or imply that their companies' interventions were perhaps more dynamic or effective than other companies. Therefore, there may have been an element of bias towards their own companies, may affect the generalisability of the result of this study.

The social cohesion concept on which this study is underpinned, has not yet been fully theorised and there is some debate about its definition and its elements. This study is based on the six elements prevalent in social cohesion literature based on the work done by Schiefer and van der Noll (2017). There may be other social cohesion elements

pertaining to the South African environment that this study may not have touched on. Some authors, for example, see tolerance and freedom of speech as crucial for social cohesion (Schiefer & van der Noll, 2017).

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

The objective of this study is to investigate how South African companies' racial diversity and inclusion initiatives promote social cohesion from the perspective of race in the workplace. The main research question and three sub-research questions were designed to achieve the stated aim of the study. This chapter presents the detailed findings that emanated from the semi-structured interviews with the study participants. The research questions, which are discussed in detail in chapter 3, are stated below:

- Main Research Question: How do South African companies' racial diversity and inclusion initiatives promote social cohesion from the perspective of race in the workplace?
- Sub-Research Question 1: What are the key characteristics or elements of South African companies' racial diversity and inclusion initiatives?
- Sub-Research Question 2: To what extent do these racial diversity and inclusion incorporate elements of social cohesion from the perspective of race?
- Sub-Research Question 3: What do diversity and inclusion experts think companies can do to promote racial cohesion effectively?

A table detailing the profile of the participants interviewed is presented in this chapter followed by the detailed findings of each research question.

5.2 Participants' Profile

As highlighted in chapter 4, semi-structured interviews were conducted with practitioners or professionals in the field of diversity and inclusion. A combination of purposive sampling and snowballing was used to target the participants, with LinkedIn social media platform as the primary source for searching the participants. No specific industry was targeted. Participants interviewed have experience working for or consulting in South African

companies, in diversity and inclusion field. Most participants have been involved directly in implementing diversity and inclusion initiatives in South African companies, and two participants were managing directors of consulting firms in the field. [Table 5.2](#) details the profile of the participants.

Table 5.2
Research participants' profiles

Participant	Positions Held	Industries	Race	Experience in D&I
Participant 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talent and Organisational Development HR Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water Management Services 	Black	4 years
Participant 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversity and Inclusion Specialist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transport Financial Services 	White	5 years
Participant 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head of Culture, People, communications HR Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engineering Consultancy 	White	5 years
Participant 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human Resources Specialist Organisational and Performance Consultant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial Services Rail, Port and Pipeline Mining 	Black	14 years
Participant 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head: People Development and Workplace Diversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Healthcare 	Indian	11 years
Participant 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive Director: Human Capital Development Head of Human Resources Senior Executive – Human Resources Human Resources Business Partner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial Services Legal Services Accounting and Auditing Mining Academic Institutions 	Black	20 years
Participant 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managing Director in Diversity Consultancy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change management consultancy, human resource development and training 	White	29 years
Participant 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transformation Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insurance 	Black	4 years

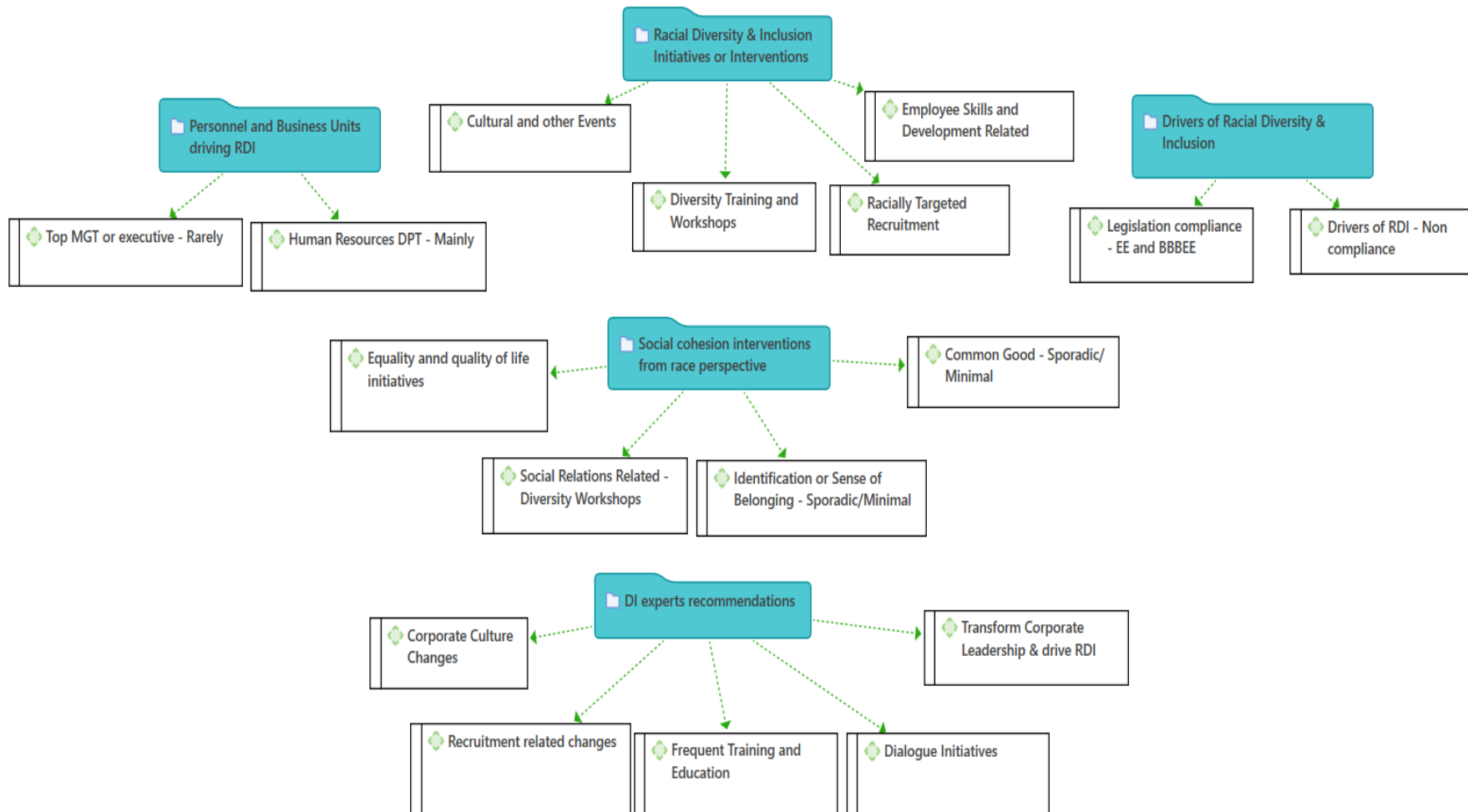
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment Equity Manager 			
Participant 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive: Responsible Business and Transformation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information Technology and Consulting 	Black	20 years
Participant 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing Director: Diversity and Inclusion Consultancy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity and Inclusion Consultancy 	Black	5 years
Participant 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of Transformation, Diversity and Inclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthcare 	Black	9 years

5.3 Research Findings

[Figure 5.3](#) below provides an overview of the themes and categories that emerged from the data analysis. [Appendix 5](#) shows themes, categories and codes generated. There were five themes that emerged from data analysis and are follows:

- **Sub-research question 1 themes:** Drivers of racial diversity and inclusion, racial diversity and inclusion interventions, and personnel driving racial diversity and inclusion
- **Sub-research question 2 theme:** Social cohesion interventions
- **Sub-research question 2 theme:** Experts recommendations

Figure 5.3
Research Findings - Themes and Categories



5.3.1 Findings for Sub-Research Question 1

Sub-research question 1: What are the key characteristics or elements of South African companies' racial diversity and inclusion initiatives?

This research question sought to understand the critical elements of companies' racial diversity and inclusion. There were three themes that emerged from the sub-question: drivers of racial diversity and inclusion, racial diversity and inclusion initiatives, and company personnel or divisions driving these initiatives ([Appendix 5](#)). [Table 5.3.1](#) below shows key concepts and words that emerged from the quotations coded.

Table 5.3.1
Research Question 1: Key Words and Concepts

Rank	Key Words & Concepts	Frequency
1	People	41
2	Employment	37
3	Equity	33
4	Diversity	31
5	Inclusion	24
6	Organisation	24
8	Recruitment	19
9	Targets	18
10	Companies	17
11	Transformation	17
14	Training	16
15	Compliance	15
17	Bias	14
18	Organisations	14
20	Management	13
21	Business	12
22	Culture	12
25	Board	11

26	HR	11
29	Company	10
30	Development	10

5.3.1.1 Drivers of Racial Diversity and Inclusion in the South African workplace

Responses from participants revealed that companies do either those racial diversity and inclusion interventions which are linked to government legislation, or voluntary interventions or a combination of both. As such, the drivers are divided into legislation compliance and drivers not compliant to legislation.

a) Legislation Compliance Drivers

Almost all the study participants believed that racial diversity initiatives in the workplace were driven mainly by government legislation, especially the Employment Equity (EE) and Broad-Based Economic Empowerment (BBBEE). The exception to this trend was the responses from participant 2, whose responses were mainly based on her direct working experience with a global company with operations in South Africa. The participant referred to a “global best practice” as the driver of racial diversity programmes.

EE was most prevalent in the participants’ responses. The participants mostly understood the two legislation pieces to be pivotal in setting racial targets regarding employee recruitment, skills development and procurement, amongst other things. The general view was that introducing the EE and BBBEE legislation was helpful from a racial diversity perspective in the workplace.

“We are driven by the Employment Equity Act, for example, which then forces us or guides us actually to have an employment equity committee in the workplace. With employment equity, we have plans to address the gaps we have identified within our own operating environment. So, we have positions that have been historically occupied

by one dominating race. So those are some of the areas where we are trying to bridge that gap” (Participant 1)

“As mentioned earlier that based on the Employment Equity, target recruitment would be used, employee resourcing would centre around the Employment Equity” (Participant 4)

“I want to start from a more broad-based perspective. We are fortunate in South Africa; we have some of the leading legislative frameworks that promote and guide acts of diversity, inclusion and spaces of belonging. There are targets that back that up through the BBBEE framework, the BBBEE codes of good practice, within the HRD space, more specifically, employment equity management, control and skills development”

(Participant 5)

Furthermore, most participants believed that racial diversity initiatives linked to these two pieces of legislation were catalysts in addressing historical inequalities, with participants 9 and 11 further adding:

“It aims to address the inequalities currently existing in the workplace due to our country's historical background. So, employment equity tries to make the workplace more equitable and aligned with the demographics of the country” (Participant 11)

“The folks locally, the focus is still very much around transformation, employment equity and BBBEE, which is understandable in South Africa, right because of our history”

(Participant 9)

It emerged that with regards to EE, employers that employ more than 50 employees (designated employers) set demographic targets - mostly racial targets - recruit according to these targets and report to the Department of Labour annually. From a BBBEE perspective, the consensus was about including black people in the economy. It looks at employment equity from a management control perspective, ownership, skills

development and procurement. However, unlike the EE requirements, BBBEE is voluntary, and companies generally do it as it makes business sense.

“So BBBEE is not enforced. It is voluntary. So, there is no act that says every company must complete a BEE compliance process. Companies do it voluntarily because it makes business sense” (Participant 6)

“A lot of times, the quick wins would be in line with your BEE” (Participant 4)

Most study participants also agreed that South African companies' racial diversity efforts are mostly related to compliance. Some participants characterised these racial diversity efforts as a “tick box” exercise to meet racial targets. The sentiment was that most companies have not progressed beyond compliance to incorporate inclusion and belonging.

“I honestly do believe that, and even when I interact with some of my peers in the DI space, right, a lot of my peers are still very much around just BBBEE and transformation, you know, and have not necessarily progressed to incorporate inclusion and belonging”
(Participant 9)

“Too many organisations are still stuck with the compliance and believe by trying to improve fractionally on compliance, they have done the role and perform the ability in terms of social cohesion” (Participant 5)

Although many participants did not comment on the success or shortcomings of companies' compliance linked diversity efforts, one participant was critical of these efforts.

