

Diversity and employee engagement in professional services firms

By: Wandile Skosana

GIBs Student Number: 04646186

UP Student Number: u04646186

A research project submitted to the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration.

11 November 2019

Abstract

Diversity has become topical in the international business arena with an increasing number of businesses globally embracing diversity as a means to sustain competitive advantage. Recent studies have begun to suggest that a diversity climate, diversity orientated leadership and diversity orientated HR practices are a means to foster employee engagement. In line with this context, this exploratory research sought to explore whether in South African professional services firms these were being employed and whether this was impacting on the engagement of the intended beneficiaries.

The study was conducted in Gauteng with employees and directors from among the largest professional services providers in the South African and globally. Data for the study was collected through semi-structured interviews and analysed using coding as a technique.

The findings of the study revealed that there had been progress in advancing diversity particularly from a human resource (HR) perspective, however, there was significant room to improve as there was a low commitment to diversity from leadership.

Based on the results, the key recommendation was that a cultural transformation was required in these settings to foster integration. Leaders within the organisation would need to adopt diversity orientated practices and model the correct behaviours. HR practitioners would need to work with the companies' leadership to ensure compliance and the correct culture and climate.

Keywords

Diversity leadership, diversity climate, diversity human resource practices

Declaration

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

Wandile Skosana

11 November 2019

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Chapter 1: Introduction to Research Problem

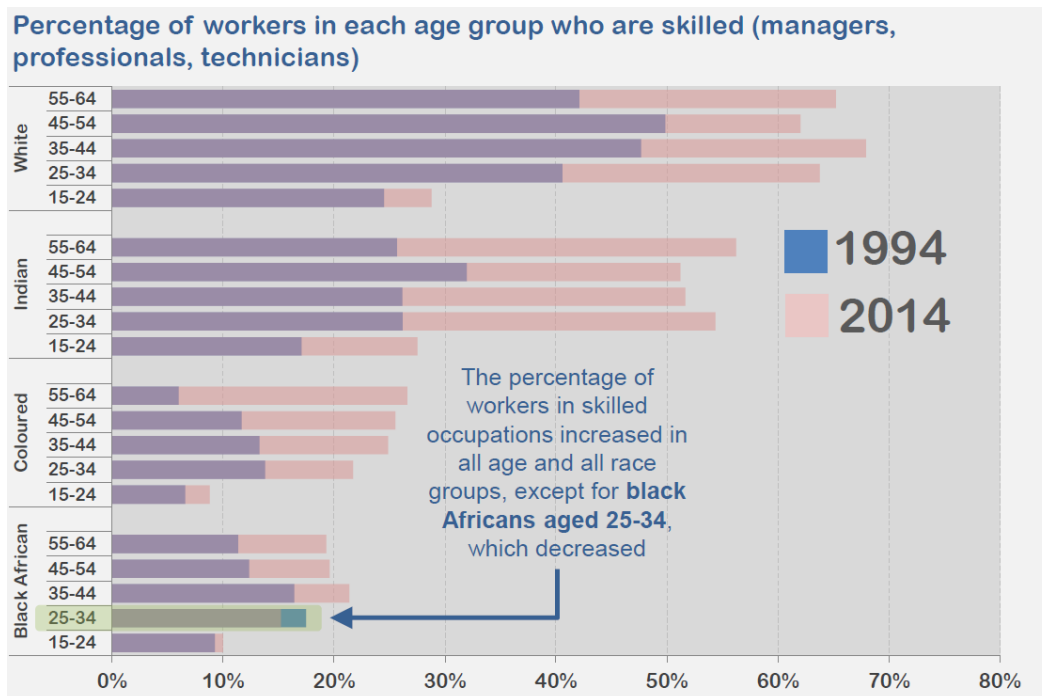
1.1. Introduction

Diversity is a reality for many organisations which, when effectively managed, can energise employees to add value to their organisations (Luu, Rowley & Vo, 2018). Furthermore, within South Africa, due to the legacy of Apartheid and racial discrimination, the issue of diversity is still a contentious topic. According to the South African Board of People Practices (SABPP), the Journey to non-discrimination and equality is ongoing in post-Apartheid South Africa, which still suffers from various forms of discrimination and racism (The South African Board of People Practices, 2019).

Progress has been made regarding equitable representation in the workforce across different races in South Africa. Stats SA figures reveal that between 1994 and 2014 there has been an improvement in the skilled workforce across population groups for Black Africans, Indians, Asians, and Coloured people, however, there was an unproportionate amount of progress within population groups. For instance, Black African skills were proportionally developing at a much lower rate than other population groups (Statistics South Africa, 2014).

Author of *Journey to diversity and inclusion in South Africa*, Nene Molefi (2017), posited that there were three common attitudes she encountered when she confronted diversity issues in the workplace, these attitudes were: an unconscious bias but a willingness to improve, a conscious bias and denial, and lastly a conscious or explicit bias and a desire to leave things in the past (Mtongana, 2017).

Figure 1: South african workers stats (Statistics South Africa, 2014, p. 25).



Many South African organisations show little interest in diversity and transformation as they do not regard it as valuable to their organisations (Daya, 2014). Some firms, however, have begun to demonstrate an interest in advancing the issue of diversity and transformation. In the professional service sector, some large co-operations have taken measures to ensure racial and gender diversity to ensure that the workforce represents the demographics within the country. Some firms viewed workforce diversity as an enabler to competitive advantage and reported their demographic composition in line with a view of addressing the diversity and transformation challenges facing the country.

A large professional services provider reported that diversity was a critical component of their value proposition and that the firm was committed to becoming inclusive and transform to reflect the diversity and demographics of South . This was of interest to the researcher as StatsSA (2014) has reported that there is still progress to be made in advancing Africans within organisations, and Masuku (2017) pointed out that corporate South Africa still lags behind on the issue of having a diverse multiracial workforce.

1.2. Research Problem Purpose

The issue with research on diversity in South Africa is that literature focuses on employment equity and does not build on how to create inclusive work environments (Daya, 2014). To overcome the limitation of a shortage of research, international literature will be used from Canada, the USA and the Vietnamese context.

This research study intends to explore the advantages of diversity in enabling engagement and providing a competitive advantage within organisations that have begun to demonstrate a commitment to building a diverse workforce. There has been limited research on the culture and climate that nurture the positive effects of diversity and eliminate any negative impact (Guillaume, Dawson, Woods, Sacramento & West, 2013).

Ashikali and Groeneveld (2015) posited that although diversity programmes were first aimed at affirmative action and equal employment opportunities, more recently the focus has shifted to the business case for diversity with traditional policies now targeting recruiting selecting to attract a diverse workforce as means to enhance organisational performance.

Scholars agree that engaged employees offer many benefits for organisations in today's globally competitive environment. Engaged employees are motivated to perform beyond their expected roles (Eldor & Harpaz, 2016; Luu et al., 2018; Young, Glerum, Wang & Joseph, 2018) and may be linked to increased financial returns and sales (Young et al., 2018). Therefore the aim of this research is to investigate whether a culture and practice of diversity within an organisation could lead to employees being more engaged, acting and behaving in a manner that would benefit the organisation.

1.3. Research Objectives

Given the benefits which engaged employees offer to organisations there is a need to understand if diversity contributes to employee engagement in an organisational setting. Gallup (2016) reported that diversity can be a competitive advantage for organisations who are able to build the right environment and that employees were more likely to state

that their company values diverse ideas.

This study seeks to contribute to the existing literature on diversity management, by investigating whether employee engagement is encouraged due to the perception of an existing diversity climate in South African firms. Diversity orientated HR practices, and diversity leadership are constructs which literature argues signal to employees that the organisation cared for diversity. The central proposition from the research is that employees would interpret these signals and as such foster greater engagement. The researcher probes the psychological understanding of diversity within the organisation and the employee's perception of the impact of diversity on their engagement. The research intends to focus on Black African Employees, within the organisational setting as the intended beneficiaries of diversity management initiatives and as the work group that is lagging behind in advancing in corporate South Africa, the lived experience from these participants provide an in-depth view of diversity management practices and its impact on the intended target beneficiary.

1.4. Conclusion

Avery (2011) advocated that there is a need for organisations to create environments where employees can engage in constructive debate, where they can be themselves as this is necessary for employee engagement, thus it is crucial that researchers identify means to create psychological safety in the presence of potential disagreements. Guillaume et al. (2013) echoed a similar sentiment in that there is a need to identify Human Resource management practices and cultures, which foster a positive diversity climate taking into account that diversity at different levels impacts organisational outcomes and that the theory should take into account that diversity not only fosters "separation and variety but also disparity" (Guillaume et al., 2013, p. 134)

Guillaume et al. (2013) highlighted that culture at both an individual and organisational level determines how employees and organisations respond to diversity. Therefore, there is a need to investigate diversity from a cultural perspective and to build multilevel models that can better explain the impact of diversity on organisational outcomes.

Manoharan and Singal (2017) posited, however, that research on diversity has led to mixed findings and argues that there is a need to conduct diversity research in different industry settings, thus the boundary conditions for this study will be limited to diversity within the professional services industry and will focus racial ethnicity at organisational level. This is not to say that other attributes of diversity such as age, function or sexual orientation are less salient in influencing organisational performance, but rather that this attributes was the most salient for this study.

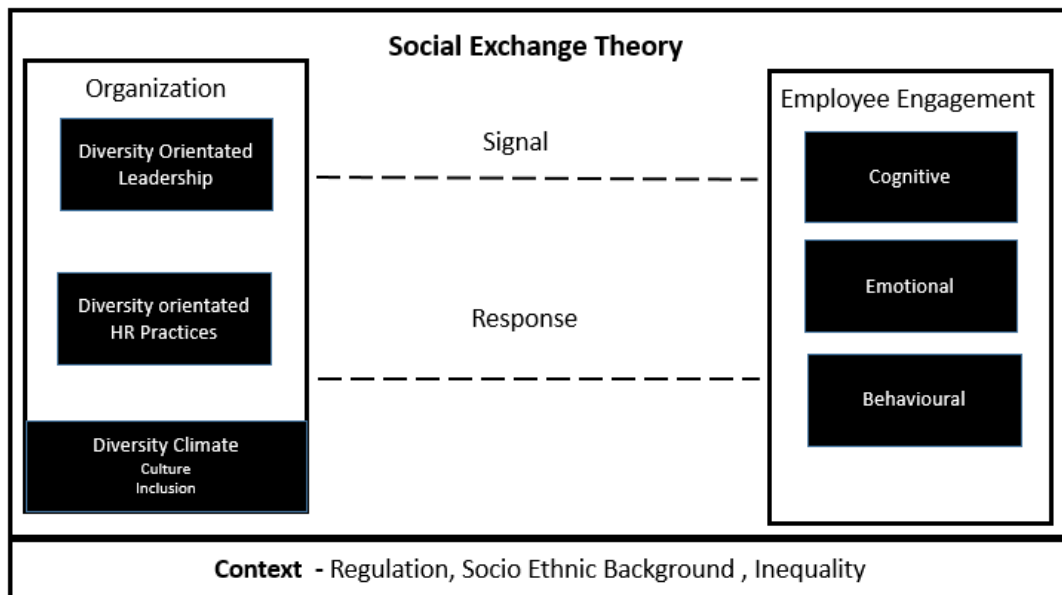
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This section outlines the concepts and theoretical considerations for the study of diversity. The main concepts investigated in the study are diversity orientated leadership, diversity orientated HR practice, and a climate of diversity, to evaluate whether these constructs act as signals to employees to engender engagement.

Given, however, that the study is being done in a particular context, contextual factors such the historic segregation of Black Africans, discrimination, as well as the culture within an organisation are taken into consideration. These contextual factors may strengthen or weaken and even void the organisations signalling. Figure 2 presents the theoretical framework for the study.

Figure 2: Theoretical framework for this study (Adapted from Konrad, Yang and Maurer, 2016; Olsen and Martins, 2016; Shuck, Adelson and Reio, 2017; and Luu et al., 2018).



Similar studies were conducted on diversity by Appadu (2018) and Masuku (2017). However, these studies were focused on the impact of diversity on organisational brand

and performance, to the authors knowledge this is the only recent study which focuses on diversity and engagement.

Given that defining diversity remains a challenge in literature with multiple terms of terminology used (Manoharan & Singal, 2017), this literature review begins by defining and tracking the concept of diversity and stating the definition applied for the study.

Post defining diversity in the workplace, this review is followed by a look at various theoretical perspectives which have been applied by scholars to study the phenomenon, arguments from scholars on theories such as Social Identity Theory (Tafjel, 1982), Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), Institutional Theory (Gacilo, Steinheider, Stone, Hoffmeister, Jawahar & Garrett, 2018), Social Categorisation (Turner, 1982), Information Processing (Van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007), Categorisation Elaboration Model (Van Knippenberg, De Dreu & Homan, 2004), Faultlines (Lau & Murnighan, 1998), Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987; Eagley & Steffen, 1984), Top Management Team (TMT) Theory (Guillaume et al., 2013; Li, Meyer, Shemla, & Wegge, 2018). These theories are reviewed in order to form a theoretical base for the study of diversity.

The literature review follows on to look at the concept of employee engagement (Kahn, 1990) as the second concept of the research, before linking the two concepts and putting forward the main theoretical model adopted for the study and elaborating on the main concepts from diversity and engagement literature which may engender employee engagement. The review then concludes with the theoretical framework for the study.

2.1.1 Diversity

Scholars (Guillaume et al., 2013; Lu, Chen, Huang & Chien, 2015) put forward that diversity refer to the perceived differences between individuals on where one individual may perceive another as different from self. Shelma, Meyer, Greer and Jehn (2016) viewed diversity from a broader group and organisational lens as the infinite number of perceived and objective difference that exist among individuals in organisations.

Shelma et al. (2016) extends the discussion on diversity to include internal individual mental models and awareness, the authors expand on the term and state that diversity is “the degree to which members are aware of one another’s differences, as reflected in their internal mental representations on the unit’s composition”, this view implies that diversity exists at both a visible and non-visible level depending on whether the person was aware that another person is different.

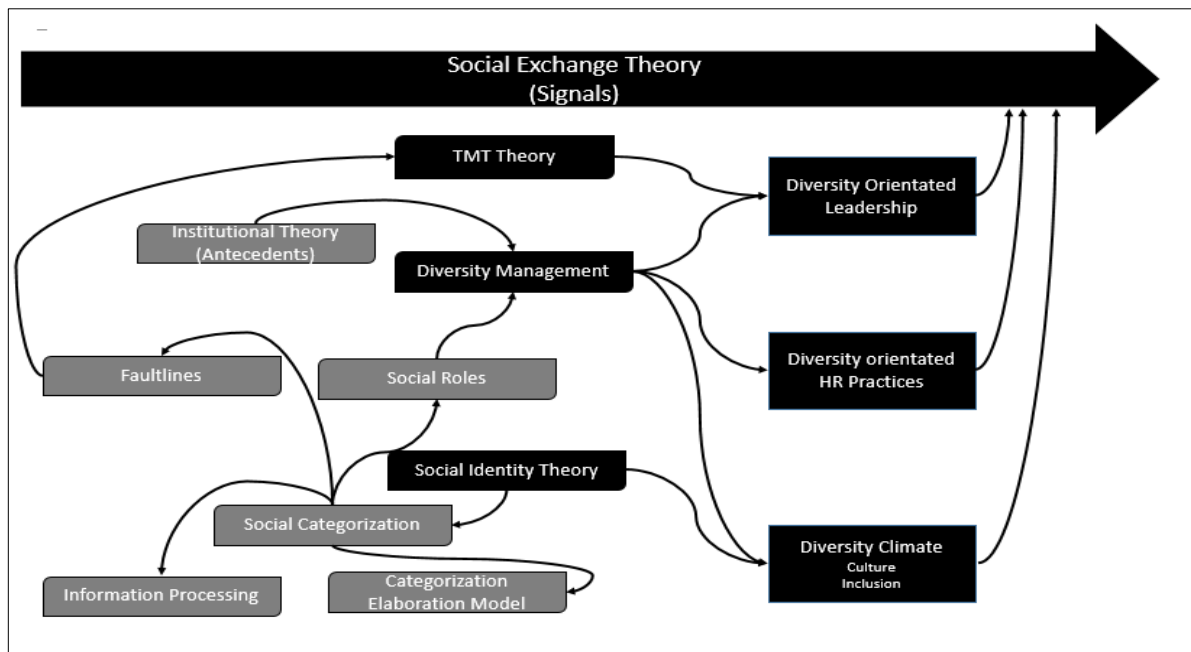
Luu et al. (2018) confirmed a similar stratifying view of diversity as Shelma et al. (2016), Luu et al. (2018) viewed diversity as existing at a primary and secondary level, where on the primary level, there is an individual’s core identity which is visible (Manoharan & Singal, 2017) where individuals differ in “age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and physical abilities” (Luu et al., 2018, p. 78), whilst on the secondary level there are attributes which do not fundamentally change who the individual is (Manoharan & Singal, 2017), these are less visible and include these are less visible and include a person religious beliefs, educational background, their values, and learning style (Luu et al., 2018).

Manoharan and Singal (2017), when attempting to define diversity, pointed out that terminology such as “heterogeneity, dispersion, divergence and variation” (p.78) is used interchangeability which thus creates a challenge in defining the phenomena. For this study we adopt the common definition of diversity as “a characteristic of a social grouping that reflects the degree to which there are objective or subjective differences between people within the group” (Van Knippenberg & Schipper, 2007; Lu et al., 2015; Guillaume et al., 2013;).

2.1.2 Diversity theoretical review

In the section below, we briefly describe the theories and lenses used in diversity literature and outline the selection of the Social Exchange Theory as the overarching theory for the study. Figure 3 presents the fuzzy logic behind how the theories relate to each other.

Figure 3: Fuzzy logic on the theoretical relation to the framework (Adapted from Blau, 1964; Tajfel, 1982; Turner, 1982; Van Knippenberg and Schippers 2007; Koenig and Eagly, 2014; Van Knippenberg et al., 2004; Lau and Murnighan, 1998; Guillaume et al., 2013; Chu, Xu, Lai, and Collins, 2018).



2.1.3 Social identity

One of the predominantly used theories in workforce diversity literature is Social Identity Theory (Shemla, Meyer, Greer, & Jehn, 2016; Hogg, Abrahms, & Brewer, 2017). “Social identity” is part of the individual identity which places “value and emotional significance” to belonging to a particular “group or social groups” (Tajfel, 1982. p. 24). Chung et al. (2015) outlined that people will then display favouritism to people with the same shared social identity and then discriminate against those that do not. Hogg et al. (2017) added on that individuals can have varying identities (person-based, group-based, relational-based) and that people can have a simple social identity and many discrete social identities which have common attributes or a complex identity if the discrete identities do not share common an attribute. From the above definition the key theme that emerges is that an individual’s social identity is complex and shaped by the context in

which the individual operates.

2.1.4 Social Categorisation

Building on Tajfel (1982), Turner (1982) described social categorisation as the process by which individuals define themselves and others, the process occurs when individuals define a person by “Including them with others and removing them from other categories” (p.18). From the social categorisation perspective, Shelma et al. (2016) argued that when individuals see team members as similar they will categorise them “as part of their in-group” and when they perceive team members to be different they will categorise them as “part of their out group” and they are “less likely to take the perspective of these team members ,to engage in helping behaviour” (p. 193)

2.1.5 Information processing

Scholars (Van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007; Guillaume et al., 2013; Chung et al., 2015) contend that the information processing perspective relates to the notion that a diverse team is able to generate more task related knowledge. This perspective is often used with the social categorisation perspective discussed above (Van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007; Guillaume et al., 2013) to argue the positive and negative outcomes of diversity. The combination of this, however, has not led to the formulation of a theoretical framework (Van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007).

2.1.6 Relational demography and social roles

Guillaume et al. (2013) posited that a realm of diversity literature which looks at demographics such as age, ethnicity, race, and looks at issues of adverse impact, differential treatment, and fairness is the relational approach. Using relational demography theory, the approach is premised on that the relationship of an individual’s own demographic attributes to that of all their members in a particular unit will have an impact on the individual’s experience in that unit (Tsui & Gutek, 1999)

Using attribution theory and literature on racial stereotypes, scholars Lukyete, Waite, Avery, and Roy (2013) as cited in Guillaume et al. (2013) found that when looking at

racial differences, black people in America received harsher punishment and had fewer advancement opportunities when they were late or tardy than their white and Hispanic counterparts.

With the focus of this South African study being on Black African employee's as the intended beneficiaries of diversity orientated organisational initiatives, the theory presents a useful lens in relation to the sample. From Roberson's, Ryan's and Ragins' (2017) meta-analysis, relational demography theory appears to be one of the more widely used theories to study race as a dimension of diversity, however this theory only appears to be used up until 2009. A recent theory used to study the phenomena of bias and racial stereotypes is the Social Role Theory as used by Koenig and Eagly (2014).

2.1.7 Social Role Theory

According to Koenig and Eagly (2014), Social Role Theory (SRT) is based on the notion that beliefs about social groups in society are drawn from the social perceivers experience of how group members are represented in roles. This is to say that the more a group is "overrepresented relative to their number in the population the general population" (Koenig & Eagly, 2014, p. 371), the stronger the belief.

SRT differentiates between a social group and a role, both however, have obligations and expectations (Koenig & Eagly, 2014). Roles are viewed as "behavioural expectations of a social system towards a concrete actor" from society which are influenced by "values, norms and beliefs" (Ng, Plewa, & Sweeney, 2016, p. 382). Social groups, however, are seen as being made up of "variables such as age, race or gender" (Koenig & Eagly, 2014, p. 372). The central argument behind SRT's perspective is that societal stereotypes form, based on the representation of the social group in a particular occupation or profession (Koenig & Eagly, 2014).

2.1.8 Categorisation Elaboration Model (CEM)

From the need to integrate the categorisation perspective with the information processing perspective, Van Knippenberg et al. (2004) developed the Categorisation Elaboration Model (CEM) which proposes that both processes unfold simultaneously

and that any type of diversity may elicit either social categorisation or an information decision making process (Guillaume et al., 2013). The CEM is useful for the research as it forms part of investigating both the negative and positive impacts of diversity outcomes, however this is not the part of the main theories for the study as the research predominantly focuses on diversity management as with engagement as the main outcome.

2.1.9 Faultline Theory

Building on the Social Identity and Social Categorisation perspective, Lau and Murnighan (1998) developed Faultline Theory. Diversity scholars (Mitchell & Boyle, 2015; Van Peteghem, Bruynseels, & Gaeremynck, 2018) posit that fault lines are “hypothetical lines” (Van Peteghem et al., 2018) that divide groups into “relatively homogeneous subgroups” (Mitchell & Boyle, 2015; Van Peteghem et al., 2018). Van et al. (2018) expanded on that, as Faultline Theory research focuses on fault line strength and fault line distance, where the former measures the degree of similarity in the groups and the latter measures “how far apart subgroups are on different member characteristics” (p. 342) . Faultline strength, measures cohesion, where faultline distance focuses on dissimilarity which may “escalate antagonistic subgroup behaviour” (Van Peteghem et al., 2018, p. 342).

Faultline strength is dependent on observable differences and causes members to identify more strongly with their sub-group than the larger group (Roberson et al., 2017) or cause the larger sub-group to see a homogeneous sub-group as the out-group (Shelma et al., 2016). The consistent findings however were that strong faultlines, experience negative consequences (Van Peteghem et al., 2018), such as conflict (Chung et al., 2015), loss of trust and respect (Van Peteghem et al., 2018).

2.1.10 Top Management Team (TMT) diversity

Beyond the issue of group identity and team dynamics, diversity scholars (Guillaume et al., 2013) study diversity from an organisational cultural perspective, as this determines how organisations and their employees respond to diversity. In this realm of literature, what is considered to be the Top Management Teams (TMT) influence on organisational

culture with regards to the composition of top management, the top management's values in relation to diversity and the actions taken by the TMT (Guillaume et al., 2013).

From literature, however, the composition of a team from a diversity perspective is an area in which scholars continue to engage in discourse as an area which offers benefits for the organisation but has its limitations (Li et al., 2018).

From an information processing theory perspective, assuming that the team is stable, team diversity benefits the team as there are additions to task-relevant ideas to the team, however, teams are not stable and the addition of new team members may cause team disparity (possession of finite social resources such as power and authority) to enlarge, leading to the control of finite social resources by a smaller amount of team members (Li et al., 2018). Thus, from a diversity perspective TMT disparity ultimately influences the decisions taken by the team and influences the culture within the team and organisation, however within the team itself there are group dynamics in that new team member is introduced this may cause disparity where resources are controlled by a portion of the team. This perspective was useful for the research as it takes into account the role of leadership within organisations with regards to influencing diversity endorsement and the culture within the organisation.

