

Exploring the influence of workplace inclusion on employee performance

By

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Abstract

Due to the diverse nature of the workforce which includes various people from different backgrounds, it has become increasingly important to discuss inclusion of these individuals in the workplace. Whilst the literature on inclusion is fairly new, research has noted, although not conclusively, that inclusion may have an influence on performance. This study explored the concepts of inclusion and performance and considered how inclusion influences performance.

The study sought to build on both the theoretical and practical knowledge that exists on inclusion and show how it influences performance. It further sought to provide organisations with the rationale for implementing inclusive practices in order to benefit from their diverse workforce.

To fully understand the inclusive experience and how it influences performance, a qualitative study using 15 semi-structured interviews of black and white females from various organisational levels was undertaken. The research found that when employees feel included, their commitment to work, their performance and their loyalty increases. This in turn has a positive influence on organisational performance, providing a strong business case for creating an inclusive workplace.

These key insights led to the adaptation of the inclusion framework as developed by Shore et al. (2011). The study presents an inclusion-performance framework which shows how performance is positively influenced when employees are included.

Keywords: diversity, inclusion, performance,

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.

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1 December 2020

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Chapter 1: Introduction to Research Problem

1.1 Introduction

“It has become commercial doctrine that diversity is a central tenet of a successful business, but beyond pay gap analysis it can be impossible for companies to understand and gauge their success or failings in creating a diverse and inclusive environment for employees.” (Kantar Inclusion Index, 2020, p. 2)

The quote above is quite fitting in setting the tone and intention for this paper, in that it speaks to the importance of diversity and inclusion practices and how these practices contribute to the success of the organisation.

When we consider diversity and inclusion, these terms have over the past few years been used as synonyms because they are so closely related (Shore, Cleveland, & Sanchez, 2018). However, while closely related, they are separate and distinct and individually deal with two separate but equally important practices within organisations. Using them as synonyms therefore detracts from the importance of each. Many scholars have over the years sought to clarify the distinction between these two terms, and in so doing seek to showcase their individual importance (Shore et al., 2018). The interplay and distinction between these terms is important and is discussed later in this paper.

Diversity has recently become quite an important concept for organisations, not only from a legal and/or governmental standpoint but also from a strategic perspective (Kundu & Mor, 2017). With various organisations seeing the importance of implementing diversity practices, it has become apparent how these practices have become essential for organisations and their success (Roberson, 2006). Flowing from the above, the increase in workforce diversity has also seen the need for organisations to increase their approaches to workplace inclusion (Shore et al., 2018).

Whilst diversity is important as a concept, for the purposes of this paper, it is important to consider how diversity is managed in organisations as this is what leads to an inclusive organisation. Diversity management is important because it aims to harness the differences from diverse groups of individuals, thereby enabling the organisation to use those differences to enhance productivity in the workplace (Cox, Taylor, & Blake, 1991). Pless and Maak (2004) write that one of the main advantages of diversity as noted by many authors is the fact that a diverse workforce is made up of different people from

different backgrounds, who generate different ideas. This translates into a different form of creative potential which results in innovative ideas that come from that workforce, presenting a competitive advantage for organisations. When we consider diversity and its advantages, it has been recommended that organisations implement diversity practices in their organisations in order to benefit from diversity (Cox et al., 1991). Diversity management is therefore an important step in moving towards an inclusive organisation and helping employees reach their full potential (Sabharwal, 2014).

The body of research on diversity has generated a wealth of meaningful and informative insights and continues to do so (Shore et al., 2011). Employers have realised that if they wish to maintain a competitive advantage, and if they want to be considered as an attractive employer, then they must embrace diversity in their organisations (Kundu & Mor, 2017). Organisations must find a way to manage diversity and integrate diverse individuals in order to reap the benefits that come with a diverse workforce (Shore et al., 2011). Diversity is therefore not the same as inclusion because inclusion goes further than diversity and could be considered the second step after implementing diversity practices (Chen & Tang, 2018).