“They are trying to reach that compliance. But many of the companies actually fall short. And I think from BBBEE perspective it is probably less than 5% of like the big organisations that are level one” (Participant 10)

b) Voluntary Drivers

While compliance was a vital feature as to why companies do racial diversity in South Africa, there were other factors not related to compliance. These drivers were not spoken about in detail by the participants, which could be an indication that companies place a lot of effort on EE and BBBEE. Participant 4 believed that organisations with dynamic organisational cultures were transitioning from pure compliance to incorporating a more holistic approach to racial diversity. Participant 2 placed minimal emphasis on her experience working for various South African companies but rather shared on her experience with the global company which has operations in South Africa. The participant mentioned that racial targets were not the main focus and emphasised that global diversity best practice tended to be used to drive racial diversity initiatives. The participant added that the purpose of diversity initiatives in the company she worked for was to attract talent and capture skills.

“So, we do not have any quotas for recruitment. It is a strange thing” (Participant 2)

“Yeah, so yeah, mainly best practice. So, we also ask teams if they have anything they want to share. And then from there, we collect the best practices that have something that we are also looking to introduce” (Participant 2)

“Here we speak about attracting talent, but it is also very much about retaining talent and using the talent that we have. And all of these three form parts of our corporate culture, which is obviously core to our business success” (Participant 2)

Another participant mentioned that the company she worked for at the time of the interview was taking a broad approach to diversity. However, the participant admitted that this was not what companies generally did in South Africa nor has the researcher got a sense from other participants that more companies were broadening the scope. According to this participant, there was a huge drive on inclusion and a sense of belonging in one company that the participant worked for.

“We take a very broad lens to inclusion and diversity as a firm, you know, and ultimately, through our program, we really are fostering to create a culture where every single person in our firm has a sense of belonging” (Participant 9)

“Culture change is something that's really difficult, you know, and it is not like employment equity, for example, where you want to get as close as possible to the employment equity numbers. If you only focus on the numbers, you are not focusing on the inclusion part. The inclusion part is the culture” (Participant 9)

Another view was that there was an economic rationale in implementing racial diversity and inclusion initiatives.

“I think it makes business sense in all businesses because of the diversity of thought. We also need to represent the kinds of customers and clients we serve and have different thoughts and opinions going into the solutions we develop. And so, for me, it makes business sense. And I think many businesses are starting to see that you are more innovative the more diversity you have in the business.” (Participant 3)

The researcher also got a strong sense from some of the participants that companies tend to implement some of the racial diversity interventions, specially training, as the knee jerk reaction to incidents such as racists incidents.

“The first time we had anything to do with diversity and inclusion was when there had been a complaint, or somebody had said something that made us think, okay, there is maybe an issue.” (Participant 3)

“I think companies do it because, I mean, I know my company gets called in when there is an incident usually” (Participant 7)

“I think these things tend to be very reactionary. When there is an incidence, perhaps then there will be a need for some sort of sensitisation of staff” (Participant 11)

5.3.1.2 Racial Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives or Interventions

The interventions findings category has sub-categories which are recruitment, training and workshops, skills development and cultural and other events. The findings are discussed under each sub-category below.

a) Racially targeted recruitment

Racially targeted recruitment is linked to employment equity compliance. Most participants agreed that racial targets through recruitment were the primary intervention to get the workplace racially diverse in South Africa. Companies set percentage racial targets for recruitment which are reported to the Department of labour.

“Recruitment is the biggest driver because it depends on whom you get to walk through the door, at which level and how much recognition and encouragement you give them once they have walked through the door, right, and so yeah, I guess recruitment is definitely one of the biggest drivers” (Participant 9)

“Definitely. I think one way to have a huge impact on employment equity is through recruitment, is through making sure that the recruitment process is as fair, as equitable”
(Participant 11)

“I think across the board; we obviously know people focus on the recruitment side to try and bring diversity into the company” (Participant 3)

However, some participants criticised South African companies' recruitment efforts in that they had mainly focussed on lower and middle-level positions with little progress in racial diversity in top management. The sentiment was that not enough black people were recruited or promoted to senior executive roles in corporate South Africa. Three participants likened South Africa's corporate structure to a cappuccino, dark at the bottom and lighter at the top. The fact that this metaphor was mentioned by three participants in

separate interviews could be an indication that the “cappuccino” effect is still very much part of the current discourse in racial diversity in the South African context.

“Corporate South Africa is like a cappuccino, you know, dark at the bottom, and the higher you go, it gets lighter. And then at the top, it is white with sprinkles of brown, you know” (Participant 9)

“So, I often describe the South African corporate structure like the South African class structure, and that it is like a cappuccino, at the bottom levels of the organisation, it is black and brown at the top levels of the organisation, it is white, brown sprinkles” (Participant 10)

“And unfortunately, it also has a bit of a cappuccino in the sense where as much as we are level one be compliant organisation, the majority of our black staff is sitting in junior management, and the middle and not senior management” (Participant 11)

The participants also tended to talk about closing the racial pay gap as part of the whole recruitment processes. Most noted that companies had progressed on closing the racial pay gap.

“Another initiative most organisations look at is closing the racial pay gap. So, you start looking at how are the white males paid versus your black males. How are your different races paid? And also dissecting it from a gender perspective, basically, and then identifying, okay, what sort of strategies will you implement to close that gap between the skills, between the wage gap depending on the level and complexity of work, so if it is similar work, you want to make sure that there is alignment be and you can justify the differences if there are any differences” (Participant 4)

b) Diversity Training/Workshop and Other Dialogue-Based Initiatives

Diversity training and workshops were vital features in most participants' responses to the question of the most prevalent racial diversity and inclusion initiatives in South African companies. Unconscious bias training and workshops were the most common interventions companies tended to implement. Participants mentioned a variety of reasons why companies do unconscious bias training and workshops. The reasons included promoting inclusive language, awareness of unconscious racial biases, awareness of unintentional racism or racist language and awareness of micro-aggressions. These reasons could be an indication of what companies are reacting to in terms of incidences they encounter in the workplace.

“So, what we have done, we have got what we call unconscious bias, which is actually mandatory. So, everyone in the firm needs to be part of our compliance training. Everyone in the firm needs to go through the unconscious bias” (Participant 9)

*“The ones that we do, and the ones that we focus on are microaggressions, thinking about the small things you say and do and then actually getting examples”
(Participant 3)*

“So yeah, I have seen it in my previous job when I worked for in law firm; we also had quite an intensive program around unconscious bias. We actually used it because it was an international firm” (Participant 6)

Another powerful feature in most participants' responses is cultural or intercultural training. Similar to unconscious bias, some participants mentioned that the purpose was promoting cultural sensitivity and awareness among teams. The responses from most participants gave the researcher a strong sense that diversity training (unconscious and cultural) was much more intense in companies with a global presence, although it was also popular in South African only based companies.

In terms of effectiveness or importance of such programmes, most participants felt it had minimal impact, with only a few placing too much value on it. Some participants expressed

that it was “tick box” exercise, with minimal impact. Most participants thought that it was mostly short-term and that some of the things trained were not embedded in those companies' cultures and values.

“It is one of those that just gets implemented for the sake of being implemented. So, we have just done this, check the box” (Participant 1)

“For me, it seems one of those being implemented but does not yield the desired tangible results. I always advise that when a new organisation is formed, I always say start by identifying the culture of the organisation because sometimes we focus on building structures and policies. So, we need to go back to the basics so and start to redefine, you know, what is it that you believe in and how can we get it right”

(Participant 1)

“I find like we have just been doing some unconscious bias training. I just find it is mostly done badly. It is rarely successful. It is not sustainable” (Participant 7)

“For some companies, it is a tick box, it happens once, and you have got all your kumbaya moments, and teams are like, wow, we can mix. Yes, yes. And it might last, that sort of, let us call it, a honeymoon period that will last for maybe six months if the training was done well. But then life gets back to normal” (Participant 2)

However, a few participants felt strongly that diversity training has value if done well. Participant 10, in particular, whose company provides such training amongst other things, was passionate about it:

“Diversity and inclusion training is to help us expose ourselves to each other. From a historical context, we come from a history that looked at human beings and ranked them regarding which human beings were superior versus those less than superior. And so those that are superior are automatically more valuable, more intelligent, more capable, or more competent. Diversity and Inclusion engagements enable us to understand that

there is neither anyone better nor worse than anybody else or inherently superior or inferior to anybody else. We are all human beings. We come from different backgrounds. We may have different cultures and ways of doing things, but neither of us is inherently better nor less than any other. And so essentially, when we do that work, we are doing the work of helping people unlearn the conditioning that they grew up under, that they would believe that certain people are automatically more capable than others. When we humanise people to each other and enable them to understand that we are all human and capable, we can all learn. It then enables the building of that bridge of how it is that we can engage as equals, how it is that we can engage with each other with respect, how it is that we can give each other dignity without undermining each other without me putting myself down” (Participant 10)

A few companies with more progressive cultures create platforms or programmes where dialogue over and above racial recruitment targets occurs. Participant 5 shared that the company he was with was following this path. The participant shared that top-level, mid-level, and low-level diversity structures had been created, and dialogues such as what informs racial targets occurred through these structures. These would include discussions of concepts such as privilege.

“So, what we are doing is we are having discussions, dialogues, engagement sessions through these various structures that I have spoken to you about to talk about matters beyond the targets. We speak about what informs the targets. So, we talk about matters of privilege. We talk about matters of fragility. We talk about our history and where we come from as a society. We talk about how unequal, unequal we are and how that continues to play out in society” (Participant 5)

Participant 5 went on to share about the benefits that were observed as a result of these dialogues:

“To dispel some myths, and then use that to dialogue, engage, and have conversations to understand different perspectives and move towards a common appreciation of where we need to be. That is where we can get it, shifting the focus from a legislative framework from targets, etc., to have more richer and deeper conversations and allow

for those spaces of safety to emerge. So, people have to be comfortable to engage, for the voices to emerge, for the truths to be shared, and then collectively inform what the best approaches that need to be taken are" (Participant 5)

Participant 9 followed in a similar vein as participant 5 in that few companies engage in dialogues beyond targets. The participant talked about the impact of an inclusion assessment project done by one of the companies the participant worked for. The project also included multiple complex and crucial engagements at various levels of the organisation. This inclusion assessment project was not only about the dialogues. However, it was also to assess where the company was in terms of inclusion and what the barriers are in terms of inclusion.

"The inclusion assessment project was to assess and analyse and tell us what we look like from an inclusion point of view. Secondly, what could be barriers to achieving the transformation goals? That we want to achieve. You know, and then thirdly, what would it take to address those barriers?" (Participant 9)

Similar to the dialogue engagements mentioned by participant 6, participant 9 mentioned that the dialogue sessions of the inclusion project were meant to dispel myths and fears about racial diversity programmes and clarify racial diversity misconceptions. Participant 9 further added:

"We have got a clear message where we are saying, and we are not saying we want to get rid of white people, Indian people, we are saying everyone has got work to do"
(Participant 9)

"In the transition of power in 94, things were not spoken about and were not addressed. You know, these are things that we spoke about in the inclusion assessment, you know, where we really ripped off the band-aids to say, you know, there are challenges and issues, and there are pains that black people have experienced" (Participant 9)

“And we are not saying that white males are territory owners, the bad people, but we are saying how do we intentionally change the narrative? What got us here is not what is going to take it forward. How do we then change the narrative to say, we want to make sure, as I said, there is an equal opportunity and equal support, that people have access and comfort to the territory or the comfort while they are in these territories and they feel a sense of belonging” (Participant 9)

Participant 3 introduced the concept of equity, diversity and inclusion moment (EDI moment) that was adopted by one of the companies' she worked for. EDI moment referred to a moment where people shared briefly just about anything relating to diversity in meetings. According to the participant this encouraged diversity engagement.