2.1.11 Institutional Theory

One of the recent theories found in diversity literature is institutional theory to explain the role of institutional pressures on diversity (Gacilo et al., 2018; Chu et al., 2018). Institutional theory proposes that institutional environments consist of the regulatory, normative, and cognitive layers (Kostova & Zaheer, 1999). The regulatory layer consists of "the rules and laws that exist to ensure stability and order in societies" (Kostova & Zaheer, 1999). Cognitive layer institutions have to "conform to or be consistent with established cognitive structures in society to be consistent" to the rules (Kostova & Zaheer, 1999). Lastly, normative layer organisations have to conform to established social values in order to gain legitimacy (Kostova & Zaheer, 1999).

Building on the three layers of institutional theory, Chu et al. (2018) posited that institutional theory is based on the notion, that business decisions are influenced by “norms, values and traditions” (Chu et al., 2018, p. 393) and that as firms struggle to gain acceptance and legitimacy in order to access scarce resources, they experience coercive, normative, and mimetic pressure. The authors relate the three layers as: coercive pressure being linked to the regulative layer and legislation; normative pressure being linked to the normative layer, as well as values and standards acceptable to society; and mimic pressure has been linked to the cognitive layer. The central argument from the authors is that regulation, societal norms, and the need to copy competitors’ diversity efforts as a source of competitive advantage place pressure on institutions to adapt and to adopt diversity (Gacilo et al., 2018; Chu et al., 2018).

The norms in institutions have gained attention from diversity scholars, Chang, Milkman, Chugh and Akinola (2019) suggested using descriptive norm theory, that organisations will comply to social norms in order to avoid scrutiny. As far as ethnic diversity is concerned organisations diversity levels will hover at the organisational social norms set by peers and once the norm is met, organisations will hire diverse candidates at a slower rate.

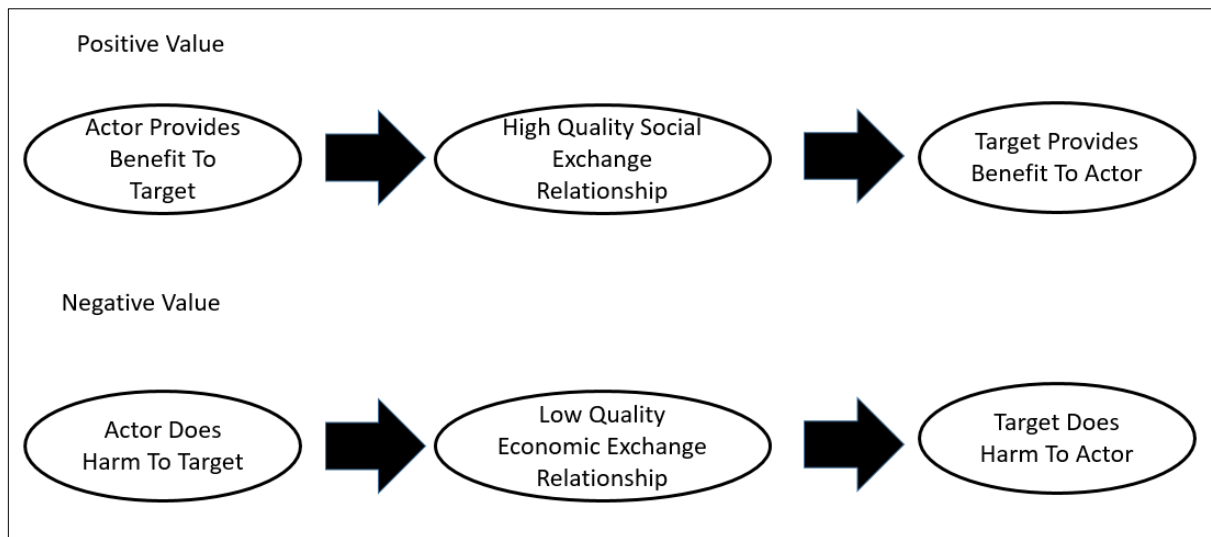
2.1.12 Social Exchange Theory (SET)

SET (Blau, 1964) posits that "obligations are generated through a series of interactions between parties who are in a state of reciprocal interdependence" (Saks, 2006, p. 603). Social exchange theorists agree that social exchange involves interaction that generates obligation and that SET is among the most influential conceptual paradigms for understanding organisational behaviour (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

Within the realm of diversity management literature, SET has been used to put forward the argument that organisations who manage diversity well, create obligations on the part of employees and act as signals to the employees of the organisations commitment to diversity (Guillaume et al., 2013; Downey, Werff, Van Der Thomas, & Plaut, 2015; Luu et al., 2018). Scholars have put forward that employees will decipher these signals and this will subsequently engender employee engagement (Downey et al., 2015; Luu

et al., 2018). Based on the argument put forward from literature, this study adopts SET as the overarching theory. The model below presents a graphical representation of both the positive and negative value which may arise in a social exchange.

Figure 4: Social exchange relationship (Adapted from Cropanzano, Anthony, Daniels, and Hall, 2016).



2.2 Engagement Theoretical Review

Scholars (Shuck, Adelson, & Reio, 2017; Eldor & Vigoda–Gadot, 2017) contend that the theory on engagement is grounded in Kahn's (1990) earlier work on personal engagement, define employee engagement as "the simultaneous employment and expression of a person's preferred self in task behaviours that promote connections to work, personal presence (physical, cognitive, and emotional) and optimal performances" (Kahn, 1990, p. 700).

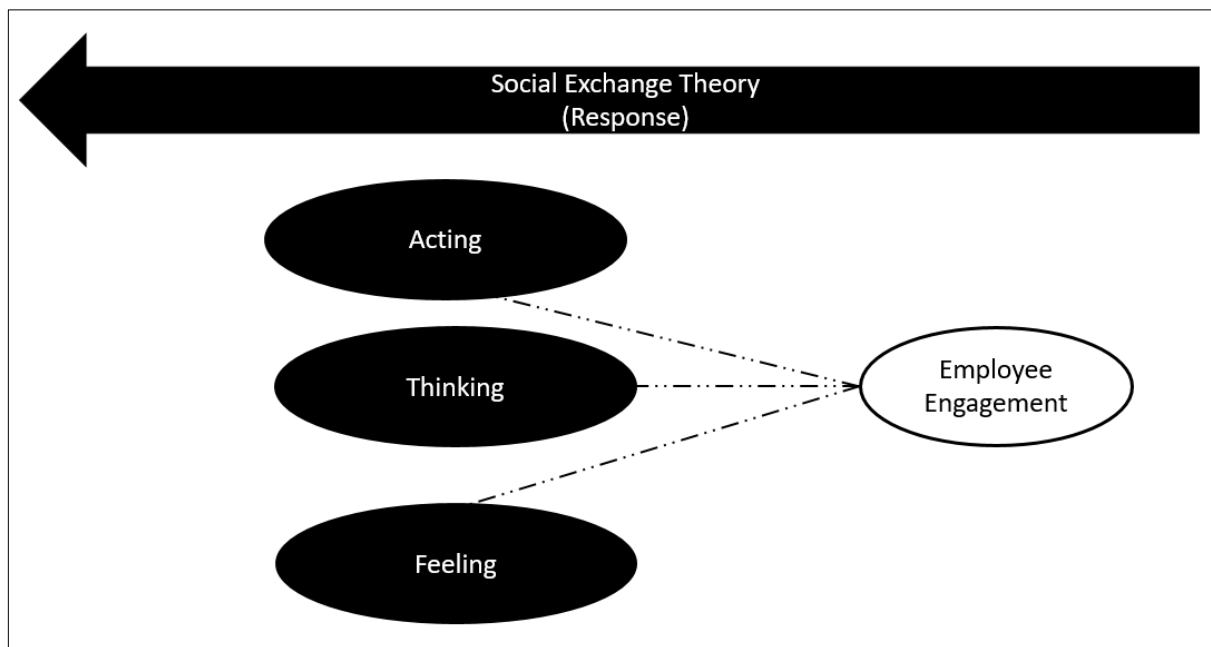
Post Kahn's (1990) definition of employee engagement, the definition of employee engagement began to evolve with different scholars adding to the definition. Maslach, Schaufeli, and Lieter (2001) defined engagement as "a persistent, positive, affective state of fulfilment that is characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption" (p. 417).

Eldor and Vigoda-Gadot (2017) posited that it was "a work-related state of mind characterised by feelings of vigour fulfilment enthusiasm absorption and dedication" (p.

526). Finally, Shuck et al. (2017) advanced that the Employee Engagement Scale (EES) consists of three sub-dimensions: the cognitive dimension, which relates to mental effort; the emotional dimension, which relates to intensity and willingness to invest emotionally; and the behavioural dimension, which relates to the psychological state of the intention to behave in a particular way. In these three dimensions, the employee can enact these states towards positive organisational or performance outcomes.

Common to these definitions is the state of mind of the employee and willingness to contribute positively to organisational performance. For this study, employee engagement was explored from Shuck's et al. (2017) sub-dimensions as the cognitive, emotional and behavioural state of employees which leads to positive organisational outcomes. The figure below illustrates the main theoretical proposition in relation to engagement and Social Exchange.

Figure 5: Employee engagement in relation to diversity (Adapted from Shuck et al. 2017).



Young et al. (2018) posited that from the perspective of the employee, personality traits fuel energy that foster engagement, they found that personality accounted for 48.10% of the variance in engagement. Macey and Schneider (2008) similarly advocated that

a proactive personality was related to trait engagement.

2.3 Diversity Management and Context

When evaluating context from an organisational perspective, Konrad et al. (2016) posited that institutional theory represents the antecedents of diversity, as legislation represents coercive pressure on institutions. Diversity Management (DM) as a concept in relation to regulation can be traced back to the United States and the civil rights movement (Manoharan & Singal, 2017; Nkomo, Bell, Roberts, & Thatcher, 2019). The United States (US) and Canada offers a similar regulatory context as South Africa and thus offer a useful frame of reference for assessing contextual factors that should be taken into consideration for the research. The context in the US is similar South Africa in that affirmative action was introduced to prevent the discrimination against employees (Manoharan & Singal, 2017; Triana, Jayasinghe, & Pieper, 2015) and the Civil Rights Act was introduced to prohibit discrimination based on "race, colour, religion, and national origin (Triana et al., 2015).

Similarly, in South Africa discrimination is prevented through legislation in the Labour Relations Act, Section 6 of the EE Act, which states that, "no person may unfairly discriminate, directly or indirectly, against an employee (Department of Labour, 1998) based on both the primary and secondary levels of diversity. The advancement of underrepresented groups is promoted through legislation by the Employment Equity Act No 5 of 1998 (EE Act) which encourages firms to institute measures to ensure that designated groups are "equitably represented in all occupational categories and levels in the workforce" (Department of Labour, 1998).

Konrad et al. (2016) continued to state that context determines DM, in that in Canadian regulation requires firms to ensure representation and advancement of specific ethnic groups in workplace. At individual level Olsen and Martins (2016) argued that the individuals racio ethnic background influences their perceptions around racial stereotypes where the individuals racio ethnic background interacts with the firms' acculturation strategy and then influences the signal to the employee. Therefore, black minorities from white communities will be more comfortable in an organisation with a

large number of whites. Additionally, white employees who have had a lot of exposure to black employees would be more comfortable around black people. The central argument from the scholars was that context plays a role at both an organisational and individual level.

Leslie (2019), however, warned that as much as diversity management practices such as the Employment Equity Act are meant to improve representation of beneficiaries, “increase inclusion” and lower gaps in career progression between different groups, the initiatives also have unintended consequences such “backfire”, negative or positive spill over and “false progress” (p. 544)

Taking this context into further account, international companies, are particularly at a higher risk due to the liability of foreignness, thus there is pressure to comply with local conditions and legislation (Konrad et al., 2016). This context is of particular interest to the study as the research focuses on international professional services firms as a setting.

As this study intended to investigate the diversity climate within the organisation, this proposition presents an interesting question for the research, in that it could ask what organisations could do to tackle the challenge of racial integration in the workplace. Kotters (1995) pointed out that organisations fail to implement change due to not establishing a sense of urgency, not creating a guiding coalition, lacking vision, under communicating the vision, not removing obstacles to the vision, not planning for short term wins, declaring a win to soon, and not anchoring the changes in the companies culture.

2.4 Diversity Management and a Diversity Climate

Diversity management manifests the diversity climate (Chung et al., 2015). Scholars contend that the definition of diversity climate can be attributed to Reichers and Schneider (1990) who defined organizational climate “as the shared perceptions and cognitive evaluations of formal and informal organisational policies, practices, and procedures and the kinds of behaviours that are rewarded” (Luu et al., 2018, p. 305; Chung et al., 2015, p. 1499).

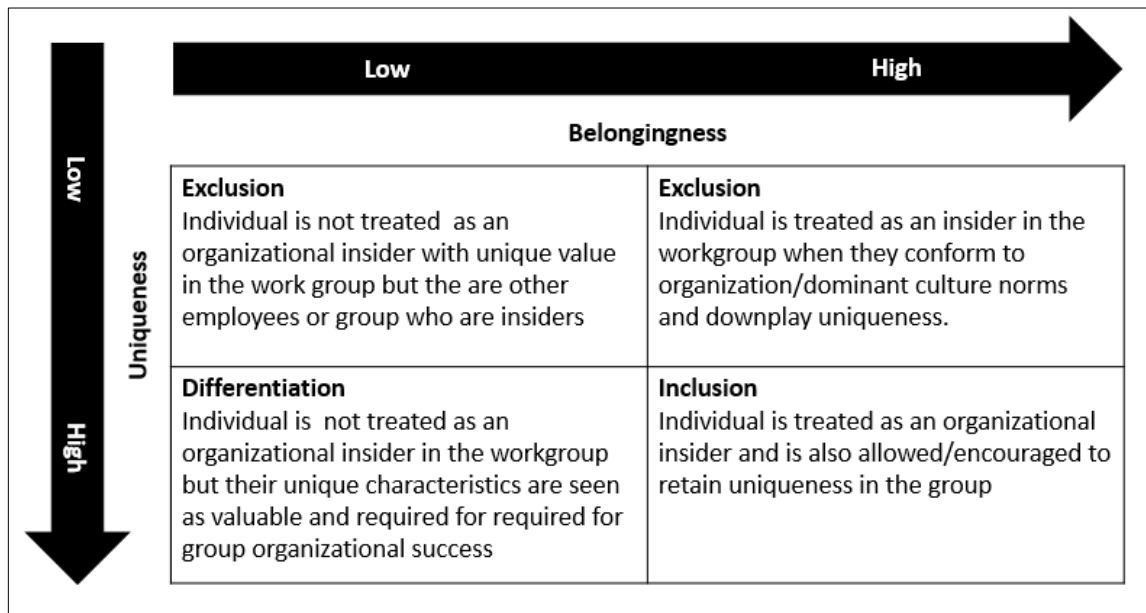
Chung et al. (2015) advanced that shared perceptions of a diversity climate are based on employees being treated equally and fairly and integrated into the workplace regardless of race.

Guillaume et al. (2013, p. 125) put forward that from a social identity theory perspective, the creation of diversity climates allows for employees to be their true selves, “embrace their uniqueness” (p. 125) and that this leads to different team members identifying with the organisation. Studies on DM and employee engagement from Downey et al. (2015) advocate a similar sentiment in that diversity practices, foster trust in organisations and that this climate is influenced by inclusion. From literature, the elements which constitute a diversity climate are inclusion (Downey et al., 2015) and culture (Guillaume et al.; Downey et al., 2015).

2.1.12 Inclusion

Downey et al. (2015) discussed inclusion as a means of achieving a diversity climate and relates to it from the self-categorisation theory perspective in that if a person is made to feel like part of the organisation in-group that person will respond positively and there will be feelings of “trustworthiness and co-operation” (Downey et al., 2015). Shore, Randel, Chung, Dean Ehrhart and Singh (2011) outlined inclusion as a person feeling that they belong to the organisation and that their uniqueness is valued, thus providing a satisfying experience for the individual. The authors provided a framework for assessing inclusions as set out in Figure 6 below, the framework asserts that inclusion consists of belongingness and uniqueness, where employees who have a high sense of belonging and a high sense of uniqueness are included, where else if an employee is not in this quadrant they feel either excluded, differentiated, or assimilated.

Figure 6: Inclusion framework (Shore et al., 2011).



2.1.12 Culture

In relation to DM literature, Guillaume et al. (2013) discussed culture prominently in relation to the organisational climate. The authors put forward that for DM to be successful, organisations must address that employees feel that they can fit and integrate with the culture, where the culture can influence them, and they can also change the culture (Guillaume et al., 2013).

Building on the pivotal role of culture and the signalling effects of diversity management programs, Olsen and Martins (2016) discuss acculturation as the means by which organisations deal with multiple cultures from different workgroups, where organisations can either adopt an assimilation posture, where employees embrace the dominant organisational culture or, an integration posture where employees maintain their distinct values and the organisations culture is shaped by its employees and leadership. Warnich, Carrell, Elbert and Hatfield, (2015), however, argued against an assimilation culture for companies that value diversity as this “reinforces the bias that spawns with this approach and perpetrates stereotyping and prejudice in the workforce” (p. 89) and leads to black employees leaving due to struggling to succeed.

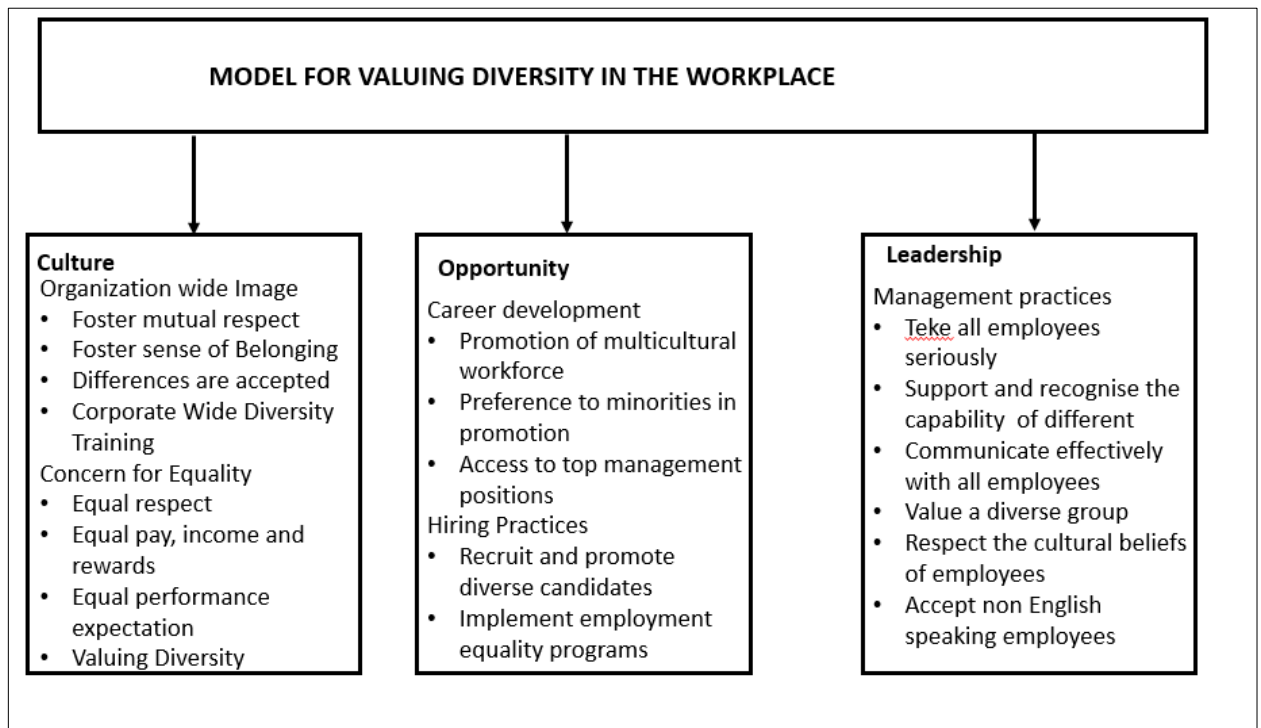
2.5 Diversity Management Initiatives

Scholars (Guillaume et al., 2013; Konrad et al., 2016; Nkomo et al., 2019) contended that DM was partially motivated by the business case for diversity (Cox & Blake, 1991), which emphasises a diversity orientated leadership style, where organisations do more than what is required by legislation and as such gain a competitive advantage by gaining access to a broader customer and employee base and an increase in innovation capability (Konrad et al., 2016).

DM practices focus on managing variation and performance in human capital and ensuring that variation does not hinder performance but instead ensures that variation is leveraged to enhance organisational performance or the attainment of organisational goals (Konrad et al., 2016; Olsen & Martins, 2016; Manoharan & Singal, 2017). The consensus amongst scholars however is that DM encompasses the HR practices within the organisation (Konrad et al., 2016; Olsen & Martins, 2016) and that these practices act as a signal to employees (Olsen & Martins, 2016).

Warnich et al. (2015) put forward a model for companies who want to value diversity in the South African context and not see diversity as part of legislative compliance requirements but as a means to establishing competitive advantage.

Figure 7: Model for valuing diversity (Warnich et al., 2015).



2.1.13 Diversity orientated leadership

Avery (2011) advanced that at any individual level, support for any construct varies in terms of endorsement (internal attitude) and activism (behaviour). The author further states that empirical evidence suggests that, "employees diversity-related behaviour is influenced by those in positions of power" (p. 247), which is to say if employees perceive their managers to endorse diversity then they might shape their behaviour to align with how they perceive their manager expects them to behave. However, this is not to say that the employee's belief and the managers own belief are irrelevant but that perceptions will have a greater influence on the employee's cognitive process.

Guillaume et al. (2013) argued that the composition of the leadership group impacts the diversity climate in organisations. Thus, a central proposition is that that the leadership profile and incorporation of diversity orientated practices influence the climate within the organisation and ultimately the engagement of employees.

Luu et al. (2018) when looking at the concepts of what diversity orientated leadership is,

not only at the internal dynamics within the TMT, but as leadership that leads by example and values employees "contributions, notwithstanding, their differences" (Luu et al. 2018, p. 95). This is perceived as fair and unbiased across all groups and is a signal to employees which may foster their engagement. Supporting Shemla et al. (2016), Luu et al. (2018) and Avery (2011) that diversity should be supported as an attitude and behaviour in an organisation in order to be successful, the authors argued that leaders are role models in organisations, they play a role in providing social cues to employees who in turn mimic behaviour, for instance if the leader encourages diversity amongst employees [TMT], employees could be motivated to engage with and support employees from different backgrounds.

2.1.14 Diversity orientated human resource management

The challenge with diversity management is that most Human Resource Management (HRM) models may presume a workforce to be homogeneous (Luu et al., 2018). Downey, et al. (2015) further points out that this often leads to a difference in the intended policies and procedures and the experiences of employees.

Downey et al. (2015) however points out that diversity practices have the objectives attracting and retaining talent, reducing labour cost, enhancing the organisation's reputation, re-enforcing business strategy, and improving employee satisfaction. Luu et al. (2018) build on this view and add on that the central concerns HRM models have to ensure the organisation attracts a heterogeneous workforce and treats it equitably and fairly.

Guillaume et al. (2013) argued that Human Resource (HR) practices such as "affirmative action and equal employment have led to a better representation of minorities" (Guillaume et al., 2013, p. 131). However, this is not sufficient as it fails to capitalise on the organizational growth benefit. The authors argued that commitment to diversity varies in organisations from simply meeting legal requirements to designing procedures and policies which seek to reshape the culture within the organisation (Guillaume et al., 2013).

The central proposition from Guillaume et al. (2013) is that if diversity orientated

initiatives such as "training, formal and informal mentoring" (p. 132) are to be successful and go beyond the satisfaction of legal requirements, they should be part of a larger system than a standalone solution.

Downey et al. (2015) re-emphasised the call for implementing diversity practices and brought forward the argument that the modern workforce is diverse and without diversity oriented practices, organisations would find themselves at a competitive disadvantage. Downey et al. (2015), however, argued that diversity orientated practices and procedures are effective at an individual level, as those who have insider access to organisational decision making processes are "more amenable to the potential positive effects of diversity practices" (p. 45),

The central proposition behind diversity orientated practices is that organisations who pay close attention to diversity orientated practices such as recruitment, promotion, equal pay, and offer training, will engender engagement from employees (Luu et al., 2018) as this acts as a signal to employees that the organisation values contributions employees from diverse backgrounds and seeks to eliminate discrimination and that the organisation cares for its employees (Luu et al., 2018).