Inclusion as opposed to diversity relates to the practices that make the employee feel like they belong (Shore et al., 2011). It also relates to the removal of obstacles to the full participation and contribution of employees in the organisation (Roberson, 2006). Inclusion, unlike diversity, can therefore be considered as the voluntary actions that the organisation takes to ensure that diverse employees feel like they belong, that they have equal opportunity for success, and ultimately that they have a level playing field (Shore et al., 2018)

Workplace inclusion, in addition to the above, also ensures that employees are treated well and that they feel accepted and valued in their places of employment as well as in the groups that they work (Pelled, Ledford, & Mohrman, 1999). Inclusive workplaces embrace all facets of inclusion such as inclusive policies and practices, individual inclusion, leader inclusion and group inclusion in order to create a wholistic inclusive environment (Shore et al., 2018). One of the main reasons why organisations focus on inclusion is to ensure that they reduce the problems which are generally associated with diversity. These could range from internal conflicts to performance issues (Nishii, 2013).

In summary, diversity and its practices relate to the strategic intent of the organisation such as ensuring representation of previously disadvantaged groups (i.e. numbers),

whereas inclusion relates to how those groups are made to feel a part of the organisation (Buengeler, Leroy, & De Stobbeleir, 2018). Organisations have realised that although they have taken a step to creating diverse organisations, they must also create inclusive organisations, to ensure that they adequately leverage off of the potential benefits that come with having a diverse workforce (Nishii, 2013).

Considering the short discussion above, there are clear benefits for organisations which implement diversity and inclusion practices (Chen & Tang, 2018; Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015; Jordan et al., 2019). The purpose of this paper is therefore to discuss these two concepts and explore how inclusion of employees influences their performance (Sabharwal, 2014).

1.2 Definition of research problem

The aim of this paper is to explore the influence of workplace inclusion on employee performance. As mentioned above, diversity and inclusion have long been considered terms that are interchangeable and synonymous (Shore et al., 2018), so much so that organisations appoint one person to deal with both of these issues. They will call the relevant employee the diversity officer or the inclusion officer, but they will be expected to deal with both diversity and inclusion related matters (Shore et al., 2018). This, practically speaking, should not be the case.

The problem with using these two terms interchangeably is that focus will not be given to each of these issues in their own right. Roberson (2006) states that even though there has been a move from diversity to inclusion, organisations still confuse these concepts. The danger of this is that we still have limited knowledge of which of these represent material change to organisations in their own right. In addition to this, the similar phrasing could also possibly be retained by organisations to avoid and mask initiatives, making them falsely applicable to both diversity and inclusion (Roberson, 2006). This also enables organisations to avoid backlash for not implementing initiatives which should be tailored to each these concepts individually (Roberson, 2006). From a theoretical perspective, there is still confusion regarding the concepts and this paper seeks to bring clarity specifically to how inclusion influences performance and further, from a practical perspective, this paper will show organisations the importance of inclusion and how it contributes to employee performance.

Diversity research has predominantly focused on the problems associated with diversity, namely bias, affirmative action, diversity effects on teams, discrimination and tokenism to mention a few (Shore et al., 2011). Diversity at its core is legislated and in certain instances organisations are mandated to comply (Shore et al., 2018). The field of diversity and how it is understood in the workplace has, however, undergone tremendous shifts over time (April & Blass, 2010). Its focus has shifted to considerations of how diversity may enhance organisational performance in a way that promotes the potential in diversity (Shore et al., 2011).

This paper, however, seeks to take the discussion one step further and explore whether inclusion influences employee performance. It seeks to consider whether inclusive behaviours at both an organisational level and at team and/or individual level have an influence on how individuals perform (Sabharwal, 2014).