“EDI moment, which is equality, diversity and inclusion moment, we realised that the scope of diversity and inclusion is huge. You can talk about religion, and you could talk about, you know, it is not just about race. So, we introduce those moments into every single team meeting that we have. And it is not a big discussion. But it could just be an interesting fact, something to think about, a short activity, a short video that we watch together so that it becomes part of just who we are as a company. So, I find that is really much more effective than the reactive approach of only doing things when you think that there is a problem.”

c) Skills and Development of Employees

Some participants talked about skills and development as part of promoting racial diversity in the workplace. These participants mentioned that skills and development initiatives are part of the BBBEE initiatives. These would typically involve identifying people from previously disadvantaged employees and putting interventions such as training, designing career paths for them and upskilling them. These would typically be done along racial lines for BBBEE purposes.

“Some initiatives would entail identifying previously disadvantaged individuals to groom them into those senior roles or identifying existing individuals within the organisation. That is run from a leadership and BEE perspective” (Participant 4)

“Once the people are inside the organisation, they have a career path and key development programs to ensure that they upskill those people because it is one thing to get a graduate from a university with an IT qualification. It is another thing to ensure they have the right skills and competencies to succeed in their role. So, they will do that, and they will target specific programs for black people because that is intentionally targeting black people because they want to build this inclusion. Then from a succession point of view, they will start identifying potential talent in the organisation from the black or black employees who have got potential to move to senior positions” (Participant 6)

d) Cultural and Other Events

Some participants mentioned that companies promote racial diversity through cultural days and events to recognise different cultures. However, similar to the sentiment expressed about diversity workshops, some participants said that this cultural appreciation was not something embedded in most organisations' cultures. It was just a once-off occurrence.

“What you do is in trying to acknowledge, you know, different cultural beliefs, if, for example, Hindus are celebrating Diwali, we send out posters, you know, internal emails to wish them well, and they are allowed to celebrate. And they are made to feel welcome and they actually practice it within the premises” (Participant 1)

5.3.1.3 Personnel and Business Units Driving Racial Diversity and Inclusion

Most participants expressed that racial diversity and inclusion initiatives and interventions, as mentioned in these findings, are often driven by the human resources department in organisations with little to no support or visibility of senior or top-level management.

“Top leadership, whether it is a board or executive, in what I observed, are not intimately involved in driving the DI initiatives; they tend to relegate it to HR or in some instances, they create a portfolio called a transformation division or transformation” (Participant 6)

“I think it is run by HR in a lot of companies. I was gonna say later, the only way that things will work is if it is supported by top management, and more important if top management are those” (Participant 3)

“In most companies, in the more than 100 clients that we have done business with in the past five years, we have only ever engaged with one company where the CEO was driving it?” (Participant 10)

However, a few participants mentioned that in big organisations, especially those with successful diversity and inclusion programmes, there tend to be ethics committees run by senior management. Furthermore, senior management tends to pay more attention to initiatives linked to compliance.

“From a governance perspective, most large organisations have governance structures that try and monitor these elements. So, you will typically have your social Ethics Committee, which looks at aspects of employment equity. In my organisation, we have the social ethics committee, but reporting to the SEC is the transformations steering committee, whose composition is made up of the entire exco, from the CEO to the CFO. All leaders and subsidiaries ensure that they are driving transformation in the group. So, it is governed and monitored at an executive level, but from an implementation perspective, operationally, it often does fall into the hands of HR to drive it in my organisation” (Participant 11)

“If it is a compliance matter, from a board level, there needs to be buy-in because they are setting out those targets and communicating them with the government or communicating them with other stakeholders. They have vested interest in the in the business” (Participant 4)

5.3.2 Findings for Sub-Research Question 2

Sub-research question 2: To what extent do these racial diversity and inclusion incorporate elements of social cohesion from the perspective of race?

The participants were asked to express their views through their experience about the extent to which South African companies' racial diversity and inclusion initiatives include elements of social cohesion from the perspective of race. These elements were social relations, identification or sense of belonging, orientation toward a common good, shared values, quality of life and equality/inequality. The response from the participants focussed more on equality/quality of life, social relations, belongingness and common goods elements. [Table 5.3.2](#) below shows key concepts and words that emerged from the quotations coded.

Table 5.3.2
Research Question 2: Key Words and Concepts

Rank	Key Words & Concepts	Frequency
1	People	47
2	Culture	16
3	Work	14
4	Company	12
5	Organisation	11
6	Bias	10
7	Employees	10
8	Training	10

5.3.2.1 Social Relations

The participants were asked how companies foster trust, social interaction, and solidarity between racial groups in the workplace. The consensus from the participants is that, while there are efforts, companies were not doing enough in this social cohesion element for

various reasons. Firstly, most participants mentioned diversity training, such as cultural and unconscious bias training and cultural events and, to a lesser degree, team building, as very popular with companies in trying to foster trust and bring races together. For example, participant 2 talked about having seen unconscious bias and cultural training breaking down barriers, getting people talking and breaking racial stereotype myths in companies she worked for.

“We rolled out unconscious bias training; it was a full-day session. Teams or groups were not designed. So, you signed up on a day that worked for you, and everyone went. I loved that because often people want to, you know, push, ah! Let us get this one because they will talk nicely. In training, you go through this journey that breaks down barriers and gets people talking. And I think programs like that, and in-depth training that is done well, promote open and honest conversation. It impacts social cohesion”

(Participant 2)

“What we will do is once a month would gather and start to actually, you know, talk about different cultures. We would identify a culture, say, this Friday or this month, we are honouring Venda culture. So, we will all try to dress up in Venda regalia, and we allow those guys from that particular ethnic group to actually, you know, tell us about their culture” (Participant 1)

Participant 4 further elaborated on the impact of social bias:

“When you bring it close to home from that perspective, then it makes a difference because people become enlightened and sometimes, remember your upbringing informs a lot of it plays a major part in terms of the person that you are. Sometimes people are not even aware of the biases that when and they would carry on without any intentions of offending” (Participant 4)

However, while there was a general sense that cultural events and diversity training help in racial relations somewhat, most participants were not entirely convinced that these activities have a lasting impact. Participant 6 described these events as superficial, with

no follow-up. Participant 8 believed that while companies honour African culture through various cultural events, this culture is not reflected daily or in the company culture in general.

“It is, again, superficial stuff..... Let us bring in a consulting firm to train our employees, which is not bad, by the way..... It is just that there is no follow; there is no follow-through. They bring them to the organisation for one or two days, teach about unconscious bias, and do all these practical exercises, but then it stops there. So, these are a number of things companies try to do, but they are ineffective. Because they are not continuously being enforced. There is no continuity. It is just a one-off thing. It is heritage month. Let us dress as our tribe. That sort of stuff. But nothing quite substantial, to be honest” (Participant 6)

“Okay, it is all good and well, they, they sing the right songs, but in actual fact what is done on a day-to-day basis does not reflect that” (Participant 8)

Participant 7, on the other hand, believed that social cohesion, in general, was a pipe dream without solving inequality and poverty. The participant believed that companies do diversity training in a limited way and that employees do not understand their colleagues lived experiences.

“Until we somehow deal with inequality and poverty and unemployment, I think social cohesion will remain a pipe dream. I think companies are well-meaning organisations..... they try and do this and that, but I think they do it in a very limited way. Most of them bring people into training or training workshops or sessions, whereas I think what really needs to happen is that employees need to really understand the life the lived experience of their colleagues. Well, what time does she get up this lady who cleans my office? How does she get to work? How long does it take her? How many people is she feeding on this salary?” (Participant 7)

Participants 10 and 11 expressed that companies are profit driven and that issues such as social cohesiveness are the least in the company's consideration.

“You know, it is more about the bottom line. It is more about, you know, how do we grow our revenue? How do we grow our clients? How do we keep our clients? How do we provide good customer service? It is all about output, you know, and most times the employee experience, whether or not the environment is socially cohesive, the culture is inclusive is not considered as strategic intent, not at all” (Participant 11)

“Capitalist system, by its nature, values money and returns at the expense of everything else. It values money and returns at the expense of human life, at the expense of quality of life, and the expense of the dignity of people. Even though organisations may speak about, you know, are wanting to you know, share a common good and that they want to live up to shared values and they want to ensure the quality of life of all human beings, they operate within a space where the capitalist system actually serves them”
(Participant 10)

Participant 5 talked about the compassionate training initiative, which was done in one of the companies the participant worked for. The initiative was about acknowledging the suffering in others to encourage others to act to lessen the suffering of another person. The participant believed it was one of the initiatives that fostered positive racial relations in the workplace.

“Compassion training initiatives are premised around compassion. And compassion, by definition, is the willingness of an individual to recognise suffering in others and then have that desire to act to lessen the suffering of another person. Now, the science of compassion shows that you need to, first of all, ensure that your internal resources are attended to. This is so that you provide yourself with the necessary acts of compassion as an individual before you feel empowered to express that outwardly towards your family, your friends, his broader social circles and colleagues. The compassion program is about understanding us as people and moving towards a common humanity. It is about understanding that we as people are all suffering, although it might not be the same levels of suffering. We need to instil this humility into us as people to empower us to move towards the desired state of social inclusion” (Participant 5)

Participant 3 shared that in one of the companies, the company would deliberately make different races work together in projects to foster race relations. The participant shared those social relations had developed between black and white engineers through these projects.

5.3.2.2 Identification/Sense of Belonging

The participants were asked how companies ensure racial groups identify or have a sense of belonging within companies in South Africa. There were two notable trends in participants' responses. Firstly, similar to social relations, some participants felt that activities meant to foster a sense of belonging are sporadic and often not cemented in companies' corporate culture. Secondly, some participants expressed that due to lack of representation at the leadership level in companies, the culture that permeates is not always representative of the majority of people that works in the company.

“It depends on the company, who is at the top and who is leading it. So, what we try now is, and I do not think in our company, for example, that people of all races felt a sense of belonging. Now, I think they do because, first of all, they see people like themselves in management. So young black women, see black women in management, they understand that there is future for them, they understand that they are valued, they start to see the grace is not going to hold them back in the company” (Participant 3)

“So due to that lack of representation, the culture that permeates throughout the organisation is not necessarily always representative of the people of the majority of the people who work in it. So that sense of belonging is as tightly as closely tied to the values and the culture of the organisation and most times, it is not necessarily aligned to the people represented in it” (Participant 11)

“Logically, if you are coming into an organisation where most of the people that run the organisation are white, then automatically there will be easier relationships built with whites, juniors, in order to support them, and to teach them and to network them, and therefore enable them a whole lot better than any of the black and coloured junior staff

members as an example. And as a result of that, you will find that white Junior staffers thrive more in those corporate spaces because it is a culture, they are familiar with, engaging with people they are familiar with. Therefore, it is a supportive environment that enables them to thrive, versus others who might be black and coloured. Many of them are still first generation coming into those spaces” (Participant 10)

Participants 3 and 6 expressed that it tends to be difficult for companies to create a culture that suits everyone. Participant 3, for example, expressed that with transformation policies being implemented, white males, in particular, feel a sense of isolation.

“Now we white men are like, oh, there is no future for me here. Because you guys are focused on transformation” (Participant 3)

While participant 6 further added:

“I would say it is easy to achieve compliance from a diversity. It is more a lot more difficult to be inclusive and have a belonging culture” (Participant 6)

5.3.2.3 Improving Equality and Quality of Life

The participants were asked how companies try to foster or improve racial equality and employees' quality of life in the workplace. Most participants expressed that companies have made strides in South Africa to ensure equal pay for work of equal value. Participant 5 expressed that Employment Equity requires that companies conduct an exercise on whether employees are paid equally for work of equal value.

"Equal pay for work of equal value is an attempt by the government to ensure that there are no pay discrepancies across race or gender. I must be honest; the in the 24 years that I have worked, I have not seen pay disparities across racial lines (Participant 6)

“All organisations conduct an exercise, referred to as income professionals, to ensure that there is equal pay for work of equal value. You can call it whatever you want; we continuously track and monitor income differentials; we have a reporting structure that's driven by our HR managers and our leadership” (Participant 5)

However, Participant 8 was much more critical of the pay sentiment. The participant felt there was still racial parity in pay, especially in the financial services sector. The participant further raised that many black people sitting in unskilled and semi-skilled jobs are not receiving standard employee benefits in many organisations.