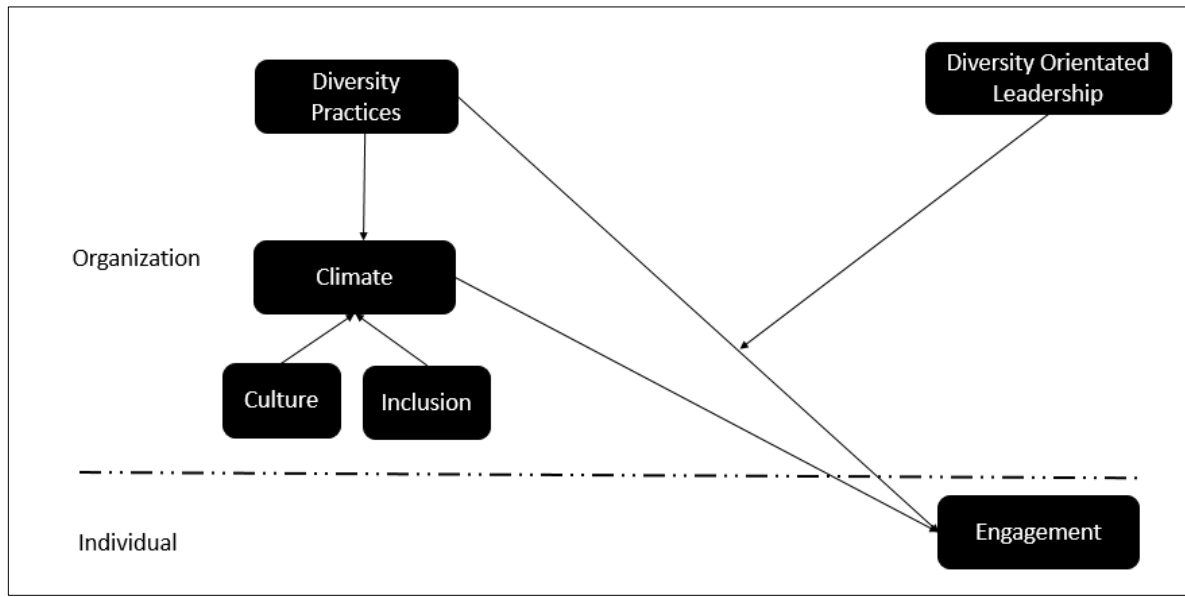
2.6 Diversity Management and Employee Engagement

Supplementing the social identity theoretical argument, scholars (Guillaume et al., 2013; Carter, Nesbit, Badham, Parker & Sung, 2015; Luu et al., 2018) advanced that the SET contributes an important argument to diversity and engagement literature, in that if employees are given positive support they will reciprocate positively by contributing greater effort to balance the social exchange. Luu et al. (2018) offered that parallel to diversity climates, HR practices and leadership have a role in fostering engagement. From a review of the macro-level theories on diversity (Nkomo et al., 2019) SET was selected as the best fit for the study.

Diversity scholars (Downey et al., 2015; Eldor & Harpaz 2016; Luu et al., 2018) synthesised literature on diversity and employee engagement. They put forward that diversity practices, diversity orientated leadership, and a diversity climate act as a signals to employees of the organisation's commitment to supporting employees from

all backgrounds. The model in figure 8 was constructed as a graphical representation of the main theoretical proposition from diversity and engagement literature.

Figure 8: Diversity and engagement model (Adapted from Guillaume et al., 2013; Downey et al, 2015; Luu et al., 2018).



2.7 Conclusion

Scholars (Avery, 2011; Guillaume et al., 2013) argued that there remains a need for research on the antecedents of employee engagement (Avery, 2011) and identified means to create psychological safety and identify HR practices and cultures, which can foster a positive diversity climate (Guillaume et al., 2013). Purcell (2014) expressed that to move employee engagement research forward, there needs to be a further exploration on employee "beliefs, values, behaviours and experiences at work, in a way not seen by the mainstream before" (Purcell 2014, p.251). Bailey, Madden, Alfes, and Fletcher (2015) also stated that further research is required to evaluate interventions aimed at improving engagement.

From diversity literature, Roberson et al. (2017) posited that due to the concepts of diversity and inclusion being interrelated, future research should focus on differentiating the constructs and the challenges of implementation in organisations. Manoharan and

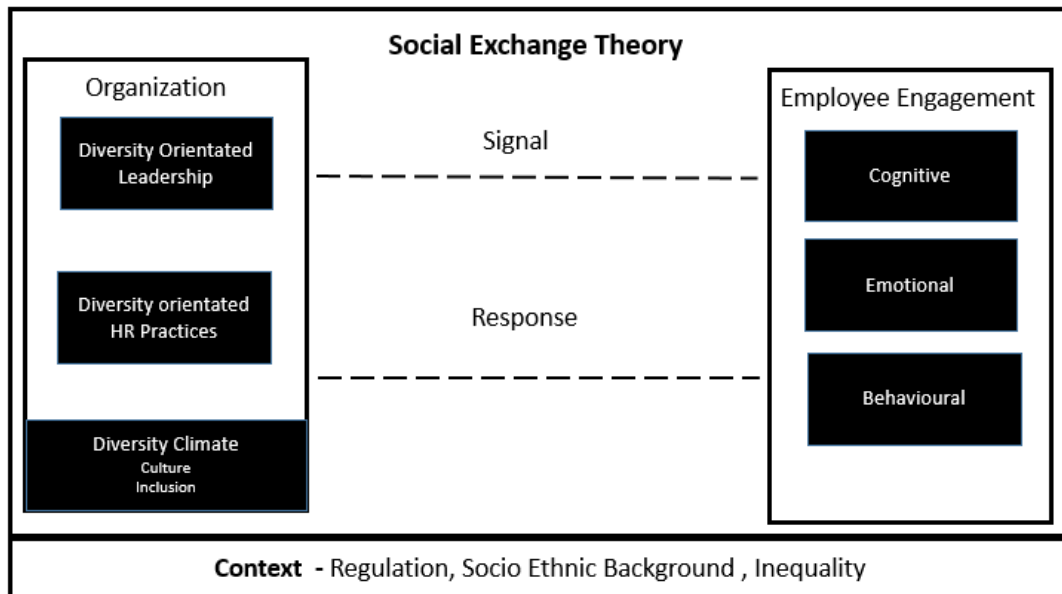
Singal (2017) expressed concern that research on diversity has led to mixed findings and argued that there is a need to conduct diversity research in specific industry settings.

Julian and Ofori-Dankwa (2017) contended that from a strategic management perspective diversity, research has been focused on the composition of the top team, However, they observe that interest has grown on the benefits of visible organisation-wide diversity. They call for more research to investigate the effects of racial diversity at different levels not only at exemplary firms.

Konrad et al. (2016) expressed that with diversity management context matters, as it determines DM practices and initiatives. Similarly, Nkomo et al. (2019), highlight that context influences theory and that there are very few studies that take into account the historical and social context. Nkomo et al. (2019) however critique that scholars have taken a reductionist approach in diversity studies where they argued that "everyone is diverse"(p. 502), the authors bring forward that this "detracts away from the inequality, discrimination, and exclusion experienced by historically disadvantaged groups.

For this study, the view by Luu et al., (2018), on the factors which foster engagement being the diversity climate, diversity orientated leadership, and HR management is adopted. Figure 9 below presents a graphical representation of the research framework.

Figure 9: Adapted from (Shuck et al., 2017; Luu et al., 2018).



The main constructs were drawn mainly from research done in Vietnam where Vietnamese employees are known to display high collectivism (Luu et al., 2018). This study intends to contribute to diversity literature by conducting this research in a South African context where the culture within companies is an assimilation culture (Warnich, et al., 2015).

Based on the literature above this study intends to better understand the perceived definition of diversity as a separate concept outside of inclusion. The study also intends to investigate the impact of DM in settings, where DM has a role in ensuring equitable representation (Konrad et al., 2016; Olsen & Martins, 2016).

From the literature review what emerges is the need to further explore factors from diversity literature which have a greater influence on engagement (Downey et al., 2015). Quantitative research suggests diversity orientated practices, leadership, enable diversity climate and engender engagement (Downey et al., 2015; Luu et al., 2018, Shuck et al., 2017). However, given that context matters in theory (Nkomo et al., 2019) these signalling factors may or may not influence engagement at a similar degree if at all in different contexts.

Diversity literature has suggested that there are underrepresented ethnic groups due to historic disadvantage (Triana et al., 2015; Nkomo et al., 2019). It was found that that in these contexts there exist issues of discrimination (Triana et al., 2015; Konrad et al., 2016; Olsen & Martins, 2016; Manoharan & Singal 2017; Nkomo et al., 2019), norms (Konrad et al., 2016; Olsen & Martins, 2016; Chang et al., 2019) social roles and unconscious bias (Koenig & Eagly, 2014). With this in mind, the study intended to further explore whether these factors may influence employee engagement by signalling, and to uncover any underlying factors which may have been overlooked or merit further investigation in such context.

Chapter 3: Research Questions and Objectives

The study aimed to explore the overarching question of whether effective diversity management impacts employee engagement.

3.1 Research Objectives

The objectives of the research were to:

- 1 Explore the employee and employer perceptions of diversity within the organisation.
- 2 Explore the impact of diversity orientated leadership, HR Practices and climate on employee engagement.
- 3 Generate insights and recommendations to add to the existing body of knowledge on the subject.

3.2 Research Questions

The overall research question regarded what the impact of DM on employee engagement was. The research questions below indicate what the research sought to explore.

3.3.1 Research Question 1: What is the understanding of diversity and inclusion?

The research question sought to understand what was meant by diversity and inclusion as both are separate terms yet used interrelated. The research question sought to confirm whether the terms described in literature are the terms used in the workplace in relation to diversity and inclusion

3.3.2 Research Question 2: What are the perceptions of the diversity climate in the organisation?

The research question sought to understand as to whether there was a shared

perception of a diversity climate in the organisational settings and whether employees felt they were treated fairly and were able to fit in the organizational setting.

3.3.3 Research Question 3: What are the perceptions of the diversity leadership?

The research question sought to explore whether the leadership in the organisational setting was diversity orientated and whether leaders were perceived as being good at managing diversity.

3.3.4 Research Question 4: What are the perceptions of diversity HR practices within the organisation?

The research question sought to explore whether the HR practices were diversity orientated and whether employee perceived compensation promotion and training as fair across all groups.

3.3.5 Research Question 5: Explore whether diversity initiatives impact employee engagement and whether there were challenges or recommendation

The research question sought to validate the theoretical framework as outlined in chapter 2 and investigate as to whether the organizations diversity initiatives fostered employee engagement amongst Black African employees.

3.3 Conclusion

The research sought to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on employee engagement and diversity management and provide insights for managers, Human Resource (HR) practitioners, and business leaders on the role of DM in fostering employee engagement. This chapter set out the research questions and objectives of the study. The next chapter outlines the research methodology adopted.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

4.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the research design and methodology that was adopted for this study. The chapter discusses the rationale behind the selection of the research design methodology, data collection, and sampling methods which support this study.

Existing literature on employee engagement and DM served as the foundation for this study, the study intended to explore diversity and engagement in professional services organisations in South Africa and to explore how diversity management impacts on employee engagement.

4.2. Research Methodology and Design

The methodology used for the study was qualitative exploratory research, based on interpretivism as a philosophy and using a deductive approach. The research philosophy, research method, research design, data sampling, data analysis, and approach, were supported by the methodological approach. The research was cross-sectional and used semi-structured face-to-face interviews for data collection.

For the purpose of this study qualitative research was justifiable as the study sought to explore DM as it relates to employee engagement from the perspective of lived experiences of the participants in order to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomena and to test and confirm the validity of the theories and studies conducted in different contexts such as in Vietnam, the United States and Canada (Luu et al., 2018, Konrad et al., 2016; Olsen & Martins, 201). Nkomo et al. (2019) posited that context should inform theory. Interviews and observations provided a useful mechanism to explore the phenomena as they lead to the discovery of mechanisms and relationships, within and between individuals and groups which cannot be observed in organisations by quantitative research alone as organisations are context based and formed by society (Garcia & Gluesing 2015).

With the aim of the study being to explore DM and engagement with the intention to gain new insights and assess topics from a different perspective in a different context, literature reviews and qualitative methods were suitable (Saunders & Lewis 2018, p. 115).

Interpretivism is “a philosophy which seeks to understand differences between humans in their role as social actors” (Saunders & Lewis, 2018, p.109). Schweber (2017) highlighted that interpretivism is often more deductive than positivism where the researcher can iteratively move between theory and the empirical evidence, using theory to specify the initial construct and then refining the theoretical model based on the empirical evidence collected.

Interpretivism, as a philosophy was selected as the researcher used the theory as a base to specify the initial constructs, empirical evidence was then gathered by observing and collecting data about the phenomena in specific organisational settings from the perspective of different social actors, this was then tested against the theoretical framework with the intention to test the validity of theory and whether there was merit for revision or extension.

Using Saunders and Lewis (2018, p. 112) as a guideline to conduct exploratory qualitative research, the study consisted of five sequential stages where the researcher:

- Defined the research question from literature and theory
- Operationalised the research questions
- Collected data to answer the research questions
- Analysed the data to determine if it supports the existing theory or warrants its modification
- And lastly confirm or modify the existing theory based on findings

The research was cross-sectional in partial fulfilment of an academic course at the Gordon Institute of Business Science and provides a snapshot at a particular time. Snapshots are common in academic institutions where research projects are undertaken within a limited amount of time (Saunders et al., 2009).

The research used semi-structured face-to-face interviews as the primary mechanism to collect data. Interviews and observations were selected as they provide a means to explore relationships between groups, and between individuals in different organisational settings (Garcia & Gluesing, 2015).

4.3. Population

The sampling population for the research consisted of participants who were employed in consulting services firms in Gauteng, South Africa. The reason for selecting consulting firms was for ease of access for the researcher. The reason for selecting Gauteng was due to the number of large consulting firms such as Deloitte, Accenture, KPMG, and Ernest and Young which are located in Gauteng. The population which was identified as being useful for the study were directors which are also referred to as partners, associate directors, senior managers, managers and consultants, who were currently employed by professional services firms, this was to ensure that the population would be able to share their lived experiences of the environment based on past and present experience. Consultants had to be with the firms for a minimum of three years so as to form part of the population, this was to ensure that the participant would have relevant experience to contribute to the study.

Black (African) directors, were selected as they represent DM beneficiaries and would offer the study deeper insight into the impact of diversity orientated practices and behaviours from the perspective of its intended recipients.

4.4. Unit of Analysis

Based on the research objectives as stated in chapter 3, it was identified that the unit of analysis would be individual Black African employees, directors, and employees who consist of associate directors, senior managers, managers, and consultants. This related specifically to the objective of the study which was to identify whether diversity orientated HR practices, leadership, and the diversity climate did indeed influence engagement.

4.5. Sampling Method and Size

Purposive homogenous sampling, for homogeneity by industry was used for the study. The majority of respondents were management consultants the sample included professionals from different service lines. The number of respondents and detail for each service line are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Description of sample.

Function	Service lines	Position	Number of Respondents
Advisory	Management Consulting	Director	3
Advisory	Management Consulting	Senior Manager	3
Advisory	Management Consulting	Consultant	1
Advisory	Management Consulting	Manager	1
Advisory	Technology Consulting	Associate Director	1
Advisory	Technology Consulting	Senior Manager	1
Advisory/TAX/Audit	Human Resources	Senior Manager	1
Advisory/TAX/Audit	Human Resources	Director	1
Audit	External Audit	Manager	1
Total			13

Participants were limited to directors, senior managers, managers, and consultants in the professional services firms. The criteria for limiting the sample to consultant level as the lowest level were that consultants would have had to be with the firms for a minimum of three years. This criterion allowed the researcher to gather insights from lived experiences.

According to Saunders and Lewis (2018, p. 145), purposive sampling is advantageous as it allows the researcher to use their own judgment in selecting participants. Non-probability sampling as a technique was used as the researcher did not have a full list of the population (Saunders & Lewis 2018).

4.6. Data Collection Tool

Saunders and Lewis (2018) suggested that in-depth interviewing as a form of data collection is useful for exploratory research as it allows for the researcher to ask predetermined questions, but also vary the questions by theme and omit certain questions depending on the interview in order to gain an in-depth understanding. As the research was exploratory and sought to uncover new insight, interviewing was advantageous as it allowed the researcher to probe participants to go into more depth on the topic.

A total of 11 face-to-face and two telephonic interviews were conducted. The in-depth interviews lasted on average 40 minutes, the longest interview lasted 63 minutes and the shortest interview lasted 17 minutes. A majority of the face-to-face interviews were conducted at a convenient place for the participants, most interviews occurred at their head offices. Some participants were involved in projects or at client sites, and in order to accommodate the participants preferences, three interviews were conducted at coffee shops, one interview was conducted at the clients' residences and two interviews were conducted telephonically. Face-to-face interviews were advantageous to the research as they allowed the researcher to observe any emotional cues and body language during the interview.

Saunders et al. (2009) suggested that when conducting exploratory research, academic literature should be reviewed so that themes emerge, the themes should the inform the construction of interview question and follow up questions which will be used by the researcher.

Based on this perspective the research framework as illustrated in chapter 2, figure 2 was constructed to illustrate the main themes for the research. Interview questions were drawn from the literature and then and grouped into themes aligned with the research

questions. This ensured consistency between the research themes and questions which would be asked during the interview, and the research problem as stated in chapter 3. Table 2 presents the mapping of the interview questions aligned to the research questions.

Table 2: Interview questions mapped against research questions.

Research Question from Chapter 3	Interview Question
<p>Research Question 1:</p> <p>What is the understanding of diversity and inclusion?</p>	<p>1.1 What does diversity and inclusion in the organisation mean to you?</p>
<p>Research Question 2:</p> <p>What are the perceptions of the diversity climate in the organisation?</p>	<p>Does your organisation maintain a diversity-friendly environment?</p> <p>2.1 Does your organisation advance people regardless of gender, age, and background?</p> <p>2.2 Do people from diverse backgrounds feel that they fit in and their views are respected?</p>
<p>Research Question 3:</p> <p>What are the perceptions of diversity leadership in the organisation?</p>	<p>What can you tell me about the leadership in your organisation?</p> <p>3.1 Are the managers committed to having a diverse workforce?</p> <p>3.2 Are they good at managing a diverse workforce?</p> <p>3.3 Do they solicit input from employees from various backgrounds and expert groups?</p> <p>3.4 Do they value the opinion of all employees equally?</p>
<p>Research Question 4:</p> <p>What are the perceptions of diversity HR practices within the organisation?</p>	<p>Can you tell me about the HR practices in your organisation?</p> <p>4.1 Does your organisation actively recruit and promote employees from diverse backgrounds?</p>

	<p>4.2 Do Black African employees have to be higher performers than others to get promoted?</p> <p>4.3 Are training practices open to all employees in the organisation?</p> <p>4.4 Are compensation practices fair across all groups?</p> <p>4.5 Are employees aware of the channels to follow when they feel discriminated</p>
<p>Research Question 5:</p> <p>Explore whether diversity impacts employee engagement in the South African professionals' services context.</p>	<p>It has been interesting learning about what your company does with regards to diversity, I am also interested in employee engagement. In your view how do you think diversity impacts engagement?</p> <p>5.1 Do you personally feel engaged in the organization?</p> <p>5.2 Do the company's diversity efforts have any impact on how engaged you feel?</p> <p>5.3 What are some of the aspects that may be inhibiting the impact?</p> <p>5.4 Could you suggest three things that could significantly improve diversity management within your organization??</p>

4.7 Data Gathering Process

Data was gathered using face-to-face semi-structured interviews when the participants were able to accommodate face-to-face interviews, where participants were not able to accommodate face-to-face interviews, telephonic semi-structured interviews were conducted. Prior to taking part in the interview's participants were notified of the research and the purpose of the research via email. The draft email (Appendix 2) explained the objectives and purpose of the research, attached to the email was an interview consent form (Appendix 3) which participants were expected to read and sign for the interview. After agreeing to take part in the interview, a follow-on meeting invite was sent to schedule the interview at a pre-arranged time. Interviews were scheduled at a convenient time for the participant and the researcher posed open-ended questions,

probing participants for additional detail based on their past and present experiences (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

Brayda and Boyce (2014) highlighted the importance of the interviewer's skill in qualitative research as the conversation may often be informal. As such, the researcher must be prepared ahead of time, writing down, and rehearsing how the interview will be opened and how the researcher will transition between the different research question themes. The researcher constructed an interview guide for the research which assisted in making the interviews more systematic by providing the framework for the interviews and grouping the questions into key themes explored by the researcher.

The participant's responses were recorded on an audio recording device (Saunders & Lewis, 2018) then transcribed into Microsoft Word, the recordings, transcription, and notes written, made up the data that was collected for the study. Meeting notes were used by the researcher to capture any nonverbal cues, on how interviewees expressed emotion (Saunders et al., 2009).

4.7.1 Ethical considerations

Prior to collecting data, ethical clearance was obtained from the university. The ethical clearance was obtained based on the research methodology and specified that confidentiality and anonymity would be ensured by anonymising the names of the participants. When conducting the interview, the researcher encouraged participants to speak freely, due to the sensitive nature of the topic, participants were reassured that all names from the research will be anonymised.

The researcher got an impression from the first two interviews that participants appeared apprehensive in discussing the topic in relation to their organisation. Some participants repeatedly stated that the views presented were their own and not that of the organisation, one participant sent the researcher an email to restate that the views expressed were their own and as such they did not want to position their perceptions as directly linked to their current organisation. The researcher then adapted the interview style for subsequent interviews by reassuring the participants that all names would be anonymised, and encouraged the participants to speak freely.

4.7.2 Data gathering challenges

One of the biggest obstacles was gaining access to Black African participants in professional services firms and scheduling time in the participant's diaries to conduct the interview. Time during the interview also became a factor with one of the directors having had scheduled the interview between two other sessions thus limiting the time available for the interview, impacting the quality of this particular interview.

4.7.3 Pilot testing

An initial pilot test was conducted to ensure that questions were not leading, that they were understandable to the participants, and that they provided the required data. The initial research questions were revised and research questions two and three were rephrased to state "does your organisation" instead of "do you maintain" in order to ensure that the participants understood that the question was referring to their currently employed organisation and not their own organisation elsewhere . Interview question one was rephrased to first gain an understanding of the participants understanding of diversity and inclusion, prior to beginning the interview and to assist the researcher in defining the concepts. As the research focused on Black African participants, question 12 was rephrased to "do Black African employees" instead of "do minority groups" this was to ensure that participants understood the particular group the research question was referring to, as minority groups in South Africa could be used to refer to other ethnic groups which are not black but represent a demographic minority.

4.8. Data Analysis

The use of computer-aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) was employed with ATLAS.ti as the software application used to analyse the data, coding was the technique adopted for data analysis. A code is "a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative salient essence capturing and/or evocating attribute for a portion of language-based observation" (Saldana 2009, p.4). Participants responses will be coded then synthesised to group similar codes into categories, the process will be iterative, with new sub-codes and sub-categories emerging as the research refines and moves from the coding and data towards a thematic, conceptual, and theoretical view

(Saldana, 2009).

Brawn and Clarke's (2009) framework presents a useful step by step process for conducting quality data analysis. The phases as stated below were followed for this research in conducting the data analysis.

Table 3: Phases of data analysis.

Phase	Process
1. Familiarising yourself with the data	The researcher read the transcripts and field notes, to identify initial themes prior to beginning with the coding.
2. Generating initial codes	Initial codes were generated per transcripts based on the research questions and answers provided by the respondents, the number of new codes per transcript were recorded in order evaluate saturation.
3. Searching for themes	On the third transcript the researcher paused to consolidate the codes and aggregate data into themes which emerge from the coding and analysis.
4. Reviewing the themes	Once all the transcripts were coded the themes were evaluated to identify potential overlaps and whether the codes in each theme reflected the transcribed data.
5. Defining and naming the themes	During the reviews of the themes and when new themes emerged, new themes were defined and named to reflect the coded data. The themes were finally reviewed at the end of the process and scrutinised (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017).
6. Producing the report	Steps 1 to 5 were produced iteratively, the final step was writing the report and producing an account of how the findings were developed (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules,2017), this account is given in detail in chapter 6.