The discussion around these concepts and this topic in particular is not new, it has been ongoing for decades. Prahalad and Bettis (1986) sought to study whether there was a linkage between diversity and overall performance and show the influence that diversity has on the performance of an organisation. On current literature considering team diversity and inclusion and its influence on employee performance, there has been a wealth of research done in this regard (Meyer, Shemla, Li, & Wegge, 2015).

However, the research conducted has not yielded conclusive findings with regards to the influence of inclusion on performance (Meyer et al., 2015), although research does suggest that it yields both positive and negative effects on individual and organisational performance (Jordan et al, 2019; Barak & Michalle, 2019). There are also studies that have considered the concept of inclusion and its importance for a company's diversity efforts (Sabharwal, 2014). However, not many studies have considered how inclusive behaviours influence the performance of an employee and the organisation at large (Sabharwal, 2014). This study therefore seeks to fill this gap.

In considering and answering the overall research question, the study applied Social Identity Theory which proposes that the groups that people belong to are a source of their self-esteem (Sabharwal, 2014). Belonging to a group and feeling a sense of belonging also enables individuals to feel as though they are part of a group and this makes them feel accepted and secure (Sabharwal, 2014). This is the basis for inclusion and will directly address how individuals perform when they are included in the group and have a sense of belonging.

This paper therefore considers how individual employee performance is influenced by inclusion (Farndale, Michal, Briscoe, & Raghuram, 2015). In discussing performance, it is important to note that individual, team/group and organisational performance are interrelated and therefore the assertion is made that the performance of the group emerges from the individual and this then translates into organisational performance (Meyer et al., 2015). This also emphasises why Social Identity Theory is applicable in this regard. For the purposes of this paper however, focus is only on individual employee performance.

1.3 Research purpose

It is clear from the above that diversity and inclusion and the discussion around these concepts have become important at a societal, theoretical and at an organisational level over the past few years (Kantar Inclusion Index, 2020; Shore et al., 2018). With the increase in diversity in organisations, it has become more important for organisations to create inclusive environments (Shore et al., 2018). This is because inclusive environments where employees feel included and encouraged to be unique, shows them that the organisation appreciates and values their input (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015). This appreciation impacts both short-term economic benefit and also contributes to the long-term sustainability of the organisation (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015).

The overall purpose of this paper is therefore to explore how inclusion influences employee performance (Sabharwal, 2014), which ultimately affects organisational performance. Through the literature review, four research objectives were developed in order to assist in answering the overall research question. These are set out at the end of Chapter 2 and are addressed in detail in Chapter 3.

In addressing the overall research question, the research aims to contribute to theory while also practically assisting organisations in realising the benefits of inclusion. This leads to the theoretical and business need for the study.

1.3.1 Theoretical need for the study

From an academic perspective, it is important to note that the field of diversity has evolved to where focus is centred around ways in which diversity could enhance work processes and organisational mechanisms to promote the value in diversity (Shore et al., 2011). What needs to be focused on is the creation of environments which consist of

individuals from various backgrounds and, further, where these diverse individuals feel included (Shore et al., 2011).

Considering the above, and although there has been a wealth written on inclusion, it is still a fairly new concept (Shore et al., 2011). In addition to this and despite organisations developing diversity and inclusive practices as a source of competitive advantage, doubt still exists as to the benefits that come with these practices (Jordan et al., 2019).

This research will therefore contribute to the body of theoretical knowledge that shows that inclusion has a positive influence on employees and contributes to increased performance (Chen & Tang, 2018, Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015). The research will assist in adding to the body of knowledge by providing insights on how employees experience inclusion and whether inclusion indeed matters, more so in relation to performance of the employee (Chen & Tang, 2018).

1.3.2 Business need for the study

From an organisational and/or practical perspective, this research is important because it will show organisations whether and how inclusion influences employee performance (Chen & Tang, 2018, Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015). Organisations can then choose whether to foster diverse and inclusive environments and/or implement inclusive practices (Shore et al., 2018) which could contribute to overall organisational performance. It will bring to light the influence and the value of promoting diversity and inclusion in organisations, which could ultimately enhance employee and organisational performance (Shore et al., 2011).