“So, what you are seeing is, in the financial services sector, there is a little bit more parity in terms of remuneration; you can clearly see the racial disparity there between white coloured versus Indian versus black. I cannot remember the percentages off the top of my head” (Participant 8)

“Black people also many organisations, I know this for a fact, tend to sit in the high numbers in the unskilled and semi-skilled area of work. Those places do not provide normal benefits. No, you are doing the work and getting paid for it. That is it” (Participant 8)

A couple of participants talked about working from home or a flexible working policy to assist employees in improving their quality of life. However, this was not necessarily race-related and was more of a recommendation.

5.3.2.4 Common Good and Share Values

On the question of how companies foster the common good, very few participants contributed to this element. Participant 3, however, shared that the nature of the work they do as a company, such as building roads for communities, does foster a sense of common good and solidarity amongst people of different races in that workspace.

"The work we do as engineers is, you know, building roads, building water treatment plants; what we do really is a common good. And what we find when we interview people about why do they stay at the company, across race groups, ages, and gender, they say, I like working for this company because we are doing good for society. So those things or the socio-economic developments are things that everybody in South Africa really cares about." (Participant 3)

Participant 10 was more critical of the concept of working towards the common good to foster social cohesion when it comes to companies:

"Even though organisations may speak about, you know, are wanting to, you know, share common good and that they want to live up to shared values and they want to ensure the quality of life of all human beings, but, but they operate within a space where the capitalist system actually serves them" (Participant 10)

5.3.3 Findings for Sub-Research Question 3

Sub-research question 3: What do diversity and inclusion experts think companies can do to promote racial cohesion effectively?

Sub-research question 2 as discussed above sought to discover the extent to which the current racial diversity and inclusion initiatives include elements of social cohesion, as discussed above. Sub-research question 3, on the other hand, sought recommendations from participants on how best to promote racial cohesion in the workplace effectively. These themes emerged: transformation of corporate leadership, dialogue initiatives, frequent training and education and corporate culture changes. [Table 5.3.3](#) below shows key concepts and words that emerged from the quotations coded.

Table 5.3.3

Research Question 2: Key Words and Concepts

Rank	Key Words & Concepts	Frequency
1	People	33
2	Organisation	23
3	Cohesion	11
4	Leadership	11
5	Approach	10
6	Leaders	9
7	Management	9
8	Team	9
9	History	8
10	HR	8
11	Inclusion	8
12	Opportunity	8
13	Diversity	7

5.3.3.1 Transform Corporate Leadership and Support from Leadership

Most participants recommended that for racial social cohesion to thrive in the workplace, racial diversity and inclusion initiatives need full support from management, both compliance and non-compliance initiatives. Secondly, most participants felt that companies should have top management representing the country's demographics to drive social relations effectively, a sense of belonging, common good, shared value, equality and quality of life.

With regard to support from top management, participants expressed the following:

“Like our top management at the moment, we have a team that's very, very supportive of this. But this is a completely different management team to what we had three years ago in terms of race; we are more than 50% black. The only reason these are supported is because the people in the team have been subjected to these exact things in their careers. So, there is no way that it will actually work if it is not supported completely by top management. That is why it is more important than cultural training to actually just transform management team. That is the first thing you have to do. Because then naturally, these things start to come at people” (Participant 3)

“If you do not have leadership buy-in, it is not driven by the CEO; if your CEO has not normalised the language of the action as part of the moral fabric of the organisation, you are not going to see the results, and it will not permeate into interventions within those different spaces or dimensions of social transformation and cohesion” (Participant 5)

“Unless the leadership is completely behind and driving it, it will never happen. You know, those companies that see it as an HR issue will not work. I mean, it needs to be driven to be seen to be driven to be communicated from the very top” (Participant 7)

As mentioned, the participants also emphasised the importance of diverse and inclusive top management in order to diversity and inclusive diversity projects.

“I also think there needs to be some sort of empowerment given to management in terms of black people in decision-making positions and leadership positions, to be able to manage diversity, to make sure that the environment is inclusive” (Participant 9)

5.3.3.2 Dialogue Initiatives

Another theme that emerged from experts’ recommendations was that companies should create more spaces where people can share their lived experiences and story tell as one way to foster social cohesion. In order to create these spaces, participants suggested that companies first create psychological safety for people to open up about their experiences. Participant 3 called this process humanising the workplace.

“So, for me, it is really trying to make the workplace more human and trying to give everybody in the company an opportunity to show others who they are, to kind of break down that fear of maybe chatting to somebody that you would not normally chat to at lunch or thinking they are not interested in me because they always sit on that side of the office at lunch. So, for me, it is the humaneness” (Participant 3)

“I think we get to share each other's experiences from a storytelling perspective, right. But very seldom do we get to walk a mile in each other's shoes” (Participant 4)

“We provide and encourage spaces of psychological safety to have these rich dialogues. And we also then facilitate these dialogues to focus group sessions” (Participant 5)

“We need to acknowledge our history, right? I think too often. We are very uncomfortable and fear addressing the imbalances of the past. You know that is a critical one because by acknowledging that, you are acknowledging that we are already operating from a position of a trust deficit” (Participant 9)

“There need to be engagements to actually understand where the barriers and organisation that sets away the barriers and perceptions where the challenges are, what is actually not leading to social cohesion, where the hindrances are” (Participant 11)

5.3.3.3 Frequent Diversity Training and Education

Some participants believed that diversity training should not be a once-off session, but there should be a reasonable amount of training a year, and it should be varied. Furthermore, what is taught in these sessions should be incorporated into the company's culture. Also, some participants think that people need to be educated about what needs to be done from an equality perspective.

“I think that typically, most companies will be like, Okay, we need to do four trainings a year, or every time there is an issue, we will do something about it. So, it is not very consistent; it is not something that becomes part of everyday life in the company”
(Participant 3)

“You need to educate people. You need to make people sensitive. And so education might be one way. What they should not do is a one-day workshop on diversity, you cannot possibly deal with in such a short time” (Participant 7)

“And so, these are still some of the things that we need to get right in educating our people regarding the work that needs to be done from equality from inequality perspective in order to truly ensure that we can have the right kind of diversity and to be world-class at the same time.” (Participant 10)

5.3.3.4 Company Culture Changes

There were several recommendations from participants in terms of company culture change. The most prevalent, emphasised more often, was creating a culture where people can express themselves freely without feeling victimised, i.e., psychological safety. One participant who was previously an attorney dealing with employment matters shared that, in her experience, employees are made to leave if they stand up for employee rights.

“In my experience, as an attorney dealing with employment matters, organisations say they create spaces where people voice grievances. But if you take that opportunity, you become too loud; they will make you leave. But again, that is not anecdotal evidence because it is just based on the work that I have done. They say they do. If you take up that opportunity, you can do it as long as you stay a good lap; when you start getting a little too radical, they start getting uncomfortable, they will get you out” (Participant 9)

Apart from psychological safety, another participant talked about the culture of dealing with incidents of racism decisively when they occur or any human rights violations. At the same time, the participant recommended that companies should have a progressive mindset and adopt rehabilitative approaches. This is about judging each incident's merits and not painting everyone with a singular brush. The participant emphasised maintaining a balance between the plenary and rehabilitative approaches.

“So, when there is a transgression like an act of racism, workplace bullying, we need to beat those acts of human rights violation. Recognising that there is zero tolerance for such behaviour as a core value when brought to the fore, the organisation must

demonstrate the desire and competence of dealing with such transgressions”

(Participant 5)

“But we also have a very progressive mindset and take the rehabilitative approach. It is very individual-specific because you cannot paint a person or an experience with a uniform or a singular brush. So, it is a balance between a full plenary approach versus the process of approach of rehabilitation. But we need to encourage our leaders to act, you need to be seen to act, and if you do not act, it is basically sending a message to say that we pardoned or condone this behaviour, which then creates cracks. So, it creates cracks, creates levels of distrust, creates levels of adiposity and does not promote social cohesion” (Participant 5)

Finally, the participants expressed that for social cohesion from the perspective of race to realise, it cannot just be a matter of compliance but a holistic approach that involves inclusion driven from the top.

“I think it should not just be a compliance thing. Because if it is a compliance exercise, it does not change the fact that if you recruit people of colour in those senior positions, they will still feel miserable because they are without the decision-making authority to make changes within the organisation” (Participant 4)

5.4 Conclusion

This study explores how South African companies' racial diversity and inclusion initiatives promote social cohesion from the perspective of race. The findings revealed that many South African companies are mainly stuck with employment equity and BBBEE initiatives such as racially targeted recruitment and skills development. Furthermore, the findings revealed that companies are doing a lot of diversity training, mostly cultural training and unconscious bias. The study participants criticised these for being short-term and sometimes superficial. However, there was a consensus that these diversity training and workshop initiatives somewhat improve social relations, but they were not enough. It was found that the lack of racial representation in management hinders the sense of belonging.

Findings further revealed that companies had made good progress in racial pay parity to improve quality of life and equality. There was a strong consensus that for racial social cohesion to thrive, companies must have racially diverse leadership.

Furthermore, leadership need to be visible in support of all diversity initiatives. There was also strong support for creating platforms for continuous dialogue, challenging conversations such as experiences of different racial groups and acknowledgement of history. There was also a strong emphasis that companies need to create a culture of psychological safety for that to happen.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

6.1 Introduction

The objective of this study is to explore how South African companies' racial diversity and inclusion initiatives social cohesion from the race perspective in the workplace. To achieve this objective, the researcher sought to understand the main characteristics of companies' racial diversity and inclusion practices. Secondly, using the social cohesion elements per the literature, the research sought to understand the extent to which these practices include these elements. Finally, the researcher sought recommendations from diversity experts on how best companies can promote social cohesion from perspective of race in the workplace. Detailed findings are presented in chapter 5. This chapter discusses the findings in chapter 5 in terms of the academic literature, elaborate and evaluate the significance of these findings. The structure of this chapter is similar to the findings chapter. The findings are discussed per main category under each research question.

6.2 Sub-Research 1 Findings Discussion

Sub-research question 1: What are the key characteristics or elements of South African companies' racial diversity and inclusion initiatives?

Similar to chapter 5, the findings in this chapter are discussed per categories that emerged from each data analysis. The characteristics of racial diversity and inclusion are described in terms of drivers of racial diversity and inclusion, initiatives and responsible units response for RDI in companies.

6.2.1 Drivers of Racial Diversity and Inclusion in the South African Workplace

The findings revealed that Employment Equity Act (EE) and Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment Act (BBEEE) were the main drivers of racial diversity in the South African workplace. These were largely designed to address historical economic inequalities and

discrimination in the workplace. It was also found that most companies have barely moved past this point in terms of diversity and inclusion, except for a few companies with dynamic organisational cultures. The compliance finding echoes the sentiments of Joubert (2017) and Carrim and Moolman (2022). Historically, many companies in South Africa pre-1994 did not pay much attention to demographic diversity, however, with the introduction of EE and BBBEE post 1994, diversity landscape in the workplace changed with many adopting the requirements of these legislation pieces (Joubert, 2017).

Carrim and Moolman (2022) also expressed that diversity in South Africa is mostly done under the umbrella of transformation, which is mostly done through EE and BBBEE. The authors further posited that although EE and BBBEE are important pillars of diversity from the South African workplace perspective, qualitative change in terms of organisational culture, practice and policy is still lacking. Indeed, the findings of this study found that instilling a culture in the workplace such as that where all races belong, is still lacking in most companies.