4.9. Quality Controls – reliability and validity

Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson and Spiers (2002) offered that qualitative research may reclaim reliability and validity by implementing verification strategies and self-correction during the conduct of the inquiry itself. The authors argued that reliability and validity remain integral concepts for attaining scientific rigour in qualitative research, as without rigour, research is worthless and becomes fiction. Scientific rigour was ensured by peer review of the coding and literature as well as triangulation during data collection.

Morse et al. (2002) proposed that in order to achieve reliability and validity in qualitative research, within the enquiry itself the researcher must aim firstly for methodological coherence, which relates to the question matching the method, which then, in turn, matches the data and analytical procedure. Saunders and Lewis (2018) post a similar argument in relation to reliability and validity, and describe reliability and validity as the extent to which the research's "data collection and analysis methods are able to produce consistent findings" (p. 135). In other words, the extent to which the process followed, matches and produces the findings, thus ensuring that the findings are indeed accurate. Reliability has to do with analysis techniques and data collection procedures where validity has to do with the accuracy of the findings (Saunders et al., 2009). The researcher strove for methodological coherence through peer reviews and iterative updates of the methodology prior to beginning the research and by specifying qualifying criteria for the sample to meet prior to conducting and accepting the interview. The codes generated and analysis was peer reviewed, the researcher also investigated literature to explain the emergence of new themes encountered during interviews against the theoretical framework proposed for the research.

4.10 Limitations

Schweber (2017) highlighted that one of the limitations of interpretivism is that knowledge is limited to specific cases. The study had the limitations listed out below:

- This study was limited to organisations providing consulting service which included the big four accounting firms as the finding may not be generalisable to smaller and local professional services.

- This study was cross-sectional and as such was conducted at a point in time and could not provide a representation of the evolving landscape within consulting service firms.
- This study was limited to participants within Gauteng; therefore, the findings may have been impacted by geographical bias.
- This study was limited to Black African participants in professional services firms as the intended beneficiaries of diversity orientated initiatives, therefore the findings could be impacted by observer bias (Saunders et al., 2009) due to ethnicity.
- Research respondents were limited to Black African directors, senior managers, managers, and consultants within professional services, lower levels than consultants were not considered, therefore the findings will not represent the perspectives of such individuals.

Chapter 5: Results

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the qualitative data collected; the data was collected from semi-structured interviews held with different Black African employees who were consultants, managers, senior managers, associate directors, and directors in professional services firms, for ease of reference they will be referred to as the interview participants in this chapter. The results are presented in alignment with the research framework presented in chapter 2, and in accordance with the research questions outlined in chapter 3, the research questions and interview question are outlined in chapter 4, in order to ensure consistency between the research themes, questions and adopted methodology.

5.2 Description of Sample

The sample consisted of 13 participants from different professional services firms with the top four audit and accounting professional services firms in South Africa. Purposive homogenous sampling was used to select the participants to ensure that there was homogeneity by industry, the participants along with the company they represent and level is presented in table 4 below. The participant's names have been anonymised and as such a description of the participant's role and career chronology is not presented, in order to ensure that the participant's anonymity is respected in accordance with the ethical considerations for the study. Each participant's number of years within the industry and level was taken into account when selecting the participants to be a part of the study. The sample consisted of seven female participants and six male participants, of the seven female participants, two were at company director level and the remaining five were at senior manager, manager and consultant level. Of the six male participants two were at company director level and associate director level and the remaining four were at senior manager and manager level.

Table 4: Details of interview participants.

Alias	Gender	Company	Designation
Associate Director 1	M	FIRM 3	Associate director
Employee 1	F	FIRM 1	Consultant
Director 1	F	FIRM 1	Director
Director 2	F	FIRM 1	Director
Director 3	M	FIRM 1	Director
Employee 2	M	FIRM 3	Manager
Employee 3	F	FIRM 3	Manager
Employee 4	F	FIRM 4	Manager
Employee 5	F	FIRM 2	Senior manager
Employee 6	M	FIRM 2	Senior manager
Employee 7	M	FIRM 2	Senior manager
Employee 8	M	FIRM 4	Manager
Employee 9	M	FIRM 1	Senior manager

5.3 Presentation of Results

The section below presents the results as outlined with the research questions and interview questions set out in table 4 of chapter 4. The research questions were designed and sequenced to firstly discuss the three main themes identified from literature which foster diversity and then to link the factors to engagement and to solicit participants for input on whether any of the efforts which may potentially be related to the themes identified from literature as the has a role fostering engagement. The research also sought to confirm whether any of the themes which were identified from the literature as diversity orientated leadership, HR practices, or a diversity climate had a role in fostering engagement particularly among Black African participants who

represent the intended beneficiaries in the South African context of the intended beneficiaries of diversity.

5.4 Results from Research Question 1 (Diversity Climate): What is the understanding of diversity and inclusion?

Research question one dealt with the theme of diversity climate within the organisation, the research questions was setup to firstly identify what the understanding of diversity and inclusion was for the participant as the preface to opening the conversation. The second research questions then delved into the participant's perceptions of the diversity climate within their organisation, particularly probing participants to reflect on whether people from diverse backgrounds could fit in and advance.

The research question dealt with the participants perception of what diversity and inclusion was, as literature suggests that there have been various definitions used in defining what diversity is (Manoharan & Singal, 2017) and that diversity is almost used interchangeably with the term inclusion with the two being interrelated (Roberson et al., 2017). It was important to understand what participant's definition of these two constructs was from their own view.

Most of the participants described the two almost interchangeably, with some of the participants focusing on diversity as surface level differences in the workforce that need to be aligned behind a common goal. This aligns to the DM perspective, but also diversity was described as encompassing non-surface level differences such as the individual culture in the context which forms part of diversity, Employee 4 expressed diversity as being about:

“The spread of different people that needs to achieve a common goal, and it is obviously going to do with a lot of demographics in terms of race, in terms of I think gender as well if I am not mistaken and I think that encompasses most of the differences and what is supposed to be. Obviously, with race you are going to get a lot of things like backgrounds and all the cultures that can belong to all micro races. But in short, I think it is just different people with different backgrounds and their way of life. And ja, culture.” (Employee 4)

On defining inclusion, most of the participants related the concept to being included in the organisations activities, decision making, and being invited to take part in the activities. It was important that the individuals views, opinions, and true self were appreciated. Inclusion was described as what's required to come after diversity in relation to the diversity climate within the organisation. Employee 1 described inclusion by describing it in terms of meaningful participation within the organisation, the employee's thoughts on the construct were:

"I think in terms of inclusion we sometimes say that we're an inclusive workplace or an inclusive employer because we have different types of people working at a particular place, but because you have different and diverse people working at a place it doesn't necessarily make you inclusive. So yes, I have a seat at the table, but am I participating meaningfully, and do I have space to do that? So, I think if there is no space for meaningful participation then we are not inclusive."

(Employee 1)

Employee 9 and Employee 3 shared similar thoughts on the concept particularity in the workplace and described inclusion as relating to affording all individuals similar opportunities:

"Being afforded the same opportunities in the organisation" **(Employee 3)**

Some of the participants referred to diversity inclusion in reference to the climate and environment where people felt safe and were able to bring their unique perspectives, Director 2 putting forward that:

"Diversity and inclusion for me, what I believe it is, and what I think it should be, what epitomises it, would be you know, it doesn't matter what I am – I could be no. 1 or I could be no. 10 – so by definition I am a number, and how you treat me as no.1 is the same as how you treat me as no. 10. It's an ABC anonymous kind of thing. So, the treatment of the individual is not defined by background, gender, culture, or any of that. So, the treatment of an individual is defined by what is the role that you want that person to fulfil within that organisation. So, it's acknowledging the differences and understanding the strengths that will come

from the differences that arise, because people are different, and they come from different backgrounds.... It's an environment that I can come in and work without fear of being... Maligned is the word I am looking for. So that's the biggest thing, you know that when I walk in here, I am not going to be judged by the fact that I am a black woman – and that's what's important.” (Director 2)

Similarly, in using the two terms with inclusion building on diversity Employee 7 expressed what the concepts have to with doing and taking deliberate action in relation to the workplace:

“I think those two concepts brought together for me allude to an embracing, an intentional embracing of difference for the better good. So no. 1 understanding that we are different, and no. 2, intentionally getting out of my own comfort zone and leaving my own biases in order to embrace the difference of another – allowing me to operate, or allowing the organisation that I work for, to operate on a level playing field. So that means for me in the intentionality and celebrating of diversity and the discarding or taking it back to own biases, you are able then to work in true meritocracy in an environment where everybody feels psychologically safe and where everyone feels that their contributions will be met with the same kind of rewards and returns as everyone else, without them feeling that they have to change themselves fundamentally to become a particular fit.” (Employee 7)

5.4.1 Summary of findings

The results from the findings indicate that participants had a clear understanding of diversity and saw inclusion as coming after diversity as a means to ensuring that employees felt safe and their contributions were valued.

5.5 Results from Research Question 2 (Diversity Climate): What are the perceptions of the climate in the organisation?

Interview question 2 delved into the diversity climate within the organisation, the interviews question was set up to include points for the participant to probe whether people from diverse backgrounds felt they could fit in to the organisation and as to whether the organisation advanced people from diverse backgrounds.

In describing diversity climate with the organisation participant's, it was considered how the participants would feel within the organisation expressing, what the environment would look like, in defining the diversity climate Director 1 expressed it as:

“An environment that is conducive and allows people to be comfortable in being themselves, such that you don't have to be two different people, that you behave in a particular manner whether you are at home or outside the work environment, and as soon as you come to the workplace you feel the pressure that you need to behave in a certain way, that you cannot be truly yourself, and your views and behaviours are not being accommodated... In simple terms it means that the workplace is welcoming, and the environment is safe and conducive for everyone to be allowed to be themselves – that they can be a person, you know in their own.” (Director 1)

Most of the directors acknowledge that the climate within their organisations was not yet quite diversity friendly, expressing that although a lot has been done, there was still a lot of work which was required.

“I wouldn't say we are fully a diverse-friendly environment, but certainly a lot of progress has been made over the years.” (Director 1)

Some directors and employees ascribed the current diversity efforts by the organisation as not by intention or design but by necessity with most participants describing it as a tick box exercise driven by legislation. Participants described the climate often relating it to the challenges which exist within the organisation and that was discrimination. Table 5 presents the main constructs found in the interviews from participants

Table 5: Perceptions of the diversity climate.

Construct	Directors	Employees	Totals
Discrimination	3	36	39
Culture	5	13	18
Legislation	6	11	17
Context (Market, External Stakeholders, History)	7	9	16
Norms	4	9	13
Communication	3	7	10
Conflicting expectations	2	4	6
Mind-set	4	2	6
Behaviour: Deep sensitivities to discussing diversity)	1	4	5
Commitment and Implementation	1	4	5
Negative racial sentiments	1	2	3
Identity	1	1	2

From the table, what was clear from most participants was that there was a view that discrimination existed within the environment. Different elements of discriminatory practices were mentioned at different areas throughout the discussion with different participants, the main sub-constructs which were covered under discrimination are presented in table 6 below.

Table 6: Sub-constructs under discrimination.

Sub-constructs - discrimination	Directors	Employees	Total
Skewed remuneration structures	1	7	8
Perception of discrimination in promotion and advancement	1	6	7
Lack of support for staff in need of development	0	6	6
Skewed development support structures	1	5	6
Hierarchy in recognition of staff	0	4	4
Discrimination towards pregnant women	0	4	4
Discrimination unequal treatment of black versus white staff	0	3	3
Forms of discrimination experienced against women in general	0	1	1

The highly ranking constructs which were covered by participants was that there was discrimination in pay and in promotion for black employees, this was related to the third most frequently mentioned topic which was the lack of support in developing black employees. On support Director 3 confirmed that there was a pattern in relation to support and that this would surface during the performance calibration sessions when employees would get assessed, this construct was also linked to the hierarchy and power dynamics which existed:

“There is a pattern, I have seen it, I sit in calibration sessions, I listen to debates, I hear it and I see the results and the results are always there – almost every time – every time, and you have to ask yourself the questions. Our recruitment processes are robust, and we are confident with them, so what happens between recruitment and when they are in the organisation on projects? And again, I think

we let our people down, we don't provide them with the right support to make them succeed." (Director 3)

The participants had varying views on whether there was discrimination regarding compensation, however a majority perceived that black employees were unfavourably paid or were at a lower base compared to their counterparts. One employee shared an experience where there was a promotion which occurred, however their counterpart who was now a level below was still compensated higher.

"The one sitting at assistant manager group, belonging to a different race, says to this other one 'You got promoted but I got the money!' So that type of talk, you then wonder and say ... because I don't know, it's a black box, I don't know what is happening behind the scenes, I don't know, I don't have access to the payroll system. But if you have someone saying that, it may just probably push the idea that probably this guy, even though he is at a lower staff level, could be earning higher than what I am earning while I am at a higher staff level than the guy down there." (Employee 8)

Another participant who was a manager reported acting on the matter Employee 7 and only then was the issue addressed, this then highlights the imbalance as not all managers would report that. Employee 7 related the story of the incident as follows:

"Recently there is another guy, a black guy who I thought was (inaudible) and we were having discussions and just getting to know him, and I realised he was being paid a lot less than he should be paid. So, I just addressed this by sending an email to the leader of that division and I said 'this is the story, what are we doing about it?' And it was addressed because of that... I don't think it would have been naturally addressed. But I don't know other people who have that urgency, especially people from the black culture. So again, these things happen in pockets because I have seen, and I have heard around and I know about it and I know how to manage and work the system." (Employee 7)

The topics and constructs around legislation, conflicting expectation, norms, and behaviours were related to participants fitting in. Most participants felt like they didn't fit

into their organisations, and companies treated diversity as a tick box exercise, where companies undertook creating diversity to comply with government regulation, and the norms which exist, and demands from the market. Participants described norms as black people tending to be at the bottom with one employee stating:

“So I think it’s in almost every company I have worked for – like I said, I have twelve years’ experience now, and almost in every company I have worked for, the higher up the organogram or the org structure you go in any professional company now – any company for that matter – you will find there are less black people, right.” (Employee 8)

Participant then shared views that diversity was driven by the need to comply with Black Economic Empowerment targets:

“So, we need to reach a certain level of BEE status and so on and so forth. So, I think because of that, there is some level of diversity and inclusion just to meet those standards, right?” (Employee 4)

The view of not fitting in was confirmed by one director, as being an issue that most people complained about on the topic of diversity in the organisation:

“So being in my role I know a lot of people are complaining about not fitting in.” (Director 2)

It was also interesting that the demand from the market to see more diversity was also seen as a force that impacts diversity. One director shared an experience where the client expressed explicitly that the team brought to them was not acceptable as it did not contain a single black person and that this was no longer acceptable, the participant shared an example and commented that:

“We were questioned by one of our clients, is that you know ‘what the hell is wrong with you guys, that in 2019 you can put in front of us a proposal with a team that doesn’t even have one single black person? Where the hell are you living?’ So I think that, being challenged, and the demands that government and

government institutions are starting to make, is changing the sentiment – which can only be good.” (Director 2)

Culture emerged as a theme with regards to the climate, fitting in and the advancement of black employees. Participants expressed that culture within these organization settings was euro centric and would present a challenge in terms of motivation and assimilation. Associate Director 1 expressed a view on that the current a view on motivation as follow:

“So, to be honest... and obviously I would still say the African majority are struggling to work within this type of an environment. Obviously because it sort of conflicts with our culture. We probably before compensation we want to be recognised, we want to be included, you know what I mean. I am talking from a Black perspective I am a Black guy so I think we have got a lot more motive... I mean we are far motivated not just financially but we want to be included. I don't think the environment that I am working on now is actually... is doing enough ... from a diversity perspective.” (Associate Director 1)

Similarly, one employee expressed that for black participants, assimilating to the corporate culture which has a western slant in the South African context was a challenge for black employees who get recruited into the organisation.

“Sometimes you can be black and from an urban area but you... and you may be westernised in some ways, but the fact remains that you are a black individual with a particular background, which may not necessarily fit the mould of what is defined as a corporate culture. So you then have to adjust yourself, whether it is in how you speak, your accent, how you socialise – which might be different to where you come from; it may be your activities outside of the work place, just to ensure that you fit in. You find that a lot of the time people have to adjust themselves in all sorts of ways to fit in with the corporate culture – especially in the South African context where again, the majority of people are black and the corporate culture still has that western slant – then you find the majority of people having to adjust themselves to ensure that they fit in.” (Employee 9)

One manager, Employee 4, highlighted the preferences for certain race groups to work with other race groups. This was one of the elements which contributed to black participants not feeling that they can fit in, the employee highlighted that for Black Africans to fit, they need to feel like they are adding value.

“Black Africans to fit in, but fit in as in feel like they are adding value, feel like their word is being taken seriously, feel like they are worthy of taking on the biggest clients, feel like they are not just there just to be a number.” (Employee 4)

The element of culture was mentioned as being quite significant by the majority of participants. One participant highlighted that this was one of the most disruptive forces in professional services, particularly when Black Africans were not able to assimilate quickly to the culture in professional services.

“African black demographic – which is probably in terms of disruptive, in terms of culture, is probably the one that really disrupts the culture because one can find that a lot of the other small minority non-white racial demographics tend to assimilate a lot quicker and a lot easier.” (Employee 7)

What was interesting to the researcher was the role of culture impacting communication, where a director expressed that this plays a role, as black employees do not necessarily communicate as expected and this then impacts them fitting in and performing, this also impacted their white counterparts who do not get the input from their black subordinates:

“So unless [Black African woman’s name] who is a Black African specifically comes to you and says ‘listen I need this exposure, this is what I can do’ then I don’t necessarily think it will happen. And unless [Black African girl name] because of the culture of ubuntu will not necessarily come to you, because she knows you know she doesn’t have that experience and she needs it.” (Director 2)

5.5.1 Summary of the findings

The results from research question, indicated that with regards to the climate a majority of the participants did not perceive the climate as being diversity orientated particularly to Black African employees, the element of assimilating to western culture, and discrimination were prevalent as major challenges in the South African context.

5.6 Results from Research Question 3 (Diversity Leadership): What are the perceptions of diversity leadership in the organisation?

Research question 2 dealt with the leadership aspect of diversity within these organisational settings. The interview question requested participants to reflect as to whether within their current organisation they perceived the leadership to exhibit commitment to diversity and whether, they were good at managing a diverse workforce. As part of managing a diverse workforce and exhibiting commitment to diversity the latter part of the question requested participants to provide a view on whether the leadership solicited and valued input from employees of diverse backgrounds the table below presents a view of the main constructs discussed by participants.

Table 7: Perceptions of leadership orientation to diversity.

Construct	Directors	Employees	Totals
Leadership commitment	4	35	39
Leadership behaviours	9	12	21
Mind-set	2	11	13
Compliance driven	4	8	12
Bias	5	7	12
Leadership composition	4	6	10
Challenges faced by black leaders	4	2	2
Support challenges	2	5	7

Financial focus in the organisations culture	4	2	6
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From the table above, leadership commitment emerged prevalently as an area which had a majority weighting. The majority of the participants expressed concerns that they were not convinced that there was authentic commitment within their organisations to diversity. The demographic composition of those in leadership was an area which most of the participants ascribed to be a challenge with the leadership’s commitment to diversity. Some of the participants, however, expressed that there was improvement in their audit division. Director 9 highlighted that:

“You see more evidence of that particularly in the audit side of the business, where I think advancement of younger people is more prevalent. So, I am fairly satisfied in the organisation and the advancement of young people.” (Director 3)

The director however added that racial diversity was a problem stating that:

“Different backgrounds, yeah... you know, lots of room for improvement there.” (Director 3)

With improvement being there Director 3 described that although there were efforts to transform to be demographically representative of different races, sexes, and ages, the industry was still predominately white male dominated which then creates a challenge for new individuals to be accepted:

“I think things that are inhibiting diversity in the organisation is I think the mind set of certain leaders in the organisation. I will make you an example, I don’t know enough about all of these organisations, but the fact still remains that white male partners – 50 plus, 60 whatever – still run and have the biggest influence in these organisations and not all of them are as committed or take diversity as seriously. And few are even very uncomfortable talking about diversity in the organisation. So, I think shifting mind sets still remains a barrier to achieving diversity and employment equity.” (Director 3)

The views from Director 3 touched on the mind-set, commitment, and composition elements which emerged as dominant constructs in relation to the leadership discussion within firms. Director 3 in relation to the mind-set construct set out that she perceived that there was an element of fear in embracing diversity which was potentially perpetuating amongst the predominantly white leadership which represent a minority in the South African context.

“Yes, you will find sporadic diverse people in leadership - but the great majority of the leaders within the organisation are from a minority, which unfortunately would perpetuate some of the fears that the minorities have. And that’s a reality.”

(Director 3)

Employee 7 similarly commented that from her experience and discussions, there was an element of feeling threatened by diversity amongst white colleagues, who would then avoid the conversation around diversity.

“Whereas I have also heard the other side, where they feel threatened and some people don’t even see why we should still be having these conversations and analysing this because of course we are a very multiracial organisation – by the look of things anyway. Yeah.” **(Employee 7)**

Part of the interview question requested participants to provide a view on soliciting input and whether their input was valued. Most of the employees felt as though their input was solicited but not valued as it was not taken seriously or adopted. Employee 5, Employee 2, Employee 4, and Employee 3 all expressed that they felt that black employees views were not valued, acted on, or not as valued as the views from their white counterparts. Employee 3 expressed that to a certain extent individuals were even apprehensive in providing input, where ego then plays a role:

“That is where you start dealing with egos in terms of, do you know who I am? I’ve got fifteen years’ experience behind me. As soon as you put in the whole race thing it just takes it to another level. To a certain extent people tend to be afraid to voice their opinions or their suggestions so there are a few where you would say, okay this guy is a complete leader... Something that we struggle with,

I don't think it is an issue that we have as a firm, but I mean it is something that I see as a consultant.” (Employee 3)

Employee 4 pointed out that this was a tough question as it insinuated that input was solicited but not valued equally:

“Again, it’s a tough one. Do they ask for input? Yes. So, I think ... I think they ask for input... I think the question is whether they value the input or whether they take the input, whether they use everyone’s input equally – if that makes sense.” (Employee 4)

The participant let out a sigh prior to expressing an opinion on whether input from black employees was valued and described the situation stating that:

“It comes back to valuing people of different backgrounds, right? I think there are certain people that are already put on a pedestal over others, and the input that I get from a) a white person vs a black person, may not be equally valued, because of the fact that we are not valued the same. I think they institute is that certain people have just got more to add.” (Employee 4)

One director expressed again, that communication across the different cultures was a challenge as this was an area where it would disadvantage employees and leaders as the leader would not get input, however they often were appreciative of the input when received

“Ja, so what I was saying is I think they do value it, if it comes to them. And that is exactly what I mean. If it does come to them and it comes to their ears, they are like ‘okay, I never thought of that’ but because it has never been solicited...I am not asking, not because I don’t care, I’m not asking because I think if somebody had something to say to me they will come to me’. You see?” (Director 2)

The latter part of the interviews question was managing a diverse workforce. Most of the participants were in agreement on that progress had been made in terms of the individual companies having clear Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) (Employee 9, Employee 4, Employee 7, Employee 8). However, Employee 3 highlighted that there was still significant work to be done on managing diversity as the KPIs indicate that those targets are not being met, and there are complaints about some of the practices and behaviours that are not addressed.

“I think the most clear thing or the most clear indicator is the fact that we have not met the KPI's, so in my mind the management of the diversity and inclusion, is not there. If I look at the number of complaints – and I don't have the actual stats – but if I look at the number of complaints through forums within the entity, there are a lot of complaints still about the silliest things, about people in a meeting saying and speaking Afrikaans in a meeting. Or to people in Afrikaans.”
(Employee 4)

From this theme, one of the key messages that emerged was that there are inconsistencies between what is said by management and what then ultimately happens, Employee 6 highlighted that there:

“So from a management perspective I think very good at being deliberate at it, but then so somebody can say ‘we're deliberate’ and then all of a sudden you see people who have been promoted, people who are sitting here, actually resigning. Right? Now you take a step back because you haven't created an environment that says, ‘when you're there I am going to give you all the chances you need to actually succeed’. You hear what I am saying?” **(Employee 6)**

Participants then highlighted culture as a sub-construct under leadership and presented managing the different culture as an issue which was a challenge, with participants expressing that the leadership within the organisation was financially focused and not attuned to the need of some of the black employees to be motivated beyond a financial focus, as discussed under the climate theme by Associate Director 1. Some of the participants also highlighted that it as was tough, particularly for black leaders as the

culture presented a challenge where they were now caught between two cultures and groups.