The research further sought to show organisations that there is value in their investment in diversity and inclusion practices as this is something that has been seen as a benefit worldwide (Kundu & Mor, 2017). The study also aimed to show organisations that diversity management and inclusion could be considered as imperative for organisational success.

Ultimately, the study provides an understanding to organisations that diverse views create for greater ideas and innovation (Chen & Tang, 2018) and have a positive impact on employees and the organisation at large. This is good for overall organisational performance (Kundu & Mor, 2017).

Without this study, the risk would be that the body of knowledge would stay stagnant from both a theoretical and organisational perspective and understanding of this question would not be taken further than where it currently stands.

1.4 Dissertation outline

In addition to what has been discussed thus far, this paper proceeds with six further chapters, namely; Chapter 2: Theory and literature review, Chapter 3: Research questions, Chapter 4: Research methodology, Chapter 5: Results, Chapter 6: Discussion of results and lastly Chapter 7: Conclusion.

The theory and literature review provides an overview of the secondary data and literature which was used in answering the research question and purpose. This section first defines the concepts of diversity and inclusion and considers their various constructs at both an organisational and team level (Farndale et al., 2015). Thereafter, attention shifts to the definition of performance and how it forms part of the study. Ultimately, consideration is given to the theoretical anchor for the paper. The research objectives then follow and show what needed to be achieved through the study to meet the main research aim and purpose. Following these, the paper provides an overview of the research methodology and design applied in the study. Finally, the paper records the results obtained from the interviews, discussing those results and concluding and advising on what has been learned.

1.5 Conclusion

The premise is that humans have a need to feel included and belong to a group, as this prevents isolation and exclusion (Shore et al., 2011). For organisations to be successful they must implement inclusive practices and create a space for the ideas of all employees to be heard (Chen & Tang, 2018). For this to happen, organisations have to respect diversity and ensure that they listen to employees' views, ideas and accept their ideas and this can only be done if diversity and inclusion practices are put in place (Kundu & Mor, 2017).

With regard to performance, research has shown that there is still not a clear way forward on what is meant by performance (Sonnentag & Frese, 2002, p. 4). Defining performance still causes confusion and conflict today and this paper sought to look at performance from the employees' point of view and how inclusion influences performance. This is important because once it can be ascertained whether inclusion does indeed influence

performance, it will lead both theorists and organisations to a better understanding of the concept and also enable them to craft a way forward in order to make better use of the interplay between these two elements.

Chapter 2: Theory and Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the influence of inclusion on performance. It looked at the concept of inclusion and how it presents itself in organisation and how this inclusion and/or inclusive environment influences both employees and their performance.

Following from the previous chapter and relating to diversity and inclusion, it must be said that the move from diversity to inclusion and the manner in which diversity and workplace inclusion is understood has undergone significant changes over time and these changes are well recorded and evidenced in literature (April & Blass, 2010; Roberson, 2006). Although these two concepts are used interchangeably, they are by and large different concepts (Barak & Michalle, 2019; Shore et al., 2018).

Diversity and inclusion are important concepts for many organisations. However, understanding pertaining to how these translate into actual change in individual and organisational behaviour is still limited (Roberson, 2006). To answer the overall research question of how inclusion influences employee performance, this chapter discusses the concepts of diversity, inclusion and performance and their various constructs applicable to this study.

2.2 Diversity

2.2.1 Defining diversity

Inclusion cannot be discussed without first considering the concept of diversity. Diversity at its core is a cultural question concerning itself with the coexistence of humans and how people from different backgrounds, values and norms are able to coexist and leverage off each other (Pless & Maak, 2004). It therefore focuses on how the workforce is split into various and distinct categories and/or workforces who may possibly have commonalities relating to a particular national or cultural context (Barak & Michalle, 2019). In its ordinary form and meaning, diversity can be defined as the composition of various groups or workforces (Roberson, 2006). This definition, however, does not capture the essence of what diversity truly is and it is therefore important to consider how various authors define diversity in an attempt to capture its true meaning.