“I honestly do believe that, and even when I interact with some of my peers in the DI space, right, a lot of my peers are still very much around just BBBEE and transformation, you know, and have not necessarily progressed to incorporate inclusion and belonging”
(Participant 9)

“Too many organisations are still stuck with the compliance and believe by trying to improve fractionally on compliance, they have done the role and perform the ability in terms of social cohesion” (Participant 5)

The lack of progress in incorporating qualitative change could be an indication that companies are focussing more on economic benefits associated with BBBEE and also more concerned about penalties imposed by the Department of Labour for not complying to the EE requirements. One participant described this as companies trying to reach “quick wins”.

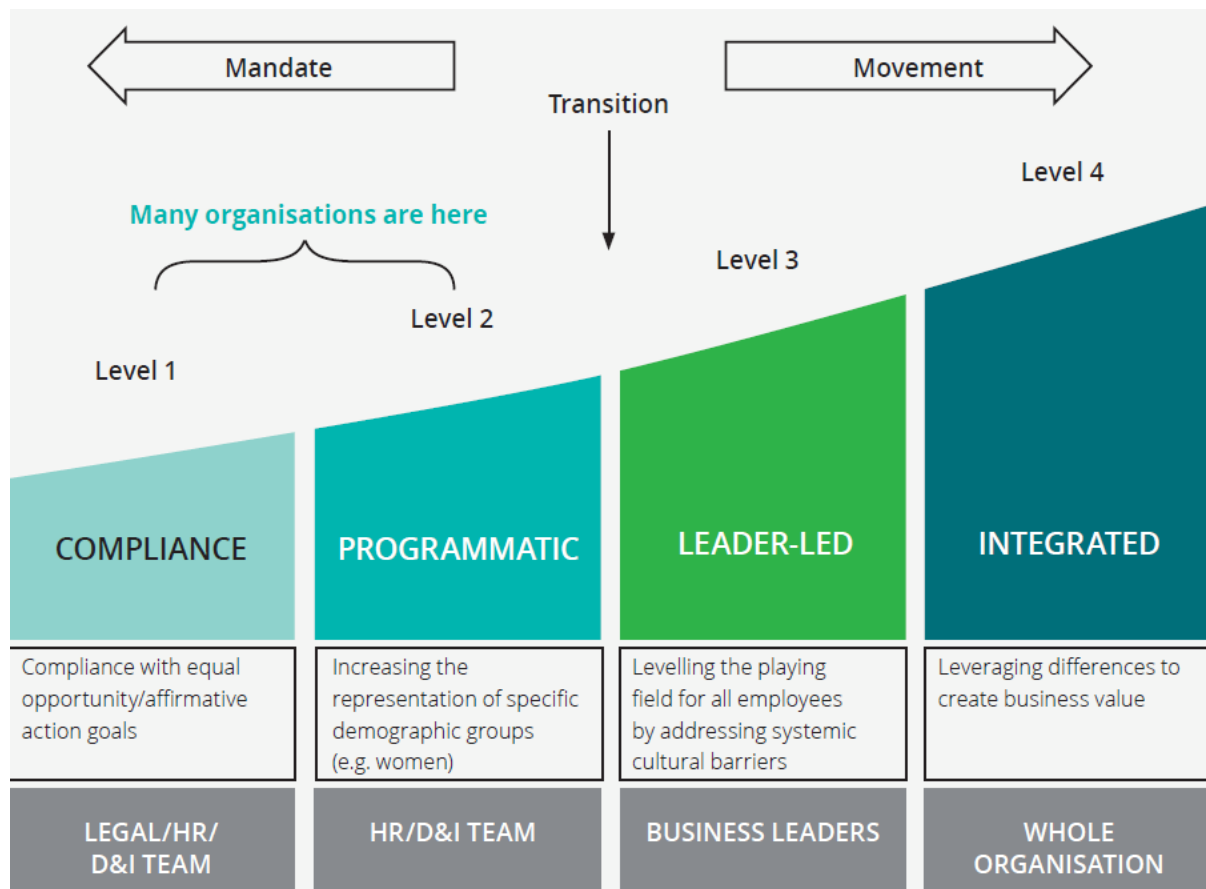
The finding on compliance is also confirmed a study done by Deloitte on South African organisations' diversity and inclusion maturity level. The study also found that many organisations' DI programmes had not transitioned from compliance (Deloitte, 2020). The study ranked DI maturity in four levels, Compliance (Level 1), Programmatic (Level 2), Leader-led (Level 4) and Integrated (Level 4). According to this study, many organisations were still on level 1 and 2 which is achieving affirmative action goals and increasing demographic representation.

The Leader-led level concerns addressing systematic cultural barriers, while the integrated level concerns leveraging differences to create business value. [Figure 6.1](#) below reflects these levels of diversity and inclusion maturity. This lack of transition from compliance could also explain the lack of meaningful interventions in terms of integrating racial social relations, sense of belonging, common good and shared values, as later in this chapter.

The findings, however, revealed that there were a few companies that were going over and above compliance, with a few participants providing examples of companies that had a big focus on inclusive culture and sense of belonging. A study of six companies in the US with the best diversity and inclusion practices also revealed that the culture of inclusiveness and sense of belonging was two of the success factors of these companies' practices (Derven, 2014).

Figure 6.1

The Deloitte D&I maturity level



Note. From “The right mind-set: Approaching diversity and inclusion in South Africa” by Deloitte, 2020.

6.2.2 Racial Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives

Diversity and inclusion initiatives included racially targeted recruitment and skills development, as well as diversity training workshops and cultural events.

6.2.2.1 Racially Targeted Recruitment and Skills Development

The findings revealed that racially targeted recruitment was the main intervention to get the workplace racially diverse, echoing the insights of Mazibuko and Govender (2017) and Roberts & Mayo (2019). From the South African perspective, these targets generally get

reported to the Department of Labour by designated employers as part of Employment Equity Act requirements. The findings further revealed that companies were not doing enough in terms of recruiting or promoting black employees into senior management roles, with some participants likening corporate South Africa to a cappuccino.

“So, I often describe the South African corporate structure like the South African class structure, and that it is like a cappuccino, at the bottom levels of the organisation, it is black and brown at the top levels of the organisation, it is white, brown sprinkles”

(Participant 10)

The sentiment on lack of racial transformation at senior management level as highlighted above was also shared by Daya (2014) and Roberts and Mayo (2019). It is also noted that in the US as well, companies have been criticised for failing to support minorities past middle level management (Roberts & Mayo, 2019). The findings further revealed that companies tend to identify employees from previously advantaged groups, mostly black people, for skills development. This is often done for BBBEE to satisfy the requirements of BBBEE. However, similar to the sentiments revealed above, the findings revealed that was not enough support or development past middle level management.

Racially targeted recruitment and skills development are linked to compliance i.e., EE and BBBEE and the findings suggest that these interventions are necessary to address economic and socio-economic inequalities i.e., addressing the equality dimension of social cohesion as expressed by Schiefer and van der Noll (2017). However, the lack of racial diversity and inclusion in top management or support past middle management is unlikely to foster other elements of social cohesion. For example, it is unlikely that all races will feel a sense of belonging in the workplace if they do not see the people who look like them at a senior management level, as one participant expressed:

“It depends on the company, who is at the top and who is leading it. So, what we try now is, and I do not think in our company, for example, that people of all races felt a sense of belonging. Now, I think they do because, first of all, they see people like themselves in management. So young black women, see black women in management, they

understand that there is future for them, they understand that they are valued, they start to see the grace is not going to hold them back in the company” (Participant 3)

6.2.2.2 Diversity Training/Workshops and Cultural Events

The findings revealed that diversity training and workshops were also another way of managing racial diversity in South Africa. The two that were highlighted the most were bias and cultural training. The purpose of these interventions, as revealed by this study participants, ranged from promoting inclusive language in the workplace to awareness of biases to appreciation of different cultures. The researcher did not find plenty of academic literature that specifically focussed on South African companies’ diversity training. However, there was a lot of academic literature specifically focussed on multinational companies and most of those studies came from the US. It was also noted that the participants of this study who worked for those companies that have international presence talked at length about bias and cultural training. This could be an indication that international companies place much more value in diversity training, whereas pure South African companies are focussed heavily on legislation compliance interventions.

Similar to the findings of this study, Thakur et al. (2021) found that companies often provided diversity training to raise awareness about personal differences or similarities, reducing prejudices, stereotypes, or ignorance-based prejudices and promoting inclusive behaviour. When it comes to the race dimension, the literature also echoed that cultural training, conscious and unconscious bias training and anti-racism training were the most popular training programmes with companies.

Most participants of this study felt diversity training had minimal impact in terms of what it intends to do, because it is mostly done infrequently with no follow up nor do companies put measures to check effectiveness. The literature reviewed mostly agree with this sentiment. Dobbin and Kalev (2018) mentioned a number of factors hindering diversity training from being thoroughly impactful. Firstly, the authors mentioned that these training programmes are short term in nature and are unlikely to change attitudes. Secondly, the authors posited that these training programmes are often mandatory, causing participants to resist. Indeed, a study done by Joubert (2017) on the effectiveness of diversity initiatives

done by South African financial Institutions found that diversity programmes are forced on trainees and the trainees found this a drawback. Furthermore, a study by Delene et al. (2002) on the impact of a two day diversity awareness training programme done by a large accounting firm in South Africa showed little of statistical significance that such training was impactful.

However, as revealed by this study, there were a few participants that were enthused and saw value in the diversity training, as one participant elaborated:

“When we do that work, we are doing the work of helping people unlearn the conditioning that they grew up under, that they would believe that certain people are automatically more capable than others. When we humanise people to each other and enable them to understand that we are all human and capable, we can all learn. It then enables the building of that bridge of how it is that we can engage as equals, how it is that we can engage with each other with respect, how it is that we can give each other dignity without undermining each other without me putting myself down” (Participant 10)

Some academic literature also expressed the value of diversity training. Holladay and Quiñones (2008) found that diversity training had major impact if it concentrated on commonalities, while an experiment by Hill and Augoustinos (2001) found that inter-cultural training programme increased cross-cultural awareness increased and reduced old fashioned racism beliefs.

This study further revealed that cultural events and other events such as cultural day celebrations and observing various significant religious days and were a popular way of trying to foster cohesion between races in the workplace. While the general sentiment from the participants was that these events enhance knowledge and appreciation of different cultures in the workplace, some participants felt that this culture appreciation is not something embedded in most companies. There was limited academic literature on such cultural events as part of diversity management.

From a racial social cohesion point of view, the finding on diversity training suggests that the current companies' diversity programmes are unlikely to provide substantial impact in

terms of promoting racial cohesion unless improvement is made in terms of frequency, variety and monitoring the success of these programmes.

6.2.3 Personnel and Business Units Driving Racial Diversity and Inclusion

Racial diversity and inclusion initiatives in most companies is a function that is often relegated to human resources department with little involvement of top-level management. The limited involvement of executives tends to be associated with diversity related to compliance initiatives because these have to be reported to various business stakeholders. Roberts and Mayo (2019) agree with this view that diversity interventions are mainly a human resource function that lack support from executives. The authors recommended that diversity and inclusion initiatives should have a sustained support from executives and its success be rewarded.

The lack of support from top level management perhaps explains the lack of success of voluntary diversity and inclusion initiatives as already discussed in previous sections of this chapter. Even with compliance initiatives, companies appear to have made slow progress in racially transforming top level management on evidence of this study. The findings of this study further revealed that companies with successful diversity and inclusion programmes tend have diversity and inclusion committees supported by top management. Indeed, the top ranked diverse and inclusive South African company according to Refinitive rating agency boast a racially diverse board of directors and have numerous DI committees driven by the company's executives (Refinitive, 2021).

6.2.4 Conclusion of Findings of Sub-Research Question 1

On evidence of this study, South African companies racial diversity and inclusion initiatives appear to have a focus on legislation compliance, especially Employment Equity and Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment. This is motivated by the desire not to default on EE compliance requirements as well as the achieving higher BBBEE level scores. While compliance has been topping the agenda, with racially targeted recruitment and skills development, there appears to be a lack of racial transformation in company top

management. Academic literature supports these claims. In terms of other racial diversity and inclusion initiatives, cultural training, workshops and events appear to be favoured by most companies. These have largely been critiqued for being short terms and less effective with plenty of academic literature also backing the claims. The findings further revealed that companies' top management largely relegate diversity and inclusion initiatives to human resources departments with little to no involvement. It can be generalised from these findings that, from racial social cohesion point of view, compliance initiatives are helpful in the equality and quality of life dimension. However, other dimensions are unlikely to be adequately promoted with the current DI initiatives.