“It’s hard, because as a black leader if you assimilate you are a sell-out because then the black juniors are like ‘Oh wow, so-and-so went and made it and left us behind’. If you try to bring them up then you’re a comrade and you’re radical and you’re a distraction, you know? (laughs). So I think in terms of black leadership it’s difficult to be a black leader in corporate SA trying to fight for diversity and inclusion.” (Director 2)

An interesting theme emerged around managing a diverse workforce and managing diversity was to also factor in the person’s background and community in which they exist, in relation to having an open conversation around diversity, as the background affects whether they will succeed in the environment. Employee 6, expressed that:

“When we come into office you and I look the same, but then one of us might go to a nice suburb when we leave and one of us might have to take three buses when they leave. But we never ask each other about those things because diversity is not me here, it is all of the other things that actually affect me being successful here.” (Employee 6)

5.6.1 Summary of the findings

The results from the research question indicate that the composition of the top leadership was indeed an area which was a signal of the organisations culture and commitment to diversity. Culture emerged an element which contributes to the climate and also as an element which should be factored in regarding how employees are able to fit into the organisation. The employees’ background and culture impacts how they behave and leaders need to be aware of some of the cultural and background norms of employees, if employees are to fit in. Participants expressed that their views were solicited, however not necessarily valued. Participants expressed that the leadership was not quite good at managing a diverse workforce, some expressing that it could be a cultural issue, and some expressing that the KPIs not being met was a clear indication that the organisation was not good at managing for diversity.

5.7 Results from Research Question 4 (Diversity HR practices): What are the perceptions of diversity HR practices within the organisation?

This interview question dealt with soliciting the participant's views regarding the HR practises in the organisation and what they perceived specifically regarding recruitment and whether promotion, compensation, and training was equitable across different racial groups. This question was followed up by a question on whether participants particularly viewed that black people had to work at a higher standard than other performers to get promoted. The latter part of the interview question dealt with if employees knew the channels available to them, for if they felt discriminated against within the workplace. Table 8 below presents the main construct which were discussed.

Table 8: Perception of HR practices.

Construct	Directors	Employees	Totals
Discrimination	4	44	48
Talent gaps and training	10	20	30
Transparency and awareness	3	22	25
Promotion challenges	4	14	18
Emerging approaches	0	7	7

In discussing whether promotion, compensation, and training was equitable and fair, most of the participants were in agreement that training was fair across the spectrum, this came up under the second highest discussed construct in table 8. One director highlighted that this was also up to the individual as there are various digital channels available to undertake training and that this required the employee to upskill themselves in line with their career aspirations.

“I would say training is probably a bit of a balanced type of a concept simply because ... we are living in a digital environment where everybody can actually influence how they train themselves. I still think everybody owns their careers so they should definitely establish a training model for themselves.” (Associate Director 1)

The participants however expressed that there is potentially a gap in diversity training specifically within their organisational settings, one director expressed that:

“In that way I don’t think we are, and I don’t think honestly we are necessarily trained. I think we are trained technically but very little from a way of managing a diverse workforce.” (Director 2)

One employee echoed the sentiment that how employees are treated impacts their engagement, alluding that there is gap to be filled with ensuring self-awareness.

“And I also think that people don’t necessarily have self-awareness in terms of how they treat people and what they say, and that erasure of people and their differences affects the engagement.” (Employee 1)

When discussing recruitment, promotion, and compensation participants had varying views however the issues of discrimination were frequently discussed under the constructs of promotion and compensation. Table 6 discussed under research question 1 presents the main sub-construct that the participant expressed regarding discrimination encountered. What was discussed by participants mostly were the channels to report and discuss discrimination, with most of the participants expressing that the channels were fair and open however they were not sufficient. This was third highest construct discussed in table 8, which is transparency and awareness.

Table 9 presents the main sub-construct related to transparency and awareness. The first, third and fourth construct particularly were related to the role HR improving being open, and accessible. The last construct was around having stronger systems to prevent discrimination.

Table 9: Perception on transparency and awareness.

Sub-Construct	Directors	Employees	Totals
Approach to reinforcing diversity open channels for request training	1	7	8
Lack of transparency in remuneration structures	0	6	6
Importance of open channels of communication to HR	1	2	3
Lack of awareness by staff of the channels available to raise concerns	1	2	3
HR accessible and accessible	0	3	3
Inadequate systems that help reveal areas at risk of discriminatory practises	0	2	2

On the systems in place to report discrimination Director 3 commented that the systems were in place, however there was an element of fear of victimisation, which was something most of the participants agreed on, on whether the systems were adequate Director 3 commented:

“I don’t think so, I don’t think there are sufficient channels for them to follow you know? I think a lot of our employees suffer in silence; you only discover when they are leaving, why. And one kind of theme that comes up in the surveys we do annually is that people don’t feel it is safe to speak up on issues, particularly issues around discrimination.” (Director 3)

The participants expressed varying views on recruitment and promotion. Table 10 highlights the main sub-constructs which emerged from the discussion.

Table 10: Perceptions related to talent gaps.

Sub-construct talent gaps	Directors	Employees	Total
Role of right developmental support and exposure to bridge competency gaps	1	6	7
Confirming the reality that in instances black employees do still tend to need more developmental support than other races	0	6	6
Views on why there is no diversity in management levels perceived shortage of skills	2	3	5
Lack of technical training	3	1	4
High demand for a limited pool of groomed black staff	2	0	2
High demand for black talent results in a premium for pay	1	1	2
White recruitment agencies fail to articulate the value of black senior candidates	0	1	1
Highlighting the need for managers to play a role in recruiting diverse candidates	0	1	1
Black employees are always at the bottom in performance assessments	1	0	1
Possible lack of interested candidates of colour to fill senior levels	0	1	1

Participants expressed that recruitment was not an issue at lower levels, however the issue seemed to come in at recruitment for senior levels and promoting for senior levels particularly with Black African employees. Participants then expressed varying views on the challenges in relation to recruitment with some participants expressing that there was a shortage of skills, one employee attributed this to the historical legacy of the country commenting that:

“I see different groups going up the ranks, but there are also legacy challenges that we have, that I think also play a bigger role in the numbers that are going up the corporate ladder. You have... I think historically it is an accepted fact that we... the blacks were actually behind our white peers in terms of acquiring the skills and so forth.” (Employee 5)

Another employee was unconvinced by the effort being put in by recruiters, commenting that there are potential skills gaps:

“The excuse we are getting from our recruiters is that it is really difficult to find Black African people who meet certain criteria, only because there are so few of them in the market and there are a lot of organisations which are willing to pay a premium for those individuals, which our organisation is not.” (Employee 9)

In confirming the premium that was being paid for black talent, one director commented:

“There is very often a premium that black people get in terms of compensation and I think it is informed by market factors as well, that black people are more in demand, marketable, etc. so I think compensation practices, and some of the policies actually favour black people in the organisation.” (Director 3)

The view that skills and that the pool was smaller, was confirmed by another director who stated, that this gap needs to be addressed by ensuring the advancement and skilling of black employees.

“The pool is smaller, and there is competition for talent in the market space, and everybody is looking for the same skills set from a very small pool. So that is really where we are challenged. So how we go about or go around that, is we realise that we do have to grow our own timber.” (Director 1)

The development and exposure of black talent was the highest ranked sub-construct in table 10, in discussion around development and support, participants expressed varying views around the opportunities afforded to black employees and the challenges of advancement faced by black employees. One employee who has a senior manager role and who was involved in a diversity and transformation role within one of the firms put forward that there was an issue with advancing Black African participants beyond supervisor and manager level as they may not be afforded the same opportunities.

“Largely at a junior level you still find that promotions happen across the diversity spectrum, but once individuals get past manager level I think it becomes a little more tough - and or actually not even manager level, let’s say supervisory level – it becomes a little more tough because of what I referred to earlier, that when people are planned on certain engagements they tend to choose those who they are comfortable with and then these things work against you, because once you go into your performance management conversation and you have no evidence of having met certain competencies, having had certain exposure, it is very difficult to make the case to be promoted.” (Employee 9)

This also touched on the opportunities afforded to black people, where Employee 9, Director 1, Employee 4, and Director 2 alluded to, that within the advisory space of professional services, Black African participants were not afforded the same opportunities to consult on different clients and that this impacted their opportunities for advancement. Employee 3 commented that there was preference which emerged stating that there is:

“Choosing certain individuals over others based on their diverse background, leads to inequality in a sense; the opportunities don’t become equal. Others will be exposed to more complex engagements, more complex work than others.” (Employee 3)

The views on preference for ethnic groups to work with other ethnic groups was echoed by another employee who commented that:

“If you are a white male you would naturally associate with white males, other white males.” (Employee 4)

This view was then ascribed to the perception that black people were not as capable of returning deliverables and this would then be a re-enforcement of the stereotype. One employee then commented that this had been admitted by other white employees within the organisation as an unconscious bias, and that however this bias also existed with black employees as well.

“Um... it goes back to perception as well, right? Firstly, the general perception – and these are the unconscious biases by the way that I know have been admitted to me, by white counterparts – is that you do not feel like a black person can perform. First of all. That’s what you walk into the room with... They admit that is a bias they have... It’s admitted... And at times it prickles to us as well, right? If there are two people here, one black, one white, I will assume before they can even open their mouths, that the white one can actually perform better than the black one.” (Employee 6)

Most of the participants agreed that there was an issue with competency perceptions around Black Africans and that this would then impact their chances of advancing in the organisation. Employee 9, and Employee 7 discussed the issue of having to draft a business case for a black employee as being particularly challenging due to not being provided with opportunities.

“That because they tend to be overlooked for all sorts of reasons when it comes to promotions, and this is not just even at the junior levels, it runs right across the senior levels, where once an individual needs to be promoted he might find that something called a business case – there is no business case for this individual to be promoted. It seems to come up quite a lot in conversation when we are talking about Black African employees, whereas when we are talking about our white counterparts, there is always a business case for the individual to be promoted.” (Employee 9)

The second highest ranked construct was related to the skills gaps. In a very frank and soft-spoken manner one Director 1 acknowledged that there is a competency gap with regards to some of the black employees particularly on the softer aspects, which would then impact their advancement.

“Everyone gets assessed equally around you know, the technical side, if you are performing well and you meet the certain set criteria, yes you will be eligible for being promoted, but if I go to the softer side which is what I referred to earlier on, I think certain groupings, particularly Black African, they do seem to fall short, because of those certain softer aspects which you know, might not be formally assessed, but they do play a big role in how people make decisions about who to promote.” (Director 1)

This issue however was given attention in different firms with some employees commenting that there were measures being taken to address that opportunities were afforded to all to develop; this was the sub-construct of emerging approaches in table 8. Table 11 presents the emerging approaches that came out of the discussion that were being implemented from an HR management perspective.

Table 11: Emerging approaches to managing a diverse workforce.

Sub-construct emerging Approaches	Totals
Centralised allocation of staff to project teams	4
Centralised assessment of performance	3

On performance participants commented that, they had done away with the rating scale and were now using an assessment goal scale to avoid preference being used mainly for promotion.

“So we have done away with that rating scale altogether and we now consider whether the individual has met their goals or not; you know, just to avoid exactly that, and people using that scale to promote those who they wish to advance

within the company whilst denying others opportunities. So yeah, that's recruitment and promotion.” (Employee 9)

Another participant advanced that they had introduced a moderation platform to ensure robust discussion when assessing performance

“We also have a moderation platform where the manager, group, partners and associate directors will then sit and say let's go and assess... performance... and in there you have different managers, there is robust discussion in that platform and to say... So because of that, it is a safety net to try and also get rid of the prejudices and so forth.” (Employee 8)

On ensuring that there was no preference in allocation of work, one employee mentioned that HR had now ensured that the planning of project teams had now been centralised.

“Our planning is now centralised, right? The idea is that you leave very little up to the individual managers and partners in terms of how people are staffed, and there has been recently, we ran a massive exercise analysing our tier one clients to understand what sort of teams we are putting against these clients, and even if you have let's say a black individual or a female individual planned against a particular engagement, what tasks have they been assigned for that engagement? Are they doing administrative, back end type of work or are they doing the actual client engagement work which is required to help them develop and progress within their career?” (Employee 9)

5.7.1 Summary of findings

The results from question 3 clearly indicate that there are issues with HR practices within organisations regarding promoting discrimination and ensuring that there were equal opportunities and support was made available for black participants to advance in the organisation in order to address the skills gap. What was interesting for the researcher was the requirement for technical training on diversity which came up as required for some of the organisations leadership and that there was a competency gap

to be filled with regards to the capabilities of black employees to advance. HR was seen as being diversity friends from a training perspective in terms of training being open to all however, this was not a diversity strong area from the views of partisans due to the challenges of discrimination, advancement, and compensation as described by the participants.

**5.8 Results from Research Question 5 (Diversity and Employee Engagement):
Explore whether diversity initiatives impact employee engagement and whether there were challenges or recommendation**

Research question 4 dealt with the participant’s perception around diversity and engagement. The research question set out to first probe whether the participants felt personally engaged within their organisations and whether the companies’ diversity efforts had an impact on their engagement. The research question then set out to probe participants on what could potentially be inhibiting the impact on the companies’ diversity efforts to foster engagement, then it followed up with a question on what the participants would recommend in order to foster engagement.

Table 12: Engagement by participants.

Engagement	Directors	Employees	Totals
Engaged: No	1	4	5
Engaged: Un-answered	0	1	1
Engaged: Yes	3	4	7

A majority of the participants reported being engaged but what was interesting about the report was that the participants reported varying views on whether the companies’ diversity efforts impacted their engagement. Some participants expressed that the companies diversity efforts did not impact their engagement, but rather that their current position within the organisation required them to be engaged. Whereas some participants highlighted that the companies’ diversity efforts and particularly the leadership had sent them a signal that the company was indeed committed to diversity

and this impacted their engagement. Table 13 below illustrates the main sub-constructs discussed by participants in in fostering engagement.

Table 13: Engagement drivers.

Sub- Construct - Drivers of engagement	Directors	Employees	Totals
Driven by position and inclusion in decision making	3	2	5
Driven By the Leaderships diversity efforts to get it right	2	3	5
Driven by policies and practices put in place	1	1	2
Fostered by mentoring and career progression	0	2	2
Driven by internal motivation	0	1	1

What emerged as the overarching theme was that inclusion in decision making as well as the leaderships diversity efforts were a key factor in fostered engagement with most of the directors reporting it was part of the position and reported:

“Ja, part of me – at my level it is very difficult not to be, because as soon as you are not engaged then that’s it, you’re on your way out – in your mind.” (Director 2)

Another director commented that, it was through his discussion with other leaders in the firms and the vision from the CEO.

“I think I am fortunate enough that I am part of this organisation’s leadership, so I am party to some of the discussions that happen, party to the vision that the ... CEO has around diversity and transformation.” (Director 3)

Whereas one employee commented that it was an inherent function of progression:

“Ja, ja, a lot... so for us, when you start getting into management and upwards at senior level and so forth, it is kind of inherent, it is integrated in your roles and responsibilities.” (Employee 3)

One employee however commented that the leadership diversity efforts were impacting engagement and commented:

“I think I have been made to feel safe by the fact that there is a firm view and stance that leadership has taken, so we are looking to get there, right?” (Employee 7)

Another employee commented that the signals coming from the top that made him feel that:

“The tone from the top. So, it guards against all these types of prejudices, though you may have one or two there... you can see that the commitment of the leadership and the position of the firm is totally against treating people differently within the group. So from that, I really feel valued within the bigger group and I feel engaged in the sense that I am also then ready to volunteer my best wits to the company – not just to do work, the bare minimum and just to be there, you know? So if I see the drive from the firm, that these guys are really thinking that my life really matters, the way they do – and that is how I feel in the firm – and I also feel that I need to give back as much. So, I can say that that link for me is there.” (Employee 8)

The role of HR as safeguarding against discrimination and improving engagement was the second most ranked behind the leadership and inclusion aspect the comments from Director 1 highlight this aspect where Director 1 stated that:

“We do have specific programs that are aimed at promoting diversity within the organisation. We have got the diversity workshops, diversity and inclusion workshops where we create a platform for people to voice out their views, and also allow people from diverse backgrounds to understand each other better

you know, and have those conversations. I think more of those can be done, you know to promote people feeling more engaged. But I do think that they do have an impact, though it is not as much as we would like to.” (Director 1)

What was also of interest was that engagement also came out as an element of personal motivation to progress and in one’s career, one participant pointed out that it was due to his clear objectives.

“I feel very engaged. And also because I have a very clear view of why I am there. So when I went back into consulting I said I wanted to diversify my CV, get exposure – so not just be the finance and accounting guy. The second was to get a little bit more autonomy and you get more autonomy the higher up you go.” (Employee 7)

Employee 7 further commented that the organisations’ diversity efforts did have an impact on his engagement as he was encouraged by the tone at the top. This impacted on his psychological contract due the efforts being made by the firm, but more so it was due to his own clarity around career objectives and what he expects and understands as what is expected.

“Because I think I have been made to feel safe by the fact that there is a firm view and stance that leadership has taken, so we are looking to get there, right.” (Employee 7)

Participants had varying views on what fostered their engagement, however what came out clear was inclusion in decision making and the communication they were getting from the leadership were clear drivers in fostering engagement.

5.8.1 Signals and responses

As the reach dealt with the signalling impact of diversity efforts as outlined in figure 3 in chapter 2 an analysis was done on the participant’s responses on the signals they were receiving from the firms and their responses to the signals. Participants had varying responses to the questions with elements coming out, including the signals

participants sought as opposed to the signals they received. Table 14 highlights the main themes which emerged on the signals.

Table 14: Signals and responses.

Rank	Direction	Construct	Totals
1	Response by employees	Staff reaction to exclusion: leaving the firm	6
2	Response by employees	Staff not feeling included	3
3	Response by employees	Inclusion of the previously disadvantaged in leadership is creating momentum	1
4	Responses by employees	Staff reaction to exclusion: checking out of the psychological contract with the firm	1
1	Signals sent by organisations	Lack of diversity in leadership positions	11
2	Signals sent by organisations	Indications of low commitment to diversity: diversity only at lower levels	7
3	Signals sent by organisations	Indications of low commitment diversity: lack of commitment to diversity hiring practises	6
4	Signals sent by organisations	Indications of low commitment diversity: minority groupings not taken seriously	5
5	Signals sent by organisations	Efforts are being made to progress diversity	5
6	Signals sent by organisations	Snowball effect of exclusion and discrimination on staff development and progression	5

7	Signals sent by organisations	The human tendency to protect one's self than serve the greater good	3
8	Signals sent by organisations	Indications of low commitment diversity: good looking HR policies that are not implemented	2
9	Signals sent by organisations	Indications of low commitment diversity: not committed to ensuring a conducive working environment for all	2
10	Signals sent by organisations	Indications of low commitment diversity: targets set but not met	2
1	Signals sought by staff	Indicators sought by staff to authenticate inclusion: hiring of diverse racial and gender profiles	5
2	Signals sought by staff	Communication: authentic communication as the backbone for inclusion and engagement	4
3	Signals sought by staff	Indicators sought by staff to authenticate inclusion: career progression for black employees	4
4	Signals sought by staff	Indicators sought by staff to authenticate inclusion: developing and promoting women	2
4	Signals sought by staff	Indicators sought by staff to authenticate inclusion: attention to wellbeing of individuals	2
5	Signals sought by staff	Role of transparency in establishing a positive internal climate	1

What emerged as a clear signal to participants was that there was lack of diversity in leadership positions and this was a signal that the company was not committed to diversify. This was expressed by the participants in the view that black employees were

at the bottom and not in leadership which was an indication of lack of commitment, one participant exclaimed, that this was a national problem and not unique to South Africa.

“I think there is still quite a lot to be done within South African organisations and I mean even the clients that I go into I deal with top management at different clients that I go into and I see the same issue. It is always White Afrikaans men that are the leadership of these organisations.” (Employee 5)

What came out as another signal was that there was a snowball effect that was growing in relation to discrimination and exclusion, where racial stereotypes were playing a role, and this was then impacting motivation of employees. This impacted the potential attractiveness of the organisation to black employees, one employee, sounding very disheartened, commented:

“But now I go back to say now if we both come in and we are not experienced, at least give us equal opportunity to get exposed to certain things.... The danger here is after a while a stigma is going to stay that you want to get rid of, that says black people are not technically strong or good enough. The stereotype is going to keep on growing, but what is causing it won't necessarily be under-performance, but really unequal opportunity - lack of exposure to good and complex engagements.” (Employee 3)

Another employee highlighted, on the impact on organisational attractiveness and commented:

“You tend to find that it is much as you can attract the junior staff to your organisation, they tend not to stay, because they are not convinced that there is much of a future for them, when all the others who came before them struggled also to get to the top.” (Employee 9)

In responding to the signal what clearly emerged was that staff would then leave the firm.

“Would honestly say that from a buy in or commitment perspective, we are committed to having the right look, but beyond the look is where the problem is – and this is also where you also find a lot of organisations failing to retain their staff, simply because those diverse opinions, perspectives, backgrounds, are not valued across the board. Only a certain type of person might have a voice within the organisation.” (Employee 2)

Participants highlighted the need to have more people of colour in diverse positions which was linked to the top-ranking positions. The signal that was perceived was the need for authentic leadership, key, to impacting diversity and engagement in the workplace. Employee 4 commented:

“Okay, so if we talk about the signals I think the first thing, I need to feel some sort of sincerity, authenticity, from the tone at the top, right? I need to feel as though they care, that they want to include every single person from whatever background, whatever ethnic group, whatever. Right? So it is that, whatever they have implemented has to feel as though it’s true; it’s not a tick box exercise, it’s not that we need certain things, but it is...” (Employee 4)

Employee 4 highlighted the role of leadership being committed to diversity as a key requirement.

“I mean the first one is they have to live, breath, and believe that we need to be diverse, and want it, so that they can convince me, right” (Employee 4)

Employee 7 highlighted the need for authenticity and to have the correct support structure:

“So, I would say with authenticity, let’s be open and authentic about the discussion, let’s have the discussion more regularly, let’s be authentic about it, right? And I think ... is a very clear plan of support. So, if we are building for the future and we are trying to transfer skills let’s be very clear about what that looks like and how we are going to do it.” (Employee 7)

In order to create a new mind-set Director 3 highlighted the need to change the leadership profile and appoint bold leaders who would be able to effect change. In his description he articulates that there is a need for organisations to be bold when coming to the issue of diversity, however most organisations don't seem to be in a position to make such bold statements due to a potential fear of the impact.

5.8.2 Recommendations and challenges

The latter part of the interview question in closing the research, dealt with what were the barriers and challenges that participants thought of and what were their views on what could be done to foster diversity and engagement in their organisations. Participants reflected on a number of challenges that they had experienced or had encountered. Table 15 illustrates the main views of the barriers and challenges as perceived by the participants prior to closing the interview

Table 15: Perception of challenges and barriers.

Barriers and Challenges	Themes	Sub-constructs	Totals
Challenges	Context	Education system produces different calibre of candidates	2
Challenges	Context	High inequality	1
Challenges	Context	External societal racial sentiments influence the firm	1
Challenges	Context	Enduring challenge in SA firms that most firms struggle with inclusion	1
Challenges	HR	Attracting senior management and levels above to join the organisation	1
Challenges	HR	Retaining talent from managers and above	1
Challenges	HR	Lack of self-awareness in how we engage with each other	1

Barriers	Climate	Barriers to communication stemming from cultural differences	10
Barriers	Climate	Bias: leaders racial bias, immaturity, and ego barriers in leaders	6
Barriers	HR	Exclusion of HR oversight in recruitment processes	1
Barriers	Leadership	Dominant mind-set of leadership: predominantly white male	1
Barriers	Climate	Assimilation culture	1
Barriers	Leadership	Lack of trust in delivery capabilities of black employees	11
Barriers	Leadership	Making assumptions about individuals	3

What came out as a top barrier and challenge was the education system in the country, which respondents felt was not equitable and did not produce the same calibre of employees. Trust in the delivery capabilities of black participants was a challenge as this led to black employees not being advanced in the organisation. Biases on the part of the leadership came out as a challenge with managers preferring to work with member of their own ethnic groups, Some leaders were also seen as not being able to discuss the topic of diversity openly and authentically rather avoided the conversation or responded egotistically which then leads to employees being scared to voice their. Cultural differences were a barrier to effective communication on the a part of both the manager and employee One Director articulating that the leaders don't necessarily solicit input, however they appreciate it, and expect that it will be given, where else on the other side of the spectrum when input is given employees become defensive and not accepting of the input

On the recommendations for how to improve engagement, participants highlighted the role of leadership within the organisation in adopting and fostering diversity. Participants had varying views on what should be done regarding how to improve the signals that organisations should send and what could be done to ensure that diversity and a diversity climate exists from their perspective. One of the central themes which emerged

from the discussion was the role of leadership and the requirement to create structures which strengthen the voice of minority groups. Table 16 provides a picture of the main recommendations to come out of the discussions with the participants.