6.3 Sub-Research Question 2 Findings Discussion

Sub-research question 2: To what extent do these racial diversity and inclusion incorporate elements of social cohesion from the perspective of race?

In this section, findings on the extent to which racial diversity and inclusion initiatives include elements of social cohesion i.e., racial social relations, sense of belonging, orientation towards common good, fostering of shared values and improving equality and quality of life, is discussed.

6.3.1 Social Relations

The social relations element of social cohesion concerns fostering trust, social interaction and solidarity between groups, in this case racial groups. The findings revealed that cultural training, bias training, cultural events and team building sessions are some of the ways companies try to foster racial relations in the workplace. Breaking barriers, honouring different cultures, honest conversation and enlightenment about bias are some of the themes that participants mentioned in this regard.

In their recommendations of group relations, Hogg et al. (2017) advocated for sustaining and celebration of group difference, while highlighting commonalities and also encouraging positive social contact. Dover et al. (2020) echoes fostering positive emotions in both training and social contact. Based on this study's findings, it would appear that

cultural training and events achieve such celebration of difference and positive emotion to a degree. However, as already mentioned in the discussion of research question one, participants of this study felt that these interventions tend to be superficial because they are usually short term and often do not form part of the culture of companies in general. In other words, this appreciation of culture does not always come through on a day-to-day culture of many companies. One participant described the feelings that develop as “kumbaya” moment.

"For some companies, it is a tick box, it happens once, and you have got all your kumbaya moments, and teams are like, wow, we can mix. Yes, yes. And it might last, that sort of, let us call it, a honeymoon period that will last for maybe six months if the training was done well. But then life gets back to normal" (Participant 2)

Hogg et al. (2017) also emphasised the important role of leadership in fostering positive group relationships. The authors advocate that the interventions need to be inspired by an effective leadership. Part of the recurring theme in this study is the absence of top leadership in diversity and inclusion initiatives, especially in those that are not linked to compliance. Again, this could be an explanation as to why the initiatives that are supposed to foster racial relations are thought to have minimal desired impact.

6.3.2 Identification/Sense of Belonging

The findings revealed that there were two things that were hindering sense of belonging in companies in South Africa. Firstly, it is the lack of racial representation, especially black leaders, in companies in South Africa. Secondly, like the finding of social relations, the participants felt that interventions that are meant to foster belonging are sporadic and do not form part of the organisational culture. One participant made an example to illustrate this lack of belonging being cemented in organisational cultures. The participant expressed that in the company he worked for, there were many elderly people who did not speak English, but the company did not make attempts to address people in the language that everyone was likely to understand.

These hinderances to racial sense of belonging validates the recommendations of Casad et al. (2018). The authors recommended value affirmation, belonging and role-model interventions for underrepresented groups as a way to foster belongingness. Value affirmation speaks to exactly the sentiments shared by one participant in the example above. It involves reaffirming a group's self-worth, which could include promoting a racial group's language. Casad et al. (2018) also advocated for belonging interventions which are interventions that aim to increase an individual's sense of fit in a group. Such interventions could come in a form of mixing minorities or underrepresented groups in projects. The authors also recommended role model interventions to foster sense of belonging. This involves hiring diverse people in leadership roles to serve as role models for underrepresented or minority groups. On evidence of this research, companies in South Africa appear to be doing very little in these dimensions. As already mentioned in this study, this could be the result of overly focussing on compliance.

6.3.3 Orientation Towards Common Good and Shared Values

The extent to which companies' racial diversity and inclusion initiatives include the elements of common good and shared values could not be explored thoroughly as few participants provided enough data on this element. However, there were few participants who believed that companies speak about common good and shared values without actually acting on it.

"Even though organisations may speak about, you know, are wanting to, you know, share common good and that they want to live up to shared values and they want to ensure the quality of life of all human beings, but, but they operate within a space where the capitalist system actually serves them" (Participant 10)

Similar to the other elements of social cohesion as discussed before, it is unlikely that most companies have a major focus on this dimension, as compliance diversity measures appear to be main focus. Frémeaux (2020) recommends that companies need to encourage groups, including different races to work together for community good and development. According to the author, working together for common good build solidarity.

6.3.4 Improving Equality and Quality of Life

On the dimension of improving equality and quality of life, the findings revealed that companies were focussing on equal pay for work of equal value. Most participants expressed that companies had made progress in closing the pay gap between racial groups since the dawn of democracy. Some participants suggested that this was mostly due to the requirements of the Employment Equity Act.

Livingstone's (2020) study recommended levelling the playing field and addressing racial barriers related to opportunities, as a way of improving racial equality. Legislation such as Employment Equity Act and Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment Act were created fundamentally to address such racial inequalities. Initiatives such as racially targeted recruitment and skills development which have already been discussed in research question 1 would, therefore, fall under this element of social cohesion. Livingstone (2020) also talked about acknowledgement of past injustices and creating empathy by creating awareness and educating people around these injustices, as the first step in improving equality and quality of life. The findings of this study suggests that there still a lot of work that companies still need to do in terms of educating people about equity and equity policies.

“And so, these are still some of the things that we need to get right in educating our people regarding the work that needs to be done from equality from inequality perspective in order to truly ensure that we can have the right kind of diversity and to be world-class at the same time.”

6.3.5 Conclusion of Findings of Sub-Research Question 2

The social cohesion literature states that social relations, identification, orientation to common good, shared values, equality and quality of life need to be present for groups to live harmoniously (Schiefer & van der Noll, 2017). Applying these elements to the race dimension of diversity, this study examined the extent to which companies' racial diversity and inclusion initiatives include these elements. Cultural training, bias training, cultural

events and team buildings are some of the interventions that companies use to promote racial social relations. Some of these interventions appear to improve social contact and generate positive emotion. However, the short-term nature of these interventions and that the values that these interventions seek to promote are often not cemented in organisational culture, means that the benefits are short lived. Similar to the social cohesion element, sense of belonging interventions are sporadic. There was also a sense that the lack of racial transformation in top leadership hinder a sense belonging, particularly for black people. The element of promoting equality and common good is closely associated with compliance interventions. It was found that companies have made progress on bridging racial pay gaps.

6.4 Sub-Research Question 3 Findings Discussion:

Sub-research question 3: What do diversity and inclusion experts think companies can do to promote racial cohesion effectively?

The study participants recommended that companies should racially transform corporate leadership and actively support racial diverse and inclusion initiatives, engage in more dialogue around race, do frequent training and education and other company cultural changes. Each of these themes is discussed below.

6.4.1 Transform Corporate Leadership and Support from Leadership

As discussed in the previous sections of this study, participants expressed that for racial diversity and inclusion initiatives to thrive, company leadership need to represent the country's racial demographic. In particular, the participants expressed that there was not enough black representation in companies' top management. This recommendation agrees with the recommendations of Roberts and Mayo (2019) on creating a racially just workplace. The authors expressed that the first step in creating a racially just workplace is to give previously marginalised groups airtime in the C-suite and resources to realise their potential. Carter, (2020) agrees with this sentiment and further adds that getting black

employees into the organisation is as important as keeping them and grooming them into leadership roles.

As stated in the discussion of sub-research question 2, the implication of racially transforming leadership could potentially influence a sense of belonging for the racial groups that are currently less represented. The study participants further recommended that racial diversity and inclusion initiatives need full support from top management of companies for them to stand a chance of a buy-in from the rest of the company. This recommendation is also echoed by Roberts and Mayo (2019). Ameri et al. (2021) also expressed that for diversity to be seen as legitimate, internal leadership need to visibly support the message.

“If you do not have leadership buy-in, it is not driven by the CEO; if your CEO has not normalised the language of the action as part of the moral fabric of the organisation, you are not going to see the results, and it will not permeate into interventions within those different spaces or dimensions of social transformation and cohesion” (Participant 5)

6.4.2 Dialogue Initiatives

It was also recommended that in order to foster social cohesion in the workplace, companies should create spaces where people can share their lived experiences and also encourage dialogue about race. To do this, it was recommended that companies should create a culture of psychological safety. There was sense that these conversations do not happen enough, as participant 4 and 9 elaborated:

“I think we get to share each other's experiences from a storytelling perspective, right. But very seldom do we get to walk a mile in each other's shoes” (Participant 4)

“We need to acknowledge our history, right? I think too often. We are very uncomfortable and fear addressing the imbalances of the past. You know that is a critical one because

by acknowledging that, you are acknowledging that we are already operating from a position of a trust deficit” (Participant 9)

The above recommendations are also echoed by plenty of academic literature. Roberts and Mayo (2019) recommended that organisations should encourage dialogue about race. The authors expressed that these conversations tend to be uncomfortable at first but over time they start to happen informally at all levels of organisations and this in turn fosters cross race relationships. Ely and Thomas, (2020) on the other hand expressed that for diversity to prosper, organisations should build trust by creating safe spaces for employees to express themselves. Janssens and Zanoni (2021) recommended creating semi-curated spaces where interracial interaction might occur. Lastly Ameri et al. (2021) expressed that diversity training works best through storytelling and in this way empathy is invoked and rapport is developed.

6.4.3 Frequent Racial Diversity Training and Education

It was recommended that racial diversity training should not be a one off occasion but there needs to be follow up sessions, check-ins if they were effective as well as variation in content of the training. Dobbin and Kalev (2018) agree that diversity training is often short term and unlikely to change behaviour, while Ameri et al. (2021) echoed the ongoing learning instead of one session programmes is likely to achieve success.

There was also a strong sense that people need to be educated on issues of equality and policy. Carter (2020) agree that educating employees is key in advancing a racial just place. The author expressed that it is important for organisations to educate employees about the racial exclusion experienced in society to give those employees context behind racial policies.

6.4.4 Company Culture Changes

Psychological safety culture was emphasised by most participants as one of the most important for promotion of racial social cohesion in the workplace. One participant talked about the tendency of companies victimising those that speak up about issues such as racial inequalities. Ely and Thomas (2020) advocates for this psychological safety as way of building trust between the organisations and employees. The participants further recommended that companies should deal decisively with incidences that violates human rights, such as racist incidents. Ely and Thomas (2020) further supports this by expressing that leaders should take decisive steps in combating all forms of discrimination and subordination.

“So, when there is a transgression like an act of racism, workplace bullying, we need to beat those acts of human rights violation. Recognising that there is zero tolerance for such behaviour as a core value when brought to the fore, the organisation must demonstrate the desire and competence of dealing with such transgressions”

(Participant 5)

However, it was further recommended that leaders should maintain a balance between rehabilitation and a plenary approach when dealing with the incidences as mentioned above i.e., judging incidences on their merits, rather than using a blanket approach. Lastly, it was recommended that racial diversity and inclusion cannot just be about compliance. It needs to a holistic approach that also looks into inclusion driven from the top, as Sherbin and Rashid (2017) expressed “diversity doesn’t stick without inclusion”

6.5 Conclusion of Findings of Sub-Research Question 3

The diversity and inclusion experts interviewed for this study expressed that social cohesion is an important concept from which racial diversity and inclusion can be approached, as participant 5 expressed:

“So, we need to start off by, first of all, acknowledge the need for social cohesion. When I say we, I'm talking about the leadership in a specific organization. There needs to be intent, there needs to be a common understanding that there's an appreciation for social cohesion. And it's something that is necessary and it's required in order to ensure for an inclusive and participative workforce” (Participant 5)

As such, recommendations were suggested to drive racial cohesion effectively in the workplace. Firstly, companies' leadership need to reflect the racial demographics of the country. In this way, there is better chance that racial sense of belonging will thrive. Secondly, company leadership need to support and be seen to support all forms of racial diversity and inclusion initiatives including diversity training. This is likely to ensure buy-in from the rest of the employees within the company. Thirdly, companies need to create platforms where dialogue about racial issues can take place. Sharing experiencing through story telling is encouraged. This is likely to foster bonds between racial groups in the workplace. Continuous training and education is also encouraged as a means to sustain benefits derived from these training and interventions. Companies should also embed a culture of psychological safety where people are encouraged to talk freely about sensitive issues. Lasty, create an environment where incidences that violate human rights are dealt with decisively by leadership.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

The academic literature reviewed to reach the study objectives suggests that there is still a lot that companies, as part of a broader society, need to do to contribute towards racial social cohesion. Racial tension persists despite the improvements in race relations that have been made over the years (Mashau, 2018). There is persistent racial polarisation ranging from polarising racial remarks to racial hate speech to racism (Geldenhuis & Kelly-Louw, 2020; Southall, 2018; Steyn et al., 2019). As Oketch (2005) and this study found, the attitudes prevalent in the society in which the company operates are bound to mirror individuals' attitudes within the company. Indeed, some of these behaviours are still prevalent in South African companies, with racial discrimination still reported in many organisations (Noyoo, 2020; Southall, 2018).

Furthermore, economic inequalities still drive the racial discourse in South Africa. Amid such social cohesion eroding racial issues, how do companies attempt to address cohesion between races? More specifically, for this study, how do companies' racial diversity and inclusion promote social cohesion from the perspective of race in the workplace?

The literature revealed that diversity management in South Africa is done mainly under legislation such as the EE Act and BBBEE Act (Carrim & Moolman, 2022) and that diversity interventions such as diversity training get implemented to create awareness about personal differences (Thakur et al., 2021). However, it needs to be clarified to what extent these interventions incorporate elements of social cohesion as identified from the social cohesion literature. This study filled this gap. The elements of social cohesion are social relations, a sense of identification, orientation towards a common good, shared values, equality and quality of life (Schiefer & van der Noll, 2017). This study addressed this phenomenon by interviewing diversity and inclusion, human resources and transformation practitioners or professionals with experience in designing or implementing diversity and inclusion interventions in South African companies. This chapter highlights

the main findings and recommendations, theoretical contributions, implications for management, limitations and future research.

7.2 Principal Findings

This study centred around the main research question: How do South African companies' racial diversity and inclusion initiatives promote social cohesion from the perspective of race in the workplace? In order to answer this question, three sub-research questions were formed: (1) What are the key characteristics or elements of South African companies' racial diversity and inclusion initiatives? (2) To what extent do these racial diversity and inclusion incorporate elements of social cohesion from the perspective of race? (3) What do diversity and inclusion experts think companies can do to promote racial cohesion effectively? The following sections summarise the principal findings.

7.2.1 Key Characteristics of Racial Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives in South African Workplace

This study found that South African companies' racial diversity and inclusion initiatives primarily focus on complying with government legislation, especially the Employment Equity Act and Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act. The main focus appears to be racially targeted recruitment, targeting designated groups, including Black people, and racially targeted skills development. The results suggest minimal focus on other aspects, such as racial inclusion and social cohesion, as discussed in the next section. Academic literature confirms the compliance focus finding (Carrim & Moolman, 2022; Mazibuko & Govender, 2017; Roberts & Mayo, 2019). There was a recognition that compliance initiatives improved economic inequalities and were necessary. However, there was also a suggestion that companies place too much value only compliance because of "quick wins", such as improving BBBEE and avoiding paying fines relating to non-compliance imposed by the Department of Labour.

It was also found that companies were not doing enough to recruit or promote black employees into senior management roles. The sentiment was that black employees were

not supported enough past middle-level management. The South African corporate structure was likened to a cappuccino, dark or black at the bottom and white on top with sprinkles of brown. Academic literature supports these sentiments (Daya, 2014; Roberts & Mayo, 2019). There was a suggestion that top management's lack of racial diversity negatively affected the sense of belonging, especially from the Black people's perspective.

South African companies' racial diversity and inclusion initiatives are also characterised by diversity training, workshops, and cultural events. In terms of diversity training, unconscious bias and cultural training were the most common forms of interventions in this dimension. It was suggested that unconscious bias training and workshops were intended to promote inclusive racial language, awareness of unconscious racial biases, unintentional racism or racist language and awareness of micro-aggressions. These sentiments are shared by Thakur et al. (2021). Cultural training programmes were intended to promote cultural sensitivity and awareness in the workplace. However, there was a strong suggestion that these interventions have minimal impact on what they are intended to do because they are mostly done infrequently with no follow-up. Furthermore, companies do not put measures to check effectiveness.

Several authors agree that such interventions' short-term nature is unlikely to change attitudes (Delene et al., 2002; Dobbin & Kalev, 2018; Joubert, 2017). Cultural events recognising different cultures in South Africa were also a popular way of fostering cohesion between different races in the companies. However, similar to the suggestions about diversity training, the impact of such events was seen as superficial. The suggestion was that this cultural appreciation was not embedded in most companies' day-to-day cultures.

Another significant finding was that racial diversity and inclusion is the function that is often delegated to the human resources department with little involvement of top-level management. Roberts and Mayo (2019) concurred with this sentiment and strongly suggested that top management needs to have sustained support of racial diversity and inclusion initiatives for it to stand a chance to succeed.

The generalisation that can be drawn from these findings is that companies in South Africa still need to move past legislation compliance regarding racial diversity and inclusion. The

implication is that other areas, such as racial inclusion and social cohesion, are neglected. The lack of management involvement in diversity and inclusion initiatives, especially those that do not involve compliance, generally impacts these initiatives' success. As will be seen later in this concluding section, there is a strong call from diversity experts for top management to support and be seen to support racial diversity and inclusion initiatives, regardless of whether they are compliance related or voluntary. Lastly, for companies to drive cultural change and foster a sense of belonging for all, racial diversity in top management should be one of the priorities.

7.2.2 The Extent to Which Social Cohesion Elements Are Incorporated

The social relations element of social cohesion involves fostering trust, social interaction, and solidarity between groups. This study found that cultural training, bias training, cultural events and team building somewhat build positive social relations between races in the workplace. There was a suggestion that these interventions break racial barriers, foster honest conversations, raise cultural awareness and enlighten on issues of racial bias. Academic literature suggests that if these interventions are sustained, they foster positive racial relations. However, these programmes' benefits are short-lived because these interventions are usually once-off programmes. Secondly, there was also a strong suggestion that some of the values these interventions try to foster are not ingrained in company cultures. As a result, these interventions are seen as superficial.

Companies do little to foster a sense of belonging, especially for Black people. Top management's lack of racial diversity was emphasised strongly as one of the primary factors hindering a sense of belonging. Again, it was emphasised that the interventions meant to foster a sense of belonging tend to be sporadic and superficial. These findings confirm the suggestions by Casad et al. (2018) that value affirmation and role modelling foster belonging. The authors posited that value affirmation is about reaffirming a group's worth and that role modelling ensures that minority groups are represented in leadership positions.

Academic literature state that orientation towards common goods and fostering shared values is essential for social cohesion. This element is about encouraging to work towards

the common good such as projects for community benefits. Orientation towards a common good is suggested to build solidarity among groups (Frémeaux, 2020). The findings of this study suggest that companies in South Africa speak about the common good and shared values, but nothing materialises.

The last two dimensions of social cohesion are the improvement of equality and quality of life. The study findings suggested that the nature of compliance diversity interventions, i.e., racially targeted recruitment and skills development, as discussed in the previous section, help in improving equality and quality of life of previously disadvantaged groups. The findings also found that companies have made strides in bridging the racial pay gap, with most companies adopting the equal pay for work of equal value principle.

Most participants of this study expressed that cohesion between races needs to be fostered and is essential for the workplace and the country. The whole idea of social cohesion appeared very important to the participants. Based on these findings, companies have not done enough to promote social cohesion, at least from the perspective of these six elements. The reason for this appears to be that the priority in companies is affirmative action. Secondly, voluntary interventions such as inclusion and social cohesion are not supported enough by top management.

7.2.3 Recommendations

The professionals and practitioners provided recommendations about what they believe would further improve social cohesion from the perspective of race in the workplace. Firstly, it was recommended that companies need to do more to diversify top leadership racially. The suggestion was that if there was racially diverse top leadership in companies, it is likely that racial cohesion would materialise. Roberts and Mayo (2019) concurred with this sentiment. The authors said that the first step in creating a racially just workplace is to give previously marginalised groups airtime in the C-suite and resources to realise their potential.

Secondly, it was recommended that companies' top management need support and be seen by employees to support racial diversity and inclusion of all types. The suggestion was that if there is no support, the chances of buy-in from the employees are minimal. Ameri et al. (2021) also expressed that for diversity to be seen as legitimate, internal leadership need to support the message visibly.

Thirdly, there was a call that companies should create spaces where people can share their lived experiences and also encourage dialogue about race. The sentiment was that conversations about race do not happen enough. It was also suggested that sharing experiences through storytelling could foster trust between races. There is also plenty of research recommending dialogue to foster racial cohesion (Ameri et al., 2021; Ely & Thomas, 2020; Janssens & Zanoni, 2021; Roberts & Mayo, 2019).

Fourthly, there was a call for companies to do a variety of diversity training regularly instead of the once-off diversity training programmes. Companies were further urged to ensure these interventions were effective by following up with the trainees. Furthermore, there was also a call for employees to be educated about issues of equality and policies that seek to address inequalities. There was a strong suggestion that people needed to understand transformation policies fully. The recommendation on education got the researcher to reflect on a controversial incident while this study was in progress, where a large pharmaceutical retailer issued a moratorium on the employment of White people (Daily Investor, 2022; Nyakunengwa, 2022). According to the retail group, the intervention was motivated by the group's desire to meet Employment Equity targets. Following the public backlash and debate, the group issued an apology claiming that the letter was poorly expressed and did not reflect the retail values. While there were many varying opinions about the moratorium and its motivations, the incident reinforced the need for constructive conversations about equity and education about policy.

Fifthly, there were calls for companies to encourage a culture of psychological safety where people are free to express themselves about complex topics such as race without feeling victimised. Lastly, it was recommended that leaders in companies deal decisively with human rights violations. At the same time, there was also a call that companies should balance the rehabilitation and plenary approaches in dealing with such violations. Such

balance means that each incident needs to be judged on merit instead of using a blanket approach.

7.3 Theoretical Contributions

This study identified six elements of social cohesion as suggested by social cohesion literature and applied these elements in the context of race within South African companies. These elements are social relations, a sense of identification or belonging, orientation towards a common good, shared values, equality and quality of life (Schiefer & van der Noll, 2017). The literature suggests that these elements are critical in the promotion of cohesiveness. The study examined how companies' racial diversity and inclusion incorporate these elements. This study went beyond these elements and discovered what more could be done to promote racial social cohesion from the South African company context. [Table 7.3.1](#) shows the extent to which racial diversity and inclusion initiatives incorporate elements of social cohesion, and [Table 7.3.2](#) shows further recommendations to improve racial social cohesion.

Table 7.3.1

Summary of the extent to which racial diversity and inclusion initiatives incorporate elements of social cohesion.

Current Situation		
Social Cohesion Element	Interventions/ Initiatives	Progress
Racial social relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural training and workshops • Bias Training • Cultural Events • Team Buildings 	The interventions somewhat foster social relations. However, these interventions are seen as short-term and often once-off events. The values being fostered by these interventions are seen as superficial if not embedded in company culture.
Sense of identification and belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural Events 	Companies are not doing enough in this element. There was a call for companies to do more in terms of racial diversifying top leadership. This is seen as one of the ways of fostering a racial sense of belonging.
Orientation towards a common good and shared values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No notable interventions 	Companies often discuss fostering common good and shared values, but little is done about it.
Equality and Quality of Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislation-related interventions such as racially targeted recruitment and skills development • Equal pay for work of equal value 	The sentiment was that legislation-related interventions help improve equality and quality of life. There were also suggestions that companies have made good strides in ensuring equal pay for work of equal value. However, there were calls for more support of Black employees past middle-level management.