Table 16: Participant recommendations.

Constructs – Recommendations	Total
Organisations should mirror the national demographic profile in their staffing	8
Paint a future vision of a desired structure	7
Establish internal ownership to drive change	7
Hire senior managers who are people of colour	5
Create structures to strengthen the voice of promoting diversity	5
Strengthen policies and procedures	4
Actively nurture mind-set change founded in practical demonstration of black competence	4
Introduce measures to monitor implementation of diversity goals	3
Improve inclusion: implement practises that ensure that all staff are fairly recognised and rewarded	3
Establish and actively implement policies and procedures to support DM	3
Implementing training on DM	3
Prioritise development of people of colour from disadvantaged backgrounds to bolster their progression	2
Embrace the multiple dimensions of diversity and inclusion	2
Foster right leadership behaviour	1
Hire for improving diversity hire senior managers from different genders	1

Requires bold leadership that will drive change	1
Promote young Black African partners	1
Have a clear plan along with proper support	1

The top-ranking themes were once again, the composition of the leadership with participants arguing that the leadership composition was an issue. What was of interest to the researcher was that participants recommended that leadership needed to paint a vision of a clear future for their firms, drive change, foster the right behaviour, be bold, and that there should be internal ownership of the diversity agenda to drive change from within. The next themes which emerged were related to HR practices and programs, with participants advocating for DM training programs, practises to reduce discrimination and promote equal pay and opportunities, and that black candidates should be promoted to different levels of the organisation specifically at director level.

5.9 Conclusion

The results from the interview questions were presented in this chapter, the results as, advocate for leadership as the strongest factor in signalling commitment to diversity. Other important factors were, the culture within the organisation creating a diversity climate, the national culture was a factor, discrimination was a significant factor in terms of whether the participants felt the climate was diversity friendly or not, HR played an important role in terms of lowering discriminatory practices. However, in the absence of diversity orientated leadership the climate was seen as not fostering diversity and as such was not sending a strong signal to participants.

Chapter 6: Discussion of Results

6.1. Introduction

Chapter five presented the result of the qualitative interviews held with employees and directors in professional services firms. The interviews explored the participant's perceptions regarding the climate, leadership, and HR practices within their organisations, and whether they perceived this as having an impact on their engagement. This chapter reviews the findings and insights obtained in chapter five and compares them against the research and literature as discussed in chapter two and the research questions in chapter 3. The research questions which were explored in relation to diversity were:

- What are the perceptions of the climate in the organisation?
- What are the perceptions of leadership in the organisation?
- What are the perceptions of HR practices with the organisation?
- Does diversity impact employee engagement and what are the challenges and recommendation to improve engagement?

The research results discussed in this chapter contributed to an enhanced understanding of fostering diversity and employee engagement for black employees in the South African context. The results and relevant literature are discussed in the section below.

6.2 Discussion of Results for Research Question 1: (Diversity Climate) What is the understanding of diversity and inclusion?

Research question one sought to first to understand what the participants thought of the construct of diversity and inclusion, before exploring what the participant's perception of the diversity climate within their organisation was. It was necessary to first understand what the participants understood in relation to diversity and inclusion prior to moving on to what participants thought of the diversity climate, whether the HR practices targeted at fostering diversity were effective, and whether a diversity orientated leadership fostered engagement amongst employees.

When discussing the concept of diversity participants discussed it in terms of the differences which existed between different groups referring to both surface level and non-surface level dimension of diversity, this definition used was:

“It is all-encompassing, so you are looking at like race, gender, the person’s sexual orientation, their religion, and certain views that they hold, you know.”
(Employee 1)

This definition relates to the definition by scholars as diversity as perceivable defences at both a primary and secondary level within different groups (Van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007; Lu et al., 2015; Manoharan & Singal 2017).

In discussing inclusion participants discussed the concept in terms of meaningful participation, being included in decision making and in top leadership structures and not being discriminated against on opportunities, some of the views from participants on inclusion were:

“It is about recognising the voices, the potential of everyone in the organisation, acknowledging that everyone in the organisation has got a contribution to make, no matter what their level is in the organisation.” **(Director 3)**

“It means that the workplace is welcoming, and the environment is safe and conducive for everyone to be allowed to be themselves – that they can be a person, you know in their own...” **(Director 1)**

“Inclusion would mean that you involve all those different cultures, different sexes, different points of view, in all decision making and you also include them in top leadership within organisations.” **(Employee 5)**

The definition of the term by participants was related to Downey’s et al. (2015) definition in that being an insider in the organisation and being part of the in-group.

Shore’s et al. (2011) views on inclusion were echoed in in a sentiment by Director 1 in that inclusion entails the person feeling like they belong and that their uniqueness is valued.

“People being allowed to be themselves.” (Director 1)

The participants views on inclusion, being valued in the workplace, and being allowed to be one's true self, is supported by the social identity perspective and views from scholars of diversity climates in that social identity is the part of one's wanting to belong to a particular identity (Hogg et al., 2017) and having a diversity climate allows one to be their true self (Guillaume et al., 2013).

What was also of interest was that participants defined diversity in the workplace in terms of managing variation in the workforce and leveraging that variation for the greater benefit of the organisation (Konrad et al., 2016; Olsen & Martins, 2016; Manoharan & Singal, 2017)

“Diversity is I think about maximising the pool of different people to solve business problems and succeed in the organisation.” (Director 3)

“It is understood that if you think of a hand, not everybody is equal, each of the fingers are actually bringing something different to make it useful.” (Director 1)

From the data collected above, it was clear that participants had an understanding of the terms and provided insight on how these terms can be operationalised in the working environment.

6.3 Discussion of Results for Research Question 2: (Diversity Climate): What are the perceptions of the diversity climate in the organisation?

In formulating a common understanding of the diversity climate, the data that was collected from the interviews, was analysed using frequency counts, and then aggregated where commonalities existed to form emerging constructs in relation to the participant's perception of the diversity climate within their respective organisations. Table 5 in chapter 5 presents the common constructs which emerged. From the frequency count it was clear that discrimination emerged as a strong construct in relation to the diversity climate. Table 6 in chapter 5 outlines the elements that participants expressed in relation to discrimination that they encountered, which when included skewed remuneration, promotion and lack of support for black employees.

“I think we let our people down, we don’t provide them with the right support to make them succeed.” (Director 3)

Due to these perceptions, participants expressed that they did not believe that there was a diversity climate within their organisation. This aligns with the literature on diversity climate, existing when employees perceive they are being treated fairly (Chung et al., 2015).

Participants then expressed varying views on fitting into the organisation where constructs emerged around legislation and the norms and behaviours, where participants expressed that diversity was driven by legislation and that this was a challenge as there was no conclusive buy-in.

“So I think it’s in almost every company I have worked for – like I said, I have twelve years’ experience now, and almost in every company I have worked for, the higher up the organogram or the org structure you go in any professional company now – any company for that matter – you will find there are less black people, right.” (Employee 8)

The views expressed by participants on legislation and norms align to institutional theory perspective from scholars (Chu et al., 2018; Gacilo et al., 2018) who postulate that institutions would be driven to change due to regulative pressure, normative pressure, and mimic pressure, in order to gain legitimacy. Regulative pressure was clearly present in this scenario, however, there was not much normative pressure and mimic pressure. Descriptive norms theory explains this phenomenon in that firms will only comply with norms and hover at specific norm level, particularly when it comes to hiring diverse candidates (Chang et al., 2019). The participants then expressed that there was preference and bias in the settings, although legislative framework was in place, people still preferred to work with similar groups.

“Although we have a policy framework to guide these things, we still have what is generally referred to as unconscious bias, where people tend to provide opportunities to those who they feel most comfortable with, and those maybe are people of an identical gender, or race or age group or ... But I think you

understand when you get that, even when we can have all the policies in the world, but generally if you don't have full buy-in or consequence for you know occasions where these policies are not fully implemented, then yeah, it all falls flat very quickly because it is merely a suggestion. Yeah, I think we still very much struggle with ensuring that people are treated, you know when you say equally.” (Employee 9)

Whilst another participant expressed that legislation also came with negative consequences as this then took away from the credibility of participants with one participant explaining:

“When these diverse candidates get here, they navigate the thing of ‘did you get here on merit or are you a BEE candidate that we just had to hire because we want to become level 1 compliant.’” (Employee 1)

The participant then further expressed that the organisation was not as forgiving to black candidates expressing that:

“And if you are black and you make a mistake, we don't forgive you. And it keeps getting brought up in your performance reviews and your discussion. It becomes quite a talk – ‘Oh you know that one is lazy, that one is not dedicated’. Sometimes people have bad days.” (Employee 1)

The views expressed by participants were a reflection of the literature in that the shared perception of a diversity climate were based on both the “formal and informal” organisation policies and procedures and the “behaviours” which were “rewarded” and “supported” (Luu et al., 2018, p. 305; Chung et al., 2015, p. 1499). The element of unfair treatment of black people is confirmed by the relational demography theory and studies by Lukyste et al. (2013) as cited in Guillaume et al. (2013), in that black people often receive harsher punishment and are often not afforded the same opportunities as their white counterparts. What was interesting for the researcher was that legislation had negative effects as this took away from the credibility of diverse employees. Leslie (2019) highlighted that diversity initiatives may have unintended consequences, in that they may backfire from their intended outcome. This exemplifies the challenge

expressed described by Koenig and Eagly (2014) in that societal stereo types form based on the role fulfilled by a social group.

The issue of division and comparison where preference is given is explained by self-categorisation theory and social identity theory. Social identity theory in that people would want to associate with particular group and place “value and emotional significance” (Tafjel, 1982, p. 24) to belonging to a group. Social Categorization in that in that there would exist in-groups and out-groups, based on the attributes of the members (Turner, 1982). From this perspective people would then wasn’t to work with similar people who are part of their in-group (Shemla et al., 2016;)

The perception of black employees being less competent than their white counterparts is explained by social role theory. Here there exists in group and out group scenario, where stereotypes form based on how a certain group, racial group, is represented in a profession. This then generates certain assumptions as to which group is capable of fulfilling a particular role, in this instance black people might not be seen of fulfilling leadership roles as they are not associate or represented in those roles in the profession (Koenig & Eagly, 2014; Ng et al., 2016)

What was of interest to the researcher was that there was a gap in respect to the competencies of black people and that this would then influence their advancement as certain softer elements would come up when assessing performance and that this would impact their chances of being promoted. This view was consistent with literature from scholars such as Olsen and Martins (2016) who argued that the social context in which an individual is brought up will influence how they will behave in the workplace. One participant pointed out that the quality of education received by black individuals in relation to the social context was of less quality than their white counterparts at times and another director confirmed that there was a gap to be filled to get everyone on the same level.

“Because if you look at the black child, in most cases they would probably go to a university that the parents could afford – which is not so top of the range in terms of the quality of the education. So that will also filter through when you get a graduate coming into the workspace, the type of skills that they will have

acquired, may not be as the same level as their peers who went to an A type of university.” (Employee 8)

These were the themes which emerged with a significant frequency as highlighted in table 14 in chapter 5 as barriers and challenges. Understanding background and culture were themes which were related in the data collected from the interviews with participants. Culture was a highly ranked construct as it related to the organisational culture and culture of black participants as described by one director as Ubuntu.

“That’s the black thinking, because of the culture of ubuntu. From an ubuntu perspective you now when your neighbour is in need. If there is a death, what do you do? You go. You don’t have to be told that there’s a death, you go... On the other hand, if there is a death, it’s almost like you come by invitation. Nobody comes by invitation in black funerals, you come! Because there is a death.” (Director 2)

Where the culture within the professional services was ascribed by participants as having a western slant

“You know it’s a corporate culture, but it tends to very much have a western slant.” (Employee 9)

Where else another participant saw it as having and having an emphasis on the bottom line on not the employee.

“I mean half the professional services firms that we see running on the ground they are probably more global companies that are managed from the Euro-centric perspective so they are actually rather keen to get an accreditation, which obviously influences the bottom line which is the performance and not necessarily around the wellness of the employee.” (Associate Director 1)

Participants described that this would present a challenge for black employees in assimilating to the culture and that this was also be a challenge for managers as they expected certain behaviours, one director pointed out:

“Yes. So white people will give you their opinion whether you have solicited it or not and black people won’t. ... I mean I know I’m generalising, but it’s from a black culture ... I’m just saying... So you will get the people from one background that are easy to voice their opinions, but then it is not necessarily the same with the other background, you know So if... and if you are coming from a background where you don’t necessarily go and solicit opinion, it just comes to you, then you will never solicit, because you will expect if there is injustice or something, somebody’s going to make a whole song and dance about.” (Director 2)

The importance of understanding the community in which a business operates is highlighted in the literature by (Olsen & Martins, 2016) who support that individual racial ethnic background will interact with the organisation acculturation strategy and determine the signal which the individual receives around diversity in the organisation. Therefore, black people who have not had exposure to white cultures will be less comfortable with white people, with the same going for white people who have not been around black people. Guillaume et al. (2013) puts forward that for diversity to be successful organisations must foster an integration culture. Olsen and Martins (2016) supported this statement and add on that for inclusive work environments to exist, employees should be influenced by the companies’ culture.

Participants thus described the environment as non-inclusive where they felt like they did not fit in, their views were solicited however they were not valued, from a cultural perspective, assimilating to western culture was a challenge (Guillaume et al., 2013) In addressing the cultural integration challenge advances that within organisations a diversity climate enables people to be their true selves and enables different employees to identify with the organisation.

6.4 Discussion of Results for Research Question 3: (Diversity Leadership) What are the perceptions of diversity leadership in the organisation?

Research question two sought to explore the perception of whether participants perceived the organisations leadership as being diversity orientated. Literature supports that leaders are the role models of the organisation and set social cues for the organisation (Avery, 2011; Luu et al., 2018). Therefore, diversity orientated leadership which supports diversity at a behavioural and attitude level, leads by example and values employees “contributions, notwithstanding, their differences” (Luu et al. 2018, p. 95) this then sends a signal to employees which in turn fosters their engagement. Guillaume et al. (2013) offer that the composition of the leadership profile, plays a role in fostering a diversity climate and sends a signal to employees of the organisations’ commitment to diversity.

The data from the participants in relation to the theme of leadership is presented in table 7 in chapter 5. What emerged from the data was that there were inconsistencies between what was said and what was done, with participants indicating that there was a lack of commitment from leadership in terms of fostering diversity. One participant explained:

“They talk the talk, let me put it that way, they talk the talk. In terms of for example hiring people of colour; in terms of involving people of colour and different backgrounds in strategic decisions, I don’t necessarily see that.” (Employee 5)

When using literature from (Luu et al., 2018; Avery, 2011) to evaluate leaderships commitment to diversity from both a behavioural and attitude perspective, evidence would suggest that this was an element the participants viewed as lacking. One director exclaimed:

“So, I think there is a little bit of commitment, there is a ‘ra, ra, let’s go, we understand why we need a diverse workforce’ – however, are they good at managing it? I don’t think so, because I still want somebody to behave the same way that I behave.” (Director 3)

Another participant echoed a similar sentiment and demonstrated the leadership’s impact on modelling behaviours to subordinates.

“People’s opinions are listened to, but I don’t necessarily know if they are processed, internalised, accepted, and acted upon.” (Employee 1)

The second highest construct in relation to leadership commitment was of having diversity at leadership position with the majority of participants explaining that most of the organisation was predominantly white with diversity only at lower levels. Descriptive norms theory (Chang et al., 2019) as discussed in chapter 2, confirms that organisation will hover at a certain level when it comes to hiring diversity candidates.

What was of interest from a leadership perspective was the composition of the top leadership in influencing the culture and behaviours in the organisation. Most of the participants pointed out that the leadership was composed by the predominately homogenous group. Scholars (Guillaume et al., 2013; Li et al., 2018) argued that the composition of the top management team influences the decisions and culture within the organisation, thus if the top-level team is predominantly homogenous, the culture within the organisation will reflect the preference of the homogenous group, this was a sentiment expressed by one director who pointed out that due to predominantly white and homogeneous leadership, there was an issue in getting authentic buy in to diversity.

“Fifty plus, 60 whatever – still run and have the biggest influence in these organisations and not all of them are as committed or take diversity as seriously. And few are even very uncomfortable talking about diversity in the organisation. So, I think shifting mindsets still remains a barrier to achieving diversity and employment equity.” (Director 3)

Some employees, however, explained that there was progress in terms of leadership commitment. Some organisations had black leadership at senior chief executive level and had communicated that there would be change to foster DM in favour of more demographic representation at leadership level. From a behavioural perspective there were accounts where leaders were demonstrating positive behaviours and understood the business imperative, one director explained:

“Ja, in some departments. It is purely because people have matured a lot more and people are a lot more... I wouldn’t say... they understand the business imperative of actually getting it right. And maybe they are younger, because I find

it's easier with younger population, where they would be more willing to engage and understand why this has to be done.” (Director 2)

The assimilation culture of the organisations also presented a challenge for black leaders. One employee explained the problem as having to juggle between meeting the expectation of black and white within the organisation.

“It's hard, because as a black leader if you assimilate you are a sell-out because then the black juniors are like ‘Oh wow, so-and-so went and made it and left us behind’. If you try to bring them up then you're a comrade and you're radical and you're a distraction, you know? (laughs). So I think in terms of black leadership it's difficult to be a black leader in corporate SA trying to fight for diversity and inclusion.” (Employee 1)

Li et al. (2018) pointed out that dissimilarities in teams often lead to the possession of finite resources by one group. Thus the utilisation of organisational resources is dependent on the support from the dominant group. Faultline theory (Mitchell & Boyle, 2015; Van Peteghem et al., 2018) supports this in that when there are strong faultlines or visible differences in a team there is likely be less cohesion. The leadership composition and power of the group were clearly dynamics which were at play regarding the commitment to diversity and the culture within the organisation. The current predominantly white group was perceived as not being committed to diversity and as such it was not taken seriously in the organisation. The culture in the organisation was also reflective of this attitude with participants putting forward that their views were not taken seriously. There were, however, shifts in behaviour at some level with participants pointing out that there was an inclination to embrace diversity amongst younger leaders in different departments. The assimilation culture of the organisation with having to manage conflicting expectations as highlighted by Employee 1 supports the view from scholars (Warnich et al., 2015; Olsen & Martins, 2016) that an assimilation culture may not be favourable to black employees, and hence there is a need for an integration culture.

6.5 Discussion of Results for Research Question 4 (Diversity HR Practices): What are the perceptions of diversity HR practices within the organisation?

Research question three sought to explore what were the participants perceptions regarding the HR practices within their organisation as the literature suggests that organisations who pay attention to ensuring that there is equal pay, training, and promotion will send a signal to employees that the organisation cares for them and this will foster employees engagement (Luu et al., 2018; Guillaume et al., 2013).

What emerged from the interviews with participants was that technical training was fair and equitable to all. However, there was a gap in informal training and support, including mentoring for black participants, which then would impact their career progression. One director highlighted that giving black employees feedback was an issue:

“If I can’t take criticism from my fellow African and accept and genuinely believe that they have my best interests at heart, then I become a barrier to myself.”
(Director 2)

Other directors highlighted that there was a gap in support for career advancement, where another highlighted that there was diversity training to be done on how to manage diversity. Providing training as part of diversity practices is supported in the literature by scholars Guillaume et al. (2013) and Luu et al. (2018). The authors(Guillaume et al., 2013; Luu et al., 2018.) advocate both for formal and informal training to support diverse candidates, saying that they are necessary if diversity orientated initiatives are to be successful.

Participants then pointed out that there was discrimination in terms of promotion, pay, and career advancement opportunities afforded to black participants and that female employees were discriminated against. One participant reported that a female colleague was put on a performance improvement plan for falling pregnant and never got confirmation as to why the employee was placed on this plan.

“I had a lady coming into a project that I was running. She was coming from another team and one of the managers just basically mentioned to me that... oh they apologised actually saying, sorry for giving you this person it was the last person that we had. I am like, what do you mean? They were like, no this person is actually under the performance improvement process. I am like, but how do you mention stuff like this at this point in time? What is going to happen to this person? Why are you apologising? If she is on performance improvement then I want you to send me an email highlighting exactly where her improvement areas are. Till today I never got the email. So I was looking at the whole race thing. Whilst discussing it with some other professional friends of mine who are also in the professional space, quite up high in the ladder as well, and they actually brought another spin to the whole thing where it is like it is even harder for females. I didn't look at it that way, but when they mentioned it I was like okay now this made it a little bit more interesting. Only to find that this lady in question had actually put in for maternity leave before that. So automatically she was put on PIP because she was pregnant.” (Employee 2)

On compensation, participants raised that this was not transparent however a majority of employees raised that black employees were paid less or were generally at much lower base than compared to their white counterparts. One employee reported that another employee was promoted to manager, however, a supervisor in the same team was paid more. Compensation, however, for candidates for senior positions was viewed by some of the participants as being significantly higher as there was a shortage of highly skilled black talent to fill senior positions. One director pointed out that candidates would often come in at a premium due to the shortage.

Participants then raised that channels to report discrimination existed, however they were not effective. One participant reported that an email account was provided for employees to report discrimination however this was archaic.

“I think our methods have been rather archaic, where you will find within some business units there is a little box, a physical box, and people are expected to submit whether it is a grievance” (Employee 9)

Another participant made an example of a black employee having to report discrimination to a white employee and then being told that it was not necessarily discrimination

“You know why they are saying ‘why are you people like this’ – and you know that that is racist. But now you are like I am highly offended and my feelings are hurt or whatever, and I am feeling victimised, and you go and you report it to HR and the HR person is white and they are like ‘no but that is not racist.’” (Employee 1).

From both employees and directors there was a perception that employees suffered in silence due to fear of victimisation and not wanting to rock the boat.

“So at the same time that I am questioning it I am asking myself, what am I doing about it? Basically I’m part of the many that just sits and doesn’t want to rock the boat I suppose.” (Employee 5)

Participants, however, reported positively that there were efforts being made within organisations to provide platforms to discuss diversity openly, however another participant emphasised that these end up falling flat due to lack of consequence or buy in.

“And so we have these policies and you know, procedures and practices in place, to ensure that particularly people in positions and of authority, people who need to make decisions about other people’s careers, do so fairly. But I think you understand when you get that, even when we can have all the policies in the world, but generally if you don’t have full buy in or consequence for you know occasions where these policies are not fully implemented, then yeah, it all falls flat very quickly because it is merely a suggestion”. (Employee 9)

The participant’s views regarding HR practices confirmed the views by (Guillaume et al., 2013) that for diversity orientated HR initiatives to be successful at signalling to employees they must go beyond meeting legal requirements and should be aimed at reshaping the culture within the organisation and be part of the wider organisation strategy. One director, however, commented that he was encouraged by the vision of

the CEO and other directors, reporting being engaged due to their position. Similarly, managers reported being engaged due to their position and career advancement, this confirms the proposition by Downey et al. (2015) that those with insider access to organisation level decision making are being more amenable to the positive effects of diversity management initiatives. Using the proposition from (Guillaume et al., 2013; Luu et al., 2018) that organisational practices that seek to eliminate discrimination and promote equality in pay, promotion, training, and provide support for candidates from diverse backgrounds will engender engagement, the findings from the participant's interviews confirm that if the HR practices do not promote equal pay and promotion, employees will not interpret the organization as caring for them and this will result in employee engagement not improving for employees from diverse backgrounds.

The interview data collected from participants was clear in that although there were efforts in terms of eliminating discrimination and providing support, organisations were still viewed as discriminatory in pay, advancement towards black employees and towards woman and as such these practices were not effective and so did not send a signal to employees that the organisation cares for them.

Participants expressed that leadership support was required if the practices were to be successful. This supports the view from scholars (Guillaume et al., 2013; Konrad et al., 2016; Nkomo et al., 2019) that DM entails both a diversity orientated leadership and supportive HR practices as well as organisations needing to do more than what is required by law in order to reap the benefits of diversity.

6.6 Discussion of Results for Research Question 5: (Diversity and Employee Engagement) Explore whether diversity initiatives impact employee engagement and whether there were challenges or recommendation

Research question four sought to gain an understanding of whether the participants were engaged and if their engagement was fostered by any of the themes constructed from the theories and literature mentioned, and the research framework constructed in chapter two. The research interview questions then focused on obtaining what the challenges were with regards to diversity efforts, fostering engagement, and what

participant's recommended in order to improve diversity and fostering engagement within their organisational settings.