Table 7.3.2

Recommendations to further improve social cohesion from the perspective of race

Recommended interventions to further improve racial cohesion	
Social Cohesion Element	Interventions/ Initiatives
Racial social relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Frequent Diversity Training and Education• Promote Psychological Safety• Dialogue Initiatives• Decisive action on human rights violations
Sense of identification and belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Racially transform the company's top leadership• Dialogue Initiatives
Equality and Quality of Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Racially transform the company's top leadership

7.4 Implications for Management and Other Relevant Stakeholders

This study has uncovered several implications for management and their companies. Firstly, it is evident from this exploration that companies prioritise compliance and have yet to transform past this stage regarding racial diversity and inclusion. However, there is also a need for management to prioritise social cohesion and inclusion, not only for the benefit of workplace cohesion but also for the benefit of a broader society.

Secondly, the top management of companies in South Africa is not visible enough to support racial diversity and inclusion programmes. Programmes are usually delegated to the human resources department. There is a strong call for a much more active role in driving diversity and inclusion interventions.

Thirdly, South Africa is diverse in terms of race and culture, among other things. In light of this, there is a strong call for companies to put measures in place to move towards a racially diverse leadership. The benefit of this is that it is likely that everyone will feel a sense of belonging with diverse leadership. There was also a suggestion that diversity and inclusion initiatives fare better with diverse leadership, as this could lead to diverse ideas.

Lastly, as academic literature has shown, the south African environment is polarised racially. As such, leaders have been called to encourage healthy conversations about race and create platforms where difficult conversations such as this happen. Furthermore, leaders are being called to encourage psychological safety for people to have these conversations.

7.5 Limitations of the Research

The limitation of this study is covered in detail in chapter 4 and is summarised here. Due to the sensitive nature of the subject of race, there was a risk that the participants' responses were influenced by their racial identity, past experiences of racial discrimination or even political persuasions, as some politicians use racially polarising remarks for political mobilisation (Southall, 2018). A racially diverse sample mitigated this. This study also does not discount the researcher's own unconscious biases on this matter. However, care was taken to report the participants' contributions as they were and without judgement.

Secondly, some participants tended to over-emphasise the experience of racial diversity and inclusion from the perspective of the companies they worked for during the interview. This may affect the generalisability of the results. Lastly, the social cohesion concept on which this study is underpinned has yet to be fully theorised, and there is some debate about its definition and its elements. There may be more elements that are essential for social cohesion.

7.6 Suggestions for Future Research

This study focussed on how companies' racial diversity and inclusion initiatives promote social cohesion from the perspective of race. It focussed on internal activities. However, the literature review shows that the racial discourse is broad. Future researchers could look into how companies can promote racial cohesion externally and how aligned these activities are with internal activities. Secondly, future researchers could look into doing a case study in one or two companies that have moved beyond compliance regarding racial

diversity and inclusion. This would be to unpack those activities that are working well and those that are not.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Consistency Matrix

Research Questions	LITERATURE REVIEW	DATA COLLECTION TOOL	ANALYSIS
Main Research Question: How do South African companies' racial diversity and inclusion initiatives promote social cohesion from the perspective of race in the workplace?			
Sub-Research question 1 What are the key characteristics or elements of South African companies' racial diversity and inclusion initiatives?	Carrim & Moolman, 2022 Joubert, 2017. Sutherland & Wöcke, 2011 Dover et al., 2020. Gündemir & Galinsky, 2017 Thakur et al., 2021	Question 1 – semi-structured interview guide	Thematic analysis
Sub-Research question 2 To what extent do these racial diversity and inclusion incorporate elements of social cohesion from the perspective of race?	Schiefer & van der Noll, 2017 Casad et al., 2018 Dover et al., 2020 Frémeaux, 2020 Hogg et al., 2017 Igwe et al., 2020	Question 2 – semi-structured interview guide	Thematic analysis
Sub-Research question 3 What do diversity and inclusion experts think companies can do to promote racial cohesion effectively?	Casad et al., 2018 Dover et al., 2020 Frémeaux, 2020 Hogg et al., 2017 Igwe et al., 2020	Question 3 – semi-structured interview guide	Thematic analysis

APPENDIX 2: Discussion Guide

Main Research Question:	
How do South African companies' racial diversity and inclusion initiatives promote social cohesion from the perspective of race in the workplace?	
Sub-Research Questions	Interview Questions
<p>Sub-Research Question 1:</p> <p>What are the key characteristics of South African companies' racial diversity and inclusion initiatives?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In your experience, what are some of the typical racial and diversity initiatives that companies often adopt? • Can you elaborate on how companies implement each of these diversity and inclusion initiatives? • How do these initiatives promote, if at all, the inclusion dimensions of belongingness and uniqueness from the race perspective? • In your experience, what do South African companies typically seek to achieve with racial diversity and inclusion initiatives and why? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Is it compliance based? i.e. to comply with various legislation such as employment equity and BBBEE. ✓ Is it resource based? i.e. as a resource to drive performance and profits. ✓ Is it moral based? i.e. it is a right thing to do regardless of legislation or profit. • In your experience, to what extent do top level management in SA companies support racially diversity initiatives? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Are these typically siloed within HR? ✓ Do these initiatives typically get full support of the C-suite? ✓ What is racially diversity of the teams that drive these initiatives? • In your experience, to what extent do companies in SA support the career development of racial groups that were previously disadvantaged?

<p>Sub-Research Question 2: To what extent do these racial diversity and inclusion incorporate elements of social cohesion from the perspective of race?</p>	<p>Social Cohesion literature highlights Social Relations, Identification, Orientation Towards Common Good, Shared Values, Quality of Life and Equality as key in achieving cohesion between groups. In light of these six elements and in relation to promotion of cohesion between races in the South African workplace:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What initiatives, if any, do you believe companies typically do to foster social relations i.e. interaction and building trust between people of different races and how do they do this? • In your experience, how do companies in South Africa ensure that people of different races have a sense of belonging within the company? • In your experience, do companies in South Africa typically tend to celebrate/appreciate commonalities or differences? Why is that? • What initiatives do companies tend to do for employees to be orientated towards achieving the common good and how do they implement these? • In your experience, what do you believe are the shared values that unite people of different races in South African companies? • What initiatives, in your experience, do companies do to reduce employee inequalities and improve quality of life? Why? How are these implemented?
<p>Sub-Research Question 3: What do diversity and inclusion experts think companies can do to promote racial cohesion effectively?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you believe that companies should try to intentionally promote racial cohesion? Why is this important or not important? • What are some of the strategies you would recommend for companies to promote racial cohesion and why? • What initiatives do you think companies should not do in their efforts to promote racial cohesion and why? • In your experience, can you give me some of the reasons why some of the initiatives succeed and others fail?

APPENDIX 3: Ethical Clearance

**Gordon Institute
of Business Science**
University of Pretoria

**Ethical Clearance
Approved**

Dear Sydney Phiri,

Please be advised that your application for Ethical Clearance has been approved.

You are therefore allowed to continue collecting your data.

We wish you everything of the best for the rest of the project.

[Ethical Clearance Form](#)

Kind Regards

This email has been sent from an unmonitored email account. If you have any comments or concerns, please contact the GIBS Research Admin team.

APPENDIX 4: Sample Consent Form



Informed consent letter

I am currently a student at the University of Pretoria's Gordon Institute of Business Science and completing my research in partial fulfilment of an MBA. My research topic is motivated by my passion in the area of social cohesion, specifically racial cohesion in the South African context. I became interested in the role companies play in promoting racial cohesion in the workplace.

Against this background, I would like to investigate what racial diversity and inclusion initiatives companies in South Africa undertake to promote social cohesion from perspective of race. Our interview is expected to last about an hour. **Your participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time without penalty.** All data will be reported without identifiers

If you have any concerns, please contact my supervisor or me. Our details are provided below.

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Signature of participant:

Date: |

Signature of researcher:

Date:

APPENDIX 5: Code Book

Themes	Categories	Codes	Quotation Count
• Experts recommendations			74
	○ Dialogue initiatives		19
		○ Humanise the workplace	4
		○ Share experiences through dialogue	11
		○ Acknowledgement of the importance of social cohesion	4
		○ Conversations about racial injustices	1
	○ Frequent training and education		19
		○ Educate employee about racial policies	10
		○ Anti-racism training	1
		○ Continuous diversity training - not once off	8
	○ Recruitment-related changes		7
		○ Competency-based recruitment	2
		○ Compliance alone is not enough - Inclusion important	3
		○ Do more than just salaries to improve quality of life	2
	○ Transform corporate leadership & support from management		22
		○ Encourage projects to be run by racially diverse teams	2
		○ Support from top management	15
		○ Racially diverse and ethical Leaders	9
	○ Corporate culture changes		10
		○ Balance between commonalities and differences	1
		○ Psychological safety culture	6
		○ Focus on commonalities	1

		o Balance- Zero Tolerance & Rehabilitation approach to violations	2
• Drivers of racial diversity and Inclusion			64
Drivers of Racial Diversity & Inclusion	o Legislation compliance - EE and BBEE		51
		o Purpose of RDI: Address historic issues or events	3
		o Drivers of RDI: Employment Equity Act	25
		o Purpose of RDI: Address inequalities	3
		o Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment	18
		o Compliance with current legislation	14
		o Quick Wins - BEE points	3
	o Drivers of Racial diversity & inclusion - Noncompliance		17
		o Promote psychological safety	3
		o Attracting talent and skills capture	1
		o Reactive measure to address diversity issues	4
		o Business Sense - diversity of thought, innovation	1
		o Broad lens to diversity - sense of belonging	2
		o Transformation agenda	4
		o Global Best Practices	2
• Personnel and Business Units driving RDI			16
	o Human Resources DPT - Mainly		12
		o Brand and Marketing - for cultural events	1
		o Human Resources Department driving diversity	8
		o Diversity driven globally	1
		o EDI officers	1

		○ Workplace diversity committees/structures	1
	○ Top management or executive - Rarely		5
		○ Supported by Executive Suite	3
		○ CEO sponsored	2
● Racial Diversity & Inclusion Initiatives or Interventions			77
	○ Diversity Training and Workshops		47
		○ Workshops and awareness sessions	6
		○ Anti-racism and unconscious bias training	7
		○ Intercultural awareness workshops	8
		○ Unconscious Bias (inclusive language) workshop	11
		○ EDI moment in every team meeting	2
		○ Dialogues and engagements beyond Targets	11
		○ Inclusion assessments to Educate and Diagnose	12
	○ Racially Targeted Recruitment		21
		○ Recruitment:	15
		○ Racial targets - progress at lower level not top level	4
		○ Closing pay gap	2
	○ Employee Skills and Development Related		6
		○ Skills and development	4
		○ Racially targeted succession planning	1
		○ Designing clear career paths	1
	○ Cultural and other Events		3
		○ Social events such as sports	2
		○ Recognition of different cultures	1
● Social cohesion interventions			76

	○ Social Relations Related - Diversity Workshops		36
		○ Cultural events	4
		○ Minimal social cohesion interventions	10
		○ Unconscious Bias Training - Break Barriers	7
		○ Intercultural awareness workshops - Breakdown Walls	5
		○ Social Events - for people to socialise outside of work	1
		○ Diverse teams working together in projects	1
		○ Team Building	2
		○ Compassionate Training	4
		○ Employee Benefit survey	2
		○ Inclusion assessment - achieves sense of belonging and Social Relations	1
	○ Identification or Sense of Belonging		21
		○ Sense of belonging initiatives - sporadic	5
		○ Eurocentric approach - sense of belonging	13
		○ Inclusion assessment - achieves sense of belonging and social relations	1
		○ Racially diverse top management - sense of belonging	2
	○ Common Good - Sporadic/Minimal		4
		○ Society projects - common good	1
		○ From policy perspective companies speak the common good game	3
			18
		○ Promote equality and quality - equal pay	12
		○ Promote equality and quality of life - Promotions	2
		○ Promote equality and quality of life - Work-life balance	5