The results of the findings with employees being engaged or not engaged is presented in table 11 in chapter 6. The qualitative data indicated that more employees were engaged than not, the next level of analysis performed on the data was to investigate what the perceived drivers of engagement from the participants perspective, the results of the analysis were presented in table 12 in Chapter 6. Employees who were engaged, reported being engaged as an outcome of the position they occupy and not necessarily as a result of the companies diversity efforts. This supports Kahn's (1990) view on engagement as people being physically, and emotionally present in a preferred task. It is also supported by scholars, Macey and Schneider (2008), Macey et al. (2009) and Eldor and Vigoda-Gadot (2017) as a state of mind that an employee reaches where they are absorbed and dedicated to achieving a particular goal, contribute extra effort, and display taking personal achievement in achieving that goal.

Using the three dimensions from Shuck et al. (2017) that engagement consisted of being cognitively, emotionally and behaviourally engaged in terms of acting, thinking, and feeling, the participants engagement would be related to the dimensions of acting and thinking but not feeling. In the responses to the signals, what emerged was that employees would respond to signals that showed no commitment to diversity by leaving the firms or they would just not feel included. This was supported by Warnich et al. (2015) who posited that previously disadvantaged members would end up leaving most companies due to the culture within the organisation, as they would struggle to succeed.

The view of being engaged due to a role is supported in diversity literature by Downey et al. (2015) that those with insider access are more amenable to the positive outcomes of diversity, participants who are managers or directors get closer access to the top leadership within the organisation and due to the role they have access in terms of the decision and plans from management. One employee reported however that his engagement was as a result of his career aspirations and opportunities and he perceived himself to advance within the organisation to meet those aspirations. This is supported by literature from Young et al. (2018) that a proactive personality, were strong predictors of engagement.

6.6.1 Discussion of results on signals

The signals sent to employees and the responses were then analysed using the research framework outlined in figure 2 in chapter 2. The results from the interview data confirmed that was relationship between diversity leadership and HR Practices as signals to employees as to whether the organisation cared for them (Guillaume et al., 2013; Downey et al., 2015; Luu et al., 2018)

What emerged from the qualitative interviews was that the composition of the top leadership was a strong signal to participants of the organisation's commitment to diversity. This was ranked as the first construct in table 12 in chapter 6 as most mentioned by the participants. Literature from Guillaume et al. (2013) supported the finding that the composition of the top-level team is a signal to employees of the organisations commitment to diversity. The second and third construct were related to the first in that within the organisation there was diversity at lower levels but no commitment to diversity hiring practices and thus there was no diversity at senior levels.

The fourth construct in table 12 in chapter 6 was related to the effect of participants perceiving the organisation as non-inclusive and not displaying any commitment to change and advancing black employees. Split on the same level was the perceptions from participants that there was progress being made within their organisations, with participants indicating that the communication they were receiving from leadership at senior executive level was encouraging. One participant highlighted that the coaching and mentoring he had received earlier in his career had also played a role in his adjustment to the profession.

“So back in the day in 2011 we had a meeting with a partner because we had an employee engagement survey, and they actually do it by race, and the black employees weren't very engaged. We had the lowest, we scored the lowest and this guy called us into a room and we discussed these things. And in there he started bringing out 'guys, this thing is so old that it is a game... once you start to understand that, then you can pull as many strings.” (Employee 6)

The next construct revealed that there were positive signals that participants received in the organisation, with participants indicating that there was progress being made in

their organisations with diversity in regards to getting younger leaders into the leadership structures and on embracing certain elements of diversity, with some participants indicating that this was in audit but not in the advisory division of the business. On the remaining constructs, participants expressed views that the current system was not adequate, that they perceived there to be discrimination in the workplace and that diversity targets were set but not met and this was an indication that the organisation was not committed to diversity. The results support literature from Guillaume et al. (2013) in that for diversity initiatives to be successful they must go beyond meeting legal requirements and seek to reshape the culture within the organization.

The signals which participants sought were aligned to literature on that employee's perceived organisations to embracing diversity when organisations had a diverse top-level leadership, progressed, and developed employees fairly and had HR practices that ensured employees were treated fairly and equally (Guillaume et al., 2013). What was interesting in this context was that literature posits that HR can serve as a substitute for leadership in creating a diversity climate (Luu et al., 2018) however, in this context participants did not view HR as sending a strong signal and so leadership emerged more dominantly.

What also emerged regarding the signals was that employees sought authentic communication, transparency, and advancements to feel cared for. Communication was not specially catered for in the interview question, however, this is related to literature in that a diversity is one that fosters trust and inclusion (Downey et al., 2015).

6.6.2 Discussion of results on barriers and challenges

Post analysing the signals, the researcher then analysed the interview data for what the participant's viewed as the main barriers and challenges with regards to diversity and inclusion in the South African context and what were the participant's recommendations.

The results from the analysis revealed that lack of trust in the delivery capabilities of black people along with communication challenges stemming from the integration of multiple cultural backgrounds, bias, and making assumptions about black people were strong constructs that the participants viewed as challenges to promoting diversity. This

was consistent with literature on the challenges faced by black employees in that they were not perceived as capable of fulfilling certain roles, as per the social role theory (Koenig & Eagly, 2014) lastly that their assimilation culture posed a challenge for black people as per Warnich et al. (2015) and Olsen and Martins (2016).

What also emerged as challenge was that the education systems was viewed as a talent gap in organisation because different individuals received different types of education and hence there was a gap to fill in ensuring that diverse candidates would be at the same level as their peers. Olsen and Martins (2016) supported that the background of an individual influences the type of education they receive during their development stages and that this then plays a role later in life in terms of their interactions in the workplace.

6.6.3 Discussion on recommendations

The recommendations on actions that should be taken were consistent with theory in that participants expressed that the demographic profile of the leadership at different structures should mirror the demographics of the country, this was related to the country being made up of predominantly black citizens however that was not reflected in the leadership structures of many organisations, this is supported by literature and theory on the Top Management Team by scholars (Li et al., 2018) in that the leaders influence the culture and control resources and that the composition of the team is a signal of commitment to diversity (Guillaume et al., 2013).

Participants' recommendations were then related to the HR practices within the organisation. Participants advocated for the hiring and promotion of black leaders, strengthening HR policies and procedures to ensure that all employees were treated equally and given the same opportunities, this is related to the HR themes from literature where diversity scholars advocate that organisational commitment to diversity entails, promoting equal pay and placing measures in place to lessen discrimination (Guillaume et al., 2013, Luu et al., 2018).

The last set of sub-contracts related to transforming the organisation to embrace diversity with participants calling for bold leadership, a clear plan, strengthening the

voice of minorities, and fostering the right leadership behaviour. This related to creating a diversity climate in the organisation, this was related to Kotter (1995) who advances that for any cultural transformation change to be effective, there should be communication and buy-in from leadership if the effort is to succeed.

6.7 Summary of Findings

Table 17 presents a summary of the overall research findings.

Table 17: Summary of findings.

Summary of research results	
Results from research question 1: diversity and Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity and Inclusion were viewed as complementary with diversity viewed as differences and inclusion viewed as acknowledging and valuing the differences
Results from research question 2: diversity climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A majority of the participants did not perceive the climate as being diversity orientated particularly to Black African employees. • Assimilating to western culture and discrimination were prevalent as major challenges in the South African context. • Contextual factors impact the perception of black employees. • Participants perceived that there was bias and preference. • Diversity was perceived as being compliance-driven and fostered by government requirements. • Lack of trust in the delivery capabilities of black employees. • Skills that needed to be addressed with regards to black employees.
Results from research question 3: leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The composition of top management was an area which was a signal of the organisations commitment to diversity. • Black employees viewed themselves as not being included as their views were not valued.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership viewed as not being good at managing a diverse workforce • Communication from leadership was valued. • Assimilation to cultures was a challenge for both the black leadership and white leadership in managing a diverse workforce as there were now conflicting expectations.
Results from research question 4: HR practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is an issue with HR practices within organisation with regard to preventing discrimination the areas participants highlighted as requiring support were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equal opportunities and support were made available for the black employee to advance in the organisation in order to address the skills gap • Compensation was not equitable • Technical training on diversity which came up as required for some of the organisations leadership • Channels to report discrimination were not adequate
Results from research question 5: diversity and engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A majority of participants were engaged • The engagement was driven by position and insider access • Leadership composition was sending a signal that there was lack of commitment to diversity • Leadership communication on of the future vision was signalling to participants that the organisation was committed to diversity • HR practices were not viewed as a strong signal to participants as participants viewed the current systems as inadequate in reducing discrimination and promoting equality. Leadership support was seen as lacking in order to ensure that HR practices were successful.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

Chapter 6 discussed the results of the qualitative data collected, with the intention of confirming whether the results were consistent with the theory and literature and whether the results were consistent with the research objectives. This chapter presents the main findings of the research along with a revised model which sets out how organisations can engender engagement amongst employees by valuing diversity, the model is used as the basis for recommendations to managers, change experts, and leaders wishing to transform organisations to value diversity as a means of improving engagement for black employees.

7.2 Research Background

Given that literature offers that organisations who value diversity can benefit from improved employee engagement the research sought to explore what avenues and strategies were available in South African for professional services firms to benefit from diversity and engender employee engagement. From the data gathered from Stats SA, Black African participants were identified as the demographic which struggled to advance within companies in South African and hence the study focused on this demographic.

The research was exploratory in nature. Current literature was reviewed on what organisations do in order to engender engagement through initiatives targeted at promoting diversity. Themes from literature were then used to construct the research frameworks as outlined in chapter 2. What emerged from literature was that, diversity orientated leadership, HR practices, and shared perception of a diversity climate foster engagement by signalling to employees that the company cares for them. The research framework was revised with the emergence of a new theme from literature that context influences theory, socio ethnic background, and regulation where then factored in as significant contextual factors which would play a role in the relationship between the organisation and employees, and thus influence the signals and perception of employees. What emerged from literature was that there as a need to define diversity

and inclusion as the terms are used interchangeably, the research amended the interview question to open with the definition as this would then form a solid base for the discussion. Data was then collected and analysed against the research objectives and literature the section below highlights the main findings.

7.3 Principal Findings

7.3.1 Research Question 1: Defining Diversity and Inclusion

There was consistency in the definition of diversity and inclusion with participants defining diversity as perceivable differences and inclusion as embracing the uniqueness and treating the individual as an insider and including the individual in decision making. What was of interest was that participants used the terms in sequence and described diversity as coming before inclusion, in that firstly differences needed to be acknowledged and that secondly they should be embraced within the organisation and all employees be given the opportunity to participate.

7.3.2 Research Question 2: What are the perceptions of diversity leadership in the organisation?

The climate within the settings was not a diversity climate for black employees as they described diversity as being driven by regulation and the need to comply, and employees did not perceive that they were being treated fairly as there was bias and discrimination against black employees when coming to pay, promotion, and opportunities, there was however consensus that training was fair and equitable across all races.

Contextual factors influence the perceptions of employees towards perceptions of being treated fairly with participants voicing out that the individuals background influences how they will interact in the organisation. The education system in producing candidates was raised as a factor that impact skills, how different cultures are socialised was raised as a factor, as this impacts how employees can adapt to the organisational culture, external racial sentiments were also raised as a factor which impacts how employees perceive their counterparts and the organisation.

7.3.3 Research Question 3: What are the perceptions of diversity leadership in the organisation?

There was consensus that HR practices play a role in fostering diversity however they were not adequate in promoting diversity and preventing discrimination. Participants did not view pay and promotion as being equal across different demographics. In order for HR to deliver on its mandate to promote diversity and manage variation in the workforce for the benefit of the organisation, leadership support and commitment was required. Participants acknowledged the positive role played by HR in ensuring that performance management was less biased, however diversity scholars (Downey et al., 2015, Guillaume et al, 2013) advocate that for HR to be more effective as it should go beyond meeting legal requirements to reshape the organisations culture.

7.3.4 Research Question 4: What are the perceptions of diversity HR practices within the organisation?

The composition and commitment of the leadership was a strong signal to participants of the leadership's commitment to diversity, due to black people not being equally represented in most of the senior leadership structures this was a signal of a lack of commitment, and was consistent with the theory from Guillaume et al. (2013). Participants also viewed that leadership was not consistent in what they said and the action being taken, which was another signal of low commitment by leadership. Participants also perceived leadership as not being fair to employees in terms of valuing opinions and treating all employees equally, this goes again with what literature describes as a diversity orientated leadership, as that leadership that is "unprejudiced and fair for all employees "(Luu et al. 2018, p.95) leads by example and values employees "contributions, notwithstanding, their differences"(Luu et al. 2018, p.95). diversity both at a behavioural and attitudinal level (Luu et al., 2018; Avery, 2011).

7.3.5 Research Question 4: Explore whether diversity initiatives impact employee engagement and whether there were challenges or recommendation

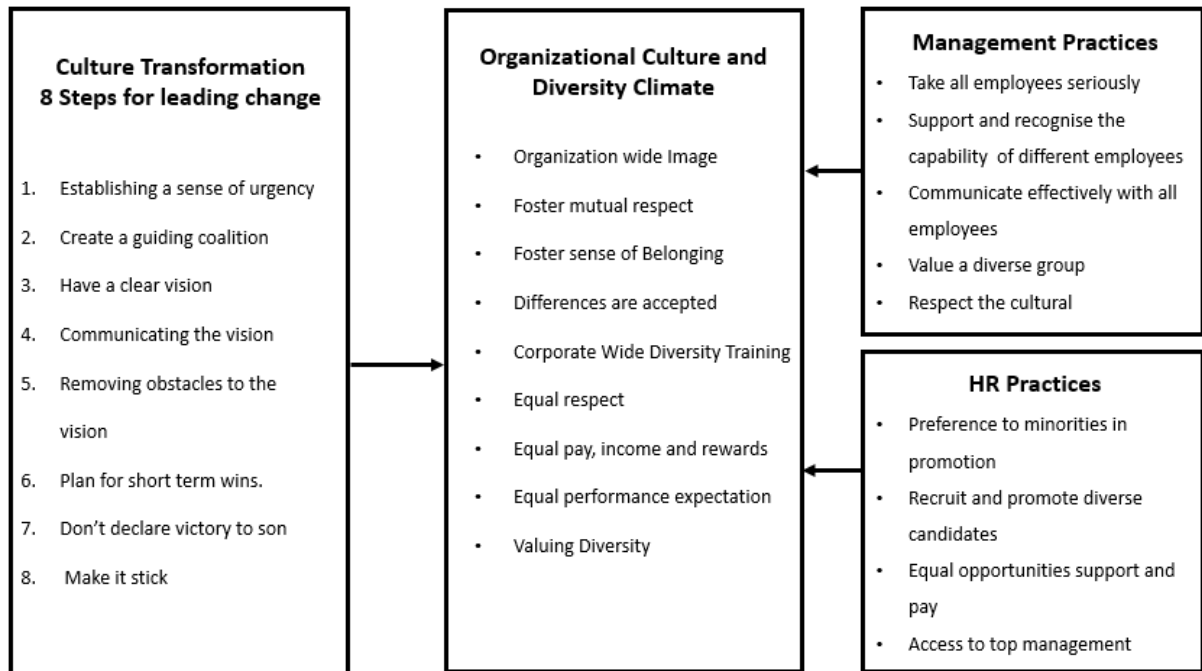
Most of the participants reported being engaged, however participants expressed that this was an outcome of their role within the organisation as leader and managers, this is consistent with the view on engagement by Khan (1990) as engagement being physically, cognitively, and emotionally present at work and focusing energy and persistence towards reaching an organisational goal. Another participant reported being engaged due to clear goals and careers aspirations, this is consistent with theory on engagement in that personality plays a role in engagement (Young et al., 2018). In relation to diversity orientated leadership as a mechanism to foster engagement, participants reported that communication from leadership and having access to top leadership was a signal that was an effort to embrace diversity, however participants had mixed reactions as to whether this fostered their engagement. The findings were mixed as to whether the companies diversity efforts fostered engagement with the majority of participants, however, indicating that there was no commitment to diversity and as such they felt that there was no effort. Whilst other participants expressed that they were encouraged by communication from leadership and this was a signal of improving commitment. Leadership, however, was the most prominent in terms of signals sought by participants. This highlights the need for active participation by leadership to transform organisational culture and landscape. The next section presents a model that can be used to reshape organisational culture and foster diversity and engagement in light of the findings.

7.4 Recommendations and Implications

The model below in figure 9 below presents a means for organisations to achieve a diversity climate where there is a shared perception of being treated fairly and equally, where black employees feel included and where they can feel like valued and belong. The model outlines that organisational culture is an element which would need to be addressed and changed through the efforts and commitment of its leadership, this emerged as key towards establishing a diversity climate and that diversity orientated HR

practices would then enable this transition however as a standalone the practices would not be sufficient.

Figure 8: Model To Value Diversity and Influence Culture (Adapted from Kotter, 1995; Warnich et al., 2015).



7.4.1 Implications for leaders and change experts

In order for organisations to change culture, a holistic approach to ensuring that the changes are enacted successfully is required, Kotter's (1995) framework for implementing change, which is founded on lessons learnt on why organisational change efforts fail to provide a useful framework for practical and sequential steps the organisation could take in order to ensure that diversity is embraced and valued.

- Create a sense urgency: in order for organisations to change meaningfully there should be a sense of urgency created were the organisations leaders, are convinced of the need to change. If the leadership and managers are not convinced for the need to change from current practices and behaviours then they will not support the effort and it will most likely fail.

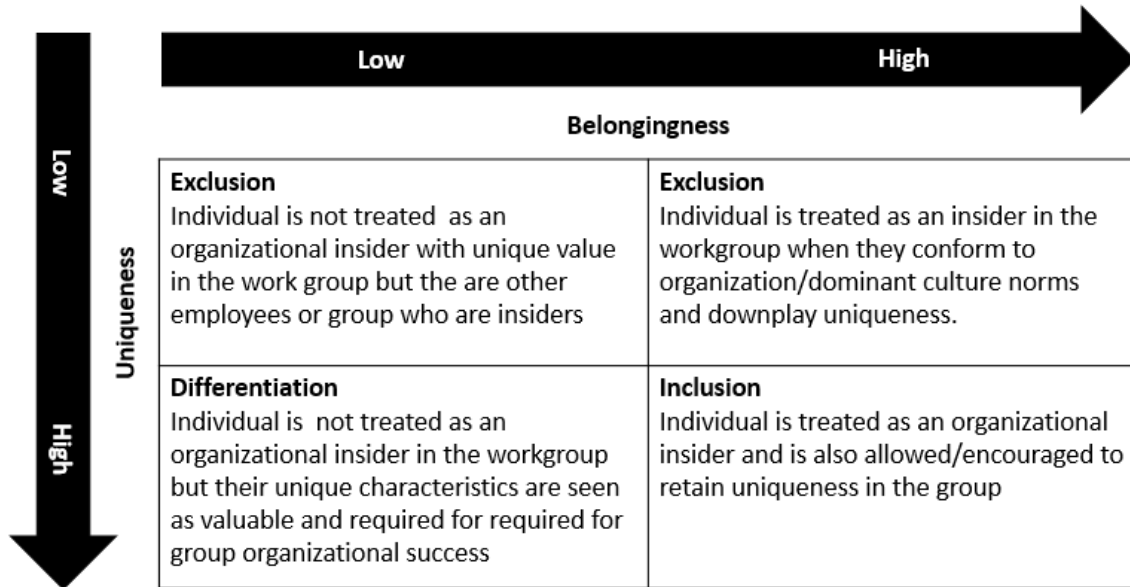
- Establish a guiding coalition: the second step is to then establish a team with enough power to affect the change and who are committed to ensuring the success of the transformation. This should be senior people within the organisation as appointing people who don't have power will result in a team where there are well-wishers who don't have authority to make decisions or who may be overridden by those with more authoritative power within the organisation who have not bought into the need for the organisation to change. This should not be left to HR, potentially another diversity position should be created in the organisation. For large professional services firms this would also be assisted by bringing in senior leadership from outside the organisation who are not from the country to assist in implementing the change and to ensure alignment with global practices and strategy.
- Have a clear vision: a clear vision is essential in order to paint a picture to staff of where the organisation is going and the actions it intends to take to in order to ensure that the organisation will meet its goal.
- Communicate effectively: the vision along with any plans the organisation intends to take should be communicated to all staff routinely to ensure awareness, as seen from the data collected, effective communication sends a signal of commitment to employees. Effective communication would also entail dealing with the fears of employees as to what does diversity and transformation mean for me, as discussed in literature on the negative consequences of diversity, diversity can lead to less social cohesion, all employees from both minority and majority groups, should be ensured that they will all be treated equally and that the embracing diversity does not mean the exclusion of whites and other ethnic groups but valuing the uniqueness and contribution from all employees.
- Empower others to act on the vision: empowering other leaders and managers to act on the vision is essential to ensuring that the initiative is successful throughout the organisation as part of the broader organisational change, the guiding coalition should model the type of behaviours and new culture the organisation is trying to achieve to other leaders and managers who should be able to enact and adopt those behaviours

- Create short term wins: as part of the change initiative, progress should be tracked and markers set along the way with KPI's to measure progress against targets. Wins should be planned for as part of the overall strategy to ensure momentum. Short term wins could include meeting the KPIs for a diversity target at a certain level and the composition of project teams across different client tiers.
- Do not declare victory too soon: the gain from the short term win should not be used as a sign that the overall change initiative is complete and therefore should be stopped, but rather as means to build up more momentum as gains could be quickly reversed and the organisation could slip back into old routines and rituals. Gains from initiatives such as meeting diversity KPIs and team mixture across projects and client satisfaction ratings should be used to demonstrate credibility of the projects and be used to build a case for the addition of members to act as change agents to hire additional staff dedicated to the success of the initiative.
- Make it stick: the change should become part of the norms and behaviours within the organisation. The link between the organisation's success and the initiative should be shown and communicated, close attention should be paid to the new behaviours and norms which are rewarded or punished within the organisation.

7.4.2 Implications for managers

Leaders and managers play a key role in determining the diversity climate, the practice and behaviours of managers ultimately will determine whether employees feel included in the organisation. The inclusion framework, as illustrated in the figure below, presents a useful framework to analyse inclusion as most employees who were not engaged report feeling excluded where their opinions were not valued by the organisation's leadership, whilst, those who were engaged reported that this was due to their access to top management and their career progression.

Figure 9: Inclusion framework (Shore et al., 2011).



These employees and managers can be plotted again either differentiation or assimilation. Some employees had assimilated to the organisational culture however there was gap in managing those employees who had not assimilated. The model presented in figure 9 in the current chapter presents some of the practices that managers can adopt to foster inclusion and engagement amongst black employees.

- Take all employees seriously: managers should pay attention to the concerns of all staff members and take the views and opinions of all staff seriously and not show preference to acting on the recommendations of certain staff members over others.
- Support and recognise the capability of different employees: support and mentoring plays a key role in career advancement and endearing a sense of belonging to the organisation, managers should ensure that all staff is supported and their capabilities nurtured, with staff being given equal opportunity to progress.
- Communicate effectively with employees: authentic communication where both parties are open will engender trust. Managers should communicate openly and honestly with all staff.

- Respect the cultural belief of all employees: managing a multicultural workforce requires that managers are culturally intelligent where they are aware of the different cultural practises that exist within their organisations and are able to pick up cultural cues. For black employees specifically staff might not be as confrontational and expect managers to address certain issues, or managers might need to be aware that staff would need to be trained on certain cultural norms within the organisation to fit in and advance.
- Value diverse group: managers need to value the benefit of having a diverse group as this improves competitive advantage and is a source of new ideas on doing things, managers and leaders are role models of the behaviours which are tolerated in the organisation

7.4.3 Implications for HR practitioners

HR has a key role in ensuring that there are shared perceptions of a diversity climate and should work alongside the leadership to ensure that discrimination does not occur and diversity is valued. The model presented in figure 6 presents some of the practical steps that HR could take.

- Promote preference to minorities: HR should ensure that the diversity KPIs are met by enforcing the promotion of different diversity demographics across all layers of the organisation.
- Recruit diverse candidates: together with the organisations managers and leaders HR should recruit diverse candidates to the organisation
- Ensure equal pay and promotion: HR should ensure that all staff is paid equally across the different organisational levels and not that one group is at a lower band and another at a higher band.
- Ensure that staff are given access to top management: having access to the vision of the leadership and engenders inclusivity and engagement.
- Strengthen systems to reduce discrimination: HR should ensure that there are strong systems in place to prevent discrimination, where staff can report anonymously.

7.5 Recommendations for Future Research

There is little research which focuses on organisational culture in impacting the diversity climate and the role that leaders play in creating a diversity friendly climate in order to foster engagement particularly for black employees, the intended beneficiaries of affirmative action initiatives, the recommendations for future research are as follows:

- What emerged from the research was that leadership both in composition and in support both at behavioural and attitudinal level play a role in fostering the adoption and valuing of diversity, future research could focus on establishing quantitatively the level of support that exists for valuing diversity amongst organisational leaders.
- What further emerged was the mixture of different cultures leading to conflicting expectations on the part of the manager and the employees, future research on diversity and engendering engagement should focus on the cultural aspects of leading a diverse workforce looking at an assimilation culture and integration culture.
- This study focused on the perception of black employees in relation to diversity orientated leadership, HR practices and the perception of a diversity climate, future studies should focus on other ethnic demographic groups.
- The study was limited to professional services firms which are global audit and accounting firms, specifically the top four accounting and professional services firms, a research study could be conducted to look at diversity and employee engagement in smaller consulting firms and in other industries and sectors.
- This study was a temperature test taken at a particular time, a longitudinal study could be undertaken to evaluate the change in perceptions over time.
- This study was qualitative in nature and did not seek to specifically identify which particular diversity element had a greater impact on employee engagement, a research study could be conducted to quantitatively test whether diversity orientated leadership, HR practices, or shared perceptions of a diversity climate had impact on employees engagement and which factor had a stronger impact

7.6 Limitations of the Study

The research limitations were outlined in chapter 4, and pertain to the choice of the sample and industry, selected as the top 4 audit and accounting firms in the professional services industry, and the sample being restricted to black employees in in these settings, further limitations are outlined in the section below:

- The researcher was not specifically trained on interviewing and this could impact the quality of the research and data collected, as interviewing requires skill from the researcher (Brayda & Boyce, 2014).
- The researcher is a Black African and is employed by one of the professional services firms and this could impact the study due to observer bias (Saunders et al., 2009)
- The findings are not generalizable to all professional services providers and all functions as this study mainly contained respondents from the advisory division for four large professional services firms.

7.7 Concluding Remarks

The objective of the research was to investigate whether diversity within an organisational setting would impact employee engagement amongst black employees as the intended beneficiaries of diversity and transformation initiatives. The researcher then addressed this objective by investigating literature on diversity and found that diversity orientated HR practices, leadership, and shared perceptions of a diversity climate where employees felt they were treated equally would signal to employees that the organisation cared for them and that this would then engender engagement. Literature also revealed that context should be factored into theory for research, the researcher then adjusted the study to factor in contextual factors of the socio ethnic background in relation to the individual and regulation, in relation to the organisation, with diversity management having been driven primarily by the need to comply with regulation.

The findings from the research study revealed several trends, firstly it was that engagement amongst black employees still remains a challenge in many of the entities selected for the study, and that there were no shared perceptions of a diversity climate with employees highlighting that they still perceived the climate to be discriminatory in terms of pay, promotion, and bias. The second was that existing HR practices were revealed to be inadequate, however, there was progress being made in terms of HR practices where there was centralisation of work allocation to eliminate preference. Additionally, there was consensus from participants that training was open and fair for all demographics. The third trend was that the demographic composition of leaders and managers across different levels, sends a strong signal to employees of the organisations commitment to diversity. The fourth was that authentic communication from leaders and managers, and access to leadership in terms of influencing decisions, and opinions being valued and promoting diverse candidates particularly black candidates sent a signal to employees that the organisation cared for them and this engenders engagement. In instances where these did not exist, employees would not feel cared for and leave the organisation or disengage from the psychological contract. Fifth was that there was an interchange between the culture of the organisation and the social ethnic background culture of the employee, this posed a challenge both to the employee and manager as there were conflicting expectations, the culture however within most organisations was an assimilated culture and there were already established norms and assumptions which were seen by participants as a challenge towards fostering a mind-set of embracing diversity. Lastly, was that there was an element of fear of victimisation amongst black employees with regards to discrimination and fear of discussing diversity on the part of white employees and managers, which then leaves the challenge of creating a diversity climate unresolved.

As a means to address this challenge and to create a shared perception of a diversity climate the model in figure 6 was created for managers and HR practitioners to promote and value diversity in order to engender engagement, from literature and from the interview data collected, what emerged was that the culture of the organisation interacts with the socio ethnic background culture of the employee and that an assimilated culture for the South Africa setting held disadvantages black employees and re-enforces

existing norms. An integration culture which is shaped by both employees and leaders would be a better fit for the environment. A second predominant theme relates to the importance of the practices of managers in promoting diversity and inclusion to enable engagement, the leadership practices and behaviours send a strong signal to employees that the organisation cared for them, thus leaders need to be aware of the kinds of diversity practices that will foster engagement amongst a diverse workforce. In lieu of a diversity orientated leadership, HR plays a strong role in signalling to employees that the organisation cared for them by ensuring that all people are treated fairly. However, the two, work best in combination and should not be treated as an either-or. HR plays a key role in ensuring that there is no discrimination against any employee and is a key enabler of achieving a diversity climate and thus is critical. HR must be made aware of the kinds of practices that enable engagement.

The outcomes of the research reflect the objectives of the research. The study explored the perception of diversity and whether diversity orientated leadership and HR practices engender engagement. The study provided insights into a particular organisational setting and generated a practical recommendation that could be implemented to improve diversity and engagement from the perceptions of black employees.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Consistency Matrix

PROPOSITIONS/ QUESTIONS/ HYPOTHESES	LITERATURE REVIEW	DATA COLLECTION TOOL	ANALYSIS
1. What are the perceptions of diversity climate, leadership and HR practices in the organization	Guillaume et al. (2013); Ashikali & Groeneveld (2015); Chung et al. (2015); Shemla et al. (2016); Luu et al. (2018);	Semi-structured Interviews	Content analysis of semi-structured interviews
2. What are the perceptions of employee engagement in the organization?	Maslach et al. (2001) Pather, S. (2014) Shuck et al. (2017); Eldor & Vigoda-Gadot, (2017) Macey & Schneider (2008)	Semi-structured Interviews	Content analysis of semi-structured interviews

3. Does diversity management aid in fostering employee engagement?	Guillaume et al. (2013); Ashikali & Groeneveld (2015); Chung et al. (2015); Shemla et al. (2016); Luu et al. (2018);	Semi-Structured Interviews	

Appendix 2: Interview Email

Dear XXXX ,

Thank you for taking my telephone call, as mentioned, I am doing qualitative exploratory research in partial fulfillment of my MBA with the Gordon Institute of Business Science.

My research paper is titled, "Diversity and employee engagement in professional services firms. The key objectives of the research are to:

- Explore the perceptions of diversity within these organization settings.
- Explore what the limitations and enablers of diversity are.
- Explore the impact of diversity on employee engagement.
- Generate insights and recommendations to add to the existing body knowledge on the subject.

I am looking to interview Black African professionals who are managers, senior managers and directors in professional services firms. The interviews will be in-depth semi structured interviews and will last approximately 45 minutes. All data collected from the interviews will be anonymised and results will be reported without any identifiers.

Find attached the interview discussion guidelines and consent form for your review.

Please let me know if you would be able to participate.

Your assistance is highly appreciated.

Thanks and regards

Wandile Skosana

Appendix 3: Consent Form

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

MBA 2018/19 Applied Business Analysis and Research

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. I am conducting research on diversity and employee engagement in professional services firms, and am trying to find out more about the role of diversity in employee engagement.

Our interview is expected to last about an hour and will help us understand the role of diversity in employee engagement. 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

Researcher Name: Wandile Skosana

Supervisor: Karl Hofmeyr

Email:04646186@mygibs.co.za

Email:karlf@mygibs.co.za

Signature of participant: _____

Date: _____

Signature of researcher: _____

Date: _____

INTERVIEW DETAILS

Name of interviewer: _____

1. Date of the interview: _____

2. Gender of interviewee:

Male:

Female:

3. Age: _____

4. Job title: _____

5. Function: _____

Appendix 4: Ethical Clearance Letter

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

25 July 2019

Wandile Skosana

Dear Wandile

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

You are therefore allowed to continue collecting your data.

Please note that approval is granted based on the methodology and research instruments provided in the application. If there is any deviation change or addition to the research method or tools, a supplementary application for approval must be obtained

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

Kind Regards

GIBS MBA Research Ethical Clearance Committee

Appendix 5: Discussion Guide

Theme 1 – Diversity Climate

What does diversity and inclusion in the organization mean to you?

- Does your organization maintain a diversity-friendly environment?
- Does your organization advance people regardless of gender, age and background?
- Do people from diverse backgrounds feel that they fit in and their views are respected?

Source: Adapted from Luu, Rowley & Vo (2018)

Theme 2 – Diversity Leadership

Can you tell about the leadership in your organization?

- Are the managers committed to having a diverse workforce?
- Are they good at managing a diverse workforce?
- Do they solicit input from employees from various backgrounds and expert groups?
- Do they value the opinion of all employees equally?

Source: Adapted from Luu, Rowley & Vo (2018)

Theme 3 – Diversity Orientated HR Practices

Can you tell me about the HR practices in your organization?

- Does your organization actively recruit and promote employees from diverse backgrounds?
- Do Black African employees have to be higher performers than others to get promoted?

- Are training practices open to all employees in the organization?
- Are compensation practices fair across all groups?
- Are employees aware of the channels to follow when they feel discriminated against?

Source: Adapted from Luu, Rowley & Vo (2018)

Theme 4 – Diversity and Employee Engagement

It has been interesting learning about what your company does with regards to diversity, I am also interested in employee engagement. In your view how do you think diversity impacts engagement?

- Do you personally feel engaged in the organization?
- Do the company's diversity efforts have any impact on how engaged you feel?
- What are some of the aspects that may be inhibiting the impact?
- Could you suggest three things that could significantly improve diversity management within your organization?

Source: Adapted from Pather (2014)

Appendix 6: Codes and Themes

Appendix 6.1: Research Results for Climate: Research Question 1

Theme	Category	Codes	Director s	Employee s	Totals
Climate	Definition	Defining diversity	4	10	14
Climate	Definition	Defining inclusion	3	8	11
Climate	Definition	Defining Diversity and Inclusion together as doing	1	3	4
Climate	Definition	Diversity Management as racial variation in staffing	2	1	3

Appendix 6.2: Research Results for Climate: Research Question 2

Theme	Category	Codes	Director s	Employee s	Totals
Climate	Commitment and Implementation	Highlighting diversity as an advantage for business.	1	2	3
Climate	Commitment and Implementation	Recognising the need to take personal responsibility to agitate for diversity	0	1	1
Climate	Commitment and Implementation	Efforts are being made to progress diversity	0	1	1
Climate	Communication	Importance of open channels for communication and interaction of diverse perspective	2	4	6
Climate	Communication	Authentic communication as the backbone for inclusion	1	3	4
Climate	Context	Highlighting the historical context	2	3	5

		that caused the current status quo			
Climate	Context	Enduring challenge of inequitable access to resources for economic advancement in SA	2	0	2
Climate	Context	Influence of external factors on climate	0	1	1
Climate	Context	External Pressure: Lack of active commitment to the cause by unions	1	0	1
Climate	Context	External Factors: National discourse and debate in influencing firm level behaviours	0	2	2
Climate	Context	Importance of understanding background	2	3	5
Climate	Culture	Culture is mostly western and requires assimilation to fit in presenting a challenge	2	4	6

Climate	Culture	Default associations established along cultural lines	0	4	4
Climate	Culture	Lack of racial diversity as an indicator of limited culture of inclusion	1	2	3
Climate	Culture	Barriers to communication stemming from cultural differences	1	2	3
Climate	Culture	Ubuntu values in practise	1	0	1
Climate	Culture	Highlighting the importance of the visible cultural artefacts	0	1	1
Climate	Legislation	BEE as a positive national policy driving diversity	2	6	8
Climate	Legislation	Negative consequences of BEE legislation	0	3	3
Climate	Legislation	Government's proactive stance in	4	2	6

		driving SA business to prioritise diversity			
Climate	Mind-set	Highlighting the need to shift to black creation and ownership of resources	4	2	6
Climate	Norms	Tendency for people of colour to be at lower levels	1	4	5
Climate	Norms	People do not speak out	2	2	4
Climate	Norms	Abuse of power by dominant	0	2	2
Climate	Norms	Negative attitude of employees towards the diversity and inclusion agenda	0	1	1
Climate	Norms	Diversity embraced at superficial level	1	0	1
Climate	Other	Identity: Need to acknowledge background	1	1	2
Climate	Other	Conflicting expectations	2	4	6

Climate	Other	Behaviours: Deep sensitivities to discussing diversity	1	4	5
Climate	Other	Negative racial sentiments	1	2	3
Climate	Discrimination	Skewed remuneration structures	1	7	8
Climate	Discrimination	Perception of discrimination in promotion and advancement	1	6	7
Climate	Discrimination	Lack of support for staff in need of development	0	6	6
Climate	Discrimination	Skewed development support structures	1	5	6
Climate	Discrimination	Discrimination towards pregnant women	0	4	4
Climate	Discrimination	Hierarchy in recognition of staff	0	4	4
Climate	Discrimination	Discrimination unequal treatment	0	3	3

		of black versus white staff			
Climate	Discrimination	Forms of discrimination experienced against women in general	0	1	1

Appendix 6.2: Research Results for Leadership: Research Question 3

Theme	Categories	Codes	Directors	Employees	Totals
Diversity Leadership	Behaviours	Maturity required to embrace diversity and inclusion as a business imperative	1	6	7
Diversity Leadership	Behaviours	Respect and Value of Opinion determined by expertise and contribution	2	2	4
Diversity Leadership	Behaviours	Evidence of enduring challenges in getting diversity and inclusion right	3	1	4
Diversity Leadership	Behaviours	The human tendency to protect one's self than serve the greater good.	2	1	3
Diversity Leadership	Behaviours	Power dynamics in the group	0	1	1

		determine decisions			
Diversity Leadership	Behaviours	Behaviours: Behaviours need to model diversity	0	1	1
Diversity Leadership	Behaviours	Positive Behaviours: Positive reception of feedback when received, however its never solicited	1	0	1
Diversity Leadership	Behaviours	Asking for diverse opinions encourages a sense of inclusion	0	0	0
Diversity Leadership	Bias	Leaders racial bias, immaturity and ego barriers in leaders	2	4	6
Diversity Leadership	Bias	Practises that create a negative impression on	3	2	5

		staff observing racial			
Diversity Leadership	Bias	Black and white staff exhibited resistance to discussing unconscious biases	0	1	1
Diversity Leadership	Leadership Commitment	Lack of diversity in leadership positions	3	6	9
Diversity Leadership	Leadership Commitment	Inconsistencies between what is said and done	3	5	8
Diversity Leadership	Leadership Commitment	Lack of commitment to diversity hiring practises	1	5	6
Diversity Leadership	Leadership Commitment	Tendency for people of colour to be at lower levels	1	4	5
Diversity Leadership	Leadership Commitment	Minority groupings not taken seriously	0	5	5

Diversity Leadership	Leadership Commitment	Good looking HR policies that are not implemented	0	2	2
Diversity Leadership	Leadership Commitment	Not committed to ensuring a conducive working environment for all	0	2	2
Diversity Leadership	Leadership Commitment	Targets set but not met	1	1	2
Diversity Leadership	Mind-set	Highlighting diversity as a senior leadership responsibility	1	3	4
Diversity Leadership	Mind-set	Highlighting the need for a paradigm shift to perceive transformation & inclusivity as a moral obligation	0	3	3
Diversity Leadership	Mind-set	Leaders and managers don't understand or buy into the vision	0	3	3

Diversity Leadership	Mind-set	Growing appreciation of the positive effects of diversity for business	1	2	3
Diversity Leadership	Other	Compliance driven: Management is obligated by external policy compliance	4	8	12
Diversity Leadership	Other	Leadership Composition	4	6	10
Diversity Leadership	Other	Challenges faced in driving inclusion in firms: ensuring all staff get equitable development support	2	5	7
Diversity Leadership	Other	Challenges faced by black leaders societal norms	4	2	6
Diversity Leadership	Other	Financial focus in the	4	2	6

		organisations culture			
Diversity Leadership	Other	Input comes in form back channels and not official channels	0	2	2

Appendix 6.3: Research Results for HR Practices: Research Question 4

Category	Code	Directors	Employees	Totals
Transparency and Awareness	Approach to reinforcing diversity open channels for request training	1	7	8
Transparency and Awareness	Lack of transparency in remuneration structures	0	6	6
Transparency and Awareness	Importance of open channels of communication to HR	1	2	3
Transparency and Awareness	Lack of awareness by staff of the channels available to raise concerns	1	2	3
Transparency and Awareness	HR accessible and accesible	0	3	3
Transparency and Awareness	Inadequate systems that help reveal areas at risk of discriminatory practises	0	2	2
Talent gaps	Role of right developmental support and exposure to bridge competency gaps	1	6	7
Talent gaps	Confirming the reality that in instances black	0	6	6

	employees do still tend to need more developmental support than other races			
Talent gaps	Views on why there is no diversity in management levels perceived shortage of skills	2	3	5
Talent gaps	Lack of technical training	3	1	4
Talent gaps	High demand for a limited pool of groomed black staff	2	0	2
Talent gaps	High demand for black talent results in a premium for pay	1	1	2
Talent gaps	Recruitment agencies fail to articulate the value of black senior candidates	0	1	1
Talent gaps	Highlighting the need for managers to play a role in recruiting diverse candidates	0	1	1
Talent gaps	Black employees are always at the bottom in	1	0	1

	performance assessments			
Talent gaps	Possible lack of interested candidates of colour to fill senior levels	0	1	1
Emerging Approaches	Centralised allocation of staff to project teams	0	4	4
Emerging Approaches	Centralised assessment of performance	0	3	3
Promotions Challenges	The use of recruitment agencies fails to articulate the value	0	1	1
Promotions Challenges	Exclusion of HR oversight in recruitment processes	1	0	1
Promotions Challenges	Confirming the perception that black people need to be higher performers	1	1	2
Promotions Challenges	Highlighting that the organization may not be good at managing diversity and promoting black people	1	0	1
Promotions Challenges	Highlighting the challenge in building the	0	1	1

	business case for promoting historically disadvantaged			
Promotions Challenges	Highlighting the need for specific attention to include non-white females	0	1	1
Promotions Challenges	Internal and external networks and relationships impact revenue target and promotion\advancement	0	2	2
Promotions Challenges	Perception of discrimination in promotion and advancement	1	6	7
Promotions Challenges	Consulting required more effort than in Audit	0	1	1
Promotions Challenges	Staff leave the firm due to external pressures	0	1	1

Appendix 6.4: Research for Diversity and Engagement: Research Question 5

Theme	Category	Code	Totals
Diversity and Engagement	Drivers of Engagement	Driven by position and inclusion in decision making	5
Diversity and Engagement	Drivers of Engagement	Driven By the Leaderships diversity efforts to get it right	5
Diversity and Engagement	Drivers of Engagement	Driven by policies and practices put in place	2
Diversity and Engagement	Drivers of Engagement	Fostered by mentoring and career progression	2
Diversity and Engagement	Drivers of Engagement	Driven by internal motivation	1
Diversity and Engagement	Engagement Confirmation	Engaged: No	5
Diversity and Engagement	Engagement Confirmation	Engaged: Un-answered	1
Diversity and Engagement	Engagement Confirmation	Engaged: Yes	7
Diversity and Engagement	Signals and Responses	Staff reaction to exclusion: leaving the firm	6
Diversity and Engagement	Signals and Responses	Staff not feeling included	3
Diversity and Engagement	Signals and Responses	Inclusion of the previously disadvantaged in leadership is creating momentum	1
Diversity and Engagement	Signals and Responses	Staff reaction to exclusion: checking out of the	1

			psychological contract with the firm		
Diversity Engagement	and	Signals Responses	and	Lack of diversity in leadership positions	11
Diversity Engagement	and	Signals Responses	and	Indications of low commitment to diversity: diversity only at lower levels	7
Diversity Engagement	and	Signals Responses	and	Indications of low commitment diversity: lack of commitment to diversity hiring practises	6
Diversity Engagement	and	Signals Responses	and	Indications of low commitment diversity: minority groupings not taken seriously	5
Diversity Engagement	and	Signals Responses	and	Efforts are being made to progress diversity	5
Diversity Engagement	and	Signals Responses	and	Snowball effect of exclusion and discrimination on staff development and progression	5
Diversity Engagement	and	Signals Responses	and	The human tendency to protect one's self than serve the greater good	3
Diversity Engagement	and	Signals Responses	and	Indications of low commitment diversity: good looking HR policies that are not implemented	2
Diversity Engagement	and	Signals Responses	and	Indications of low commitment diversity: not committed to ensuring a conducive	2

			working environment for all		
Diversity Engagement	and	Signals Responses	and	Indications of low commitment diversity: targets set but not met	2
Diversity Engagement	and	Signals Responses	and	Indicators sought by staff to authenticate inclusion: hiring of diverse racial and gender profiles	5
Diversity Engagement	and	Signals Responses	and	Communication: authentic communication as the backbone for inclusion and engagement	4
Diversity Engagement	and	Signals Responses	and	Indicators sought by staff to authenticate inclusion: career progression for black employees	4
Diversity Engagement	and	Signals Responses	and	Indicators sought by staff to authenticate inclusion: developing and promoting women	2
Diversity Engagement	and	Signals Responses	and	Indicators sought by staff to authenticate inclusion: attention to wellbeing of individuals	2
Diversity Engagement	and	Signals Responses	and	Role of transparency in establishing a positive internal climate	1
Diversity Engagement	and	Challenges		Education system produces different calibre of candidates	1
Diversity Engagement	and	Challenges		High inequality	1

Diversity Engagement and	Challenges	External societal racial sentiments influence the firm	1
Diversity Engagement and	Challenges	Enduring challenge in SA firms that most firms struggle with inclusion	1
Diversity Engagement and	Challenges	Attracting senior management and levels above to join the organisation	1
Diversity Engagement and	Challenges	Retaining talent from managers and above	1
Diversity Engagement and	Challenges	Lack of self-awareness in how we engage with each other	10
Diversity Engagement and	Barriers	Barriers to communication stemming from cultural differences	6
Diversity Engagement and	Barriers	Bias: leaders racial bias, immaturity, and ego barriers in leaders	1
Diversity Engagement and	Barriers	Exclusion of HR oversight in recruitment processes	1
Diversity Engagement and	Barriers	Predominantly white male	1
Diversity Engagement and	Barriers	Assimilation culture	11
Diversity Engagement and	Barriers	Lack of trust in delivery capabilities of black employees	3
Diversity Engagement and	Barriers	Making assumptions about individuals	

Diversity Engagement and	Recommendations	Organisations should mirror the national demographic profile in their staffing	8
Diversity Engagement and	Recommendations	Paint a future vision of a desired structure	7
Diversity Engagement and	Recommendations	Establish internal ownership to drive change	7
Diversity Engagement and	Recommendations	Hire senior managers who are people of colour	5
Diversity Engagement and	Recommendations	Create structures to strengthen the voice of promoting diversity	5
Diversity Engagement and	Recommendations	Strengthen policies and procedures	4
Diversity Engagement and	Recommendations	Actively nurture mind-set change founded in practical demonstration of black competence	4
Diversity Engagement and	Recommendations	Introduce measures to monitor implementation of diversity goals	3
Diversity Engagement and	Recommendations	Improve inclusion: implement practises that ensure that all staff are fairly recognised and rewarded	3
Diversity Engagement and	Recommendations	Establish and actively implement policies and procedures to support DM	3
Diversity Engagement and	Recommendations	Implementing training on DM	3

Diversity Engagement and	Recommendations	Prioritise development of people of colour from disadvantaged backgrounds to bolster their progression	2
Diversity Engagement and	Recommendations	Embrace the multiple dimensions of diversity and inclusion	2
Diversity Engagement and	Recommendations	Foster right leadership behaviour	1
Diversity Engagement and	Recommendations	Hire for improving diversity hire senior managers from different genders	1
Diversity Engagement and	Recommendations	Requires bold leadership that will drive change	1
Diversity Engagement and	Recommendations	Promote young Black African partners	1
Diversity Engagement and	Recommendations	Have a clear plan along with proper support	1

Appendix 7: Coding Saturation Analysis