Diversity could be defined in terms of demographic differences amongst members of a group (Roberson, 2006). When defined through this lens, the definition considers cultural differences and identities within a group. Such definition is in line with that of Larkey (1996) who stated that diversity is when persons have different perspectives, which causes different behaviours amongst group members, and also identify differences amongst group members in relation to other groups. In addition to this, diversity can also be defined with reference to physical and non-physical characteristics (Milliken & Martins, 1996). The non-observable characteristics could include cognitive and technical differences, whereas observable differences could include age, race, ethnicity and gender of employees (Kochan et al., 2003).

In addition to these definitions, Walker, Ruggs, Morgan and DeGrassi (2019) defined diversity as an instance that focuses on the numeric representation of individuals, for example members of certain protected classes. However, the definition of diversity which is most applicable to this study is offered by Bilimoria, Liang and Joy (2008) who stated that diversity is where work environments are created that make diverse individuals feel included. This definition is most applicable to this study because it considers the creation of an inclusive environment for a variety of individuals to make them feel included, in line with this study's objectives. More specifically, it addresses how this influences the performance of these diverse individuals.

2.2.2 Management of diversity

An important aspect to consider when discussing diversity practices which lead onto inclusion was how organisations seek to carry out these practices and ultimately how organisations manage diversity. Diversity management is concerned with the various practices and initiatives that organisations employ to include various groups in the organisation (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015).

Many scholars have argued on the importance of effective diversity management because it enhances the effects of diversity in relation to organisational performance (Choi & Rainey, 2010). What diversity management therefore aims to do is to harness differences from diverse groups of people so that those differences can be used to enhance productivity in the workplace (Cox et al., 1991).

When organisations focus primarily on employing individuals from diverse backgrounds and not the management of diversity, not much attention is actually given to the concept

of diversity (Roberson, 2006). Diversity on its own is not a guarantee of organisational success or inclusion of individuals. For diversity to be fruitful for organisations, they must actively manage it and must do so through the valuing and promoting of diversity in both the workforce and the organisation as a whole (Kundu & Mor, 2017). It has been shown that when diversity is managed effectively, the results have a significant impact on both individual and organisational performance (Choi & Rainey, 2010). When we look at diversity from a number's perspective, it is easy to measure (Kantar Inclusion Index, 2020). Organisations, however, can only know whether they have adequately implemented and achieved diversity when they consider the perceptions of their employees with regard to the diversity management practices (Kundu & Mor, 2017).

A diverse workforce refers to one which consists of people from various ethnic and social backgrounds and considers how they are able to come together (Kundu & Mor, 2017). Although diversity management could be perceived as a step forward, it has been criticised by various scholars for only focusing on minorities and previously disadvantaged groups (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015). The criticism lends itself to the fact that focusing on a select group may create biases and exclude other groups, which may cause further discrimination and status distinctions (Buengeler et al., 2018). With this being said, some authors have stated that adequate diversity management reduces the potential negative impacts that come with increased levels of diversity and, with this, enhances the positive impacts that diversity could have (Choi & Rainey, 2010). This is the ultimate goal of diversity management and this is why it could be considered a bridge between diversity and inclusion (Choi & Rainey, 2010).

In considering its application, we therefore need to understand what the advantages of diversity could be for the organisation in employing persons from various backgrounds or with varying identities. However, considering only the advantages ignores the consequences that come with the exclusion of other groups (Roberson, 2006). Furthermore, perceptions on diversity call for people from various fields to understand each other and how they have had different experiences, more so towards women and minorities (Kundu & Mor, 2017). Factors that are considered by organisations in their management of diversity (Cox et al., 1991) are contained in Figure 1.

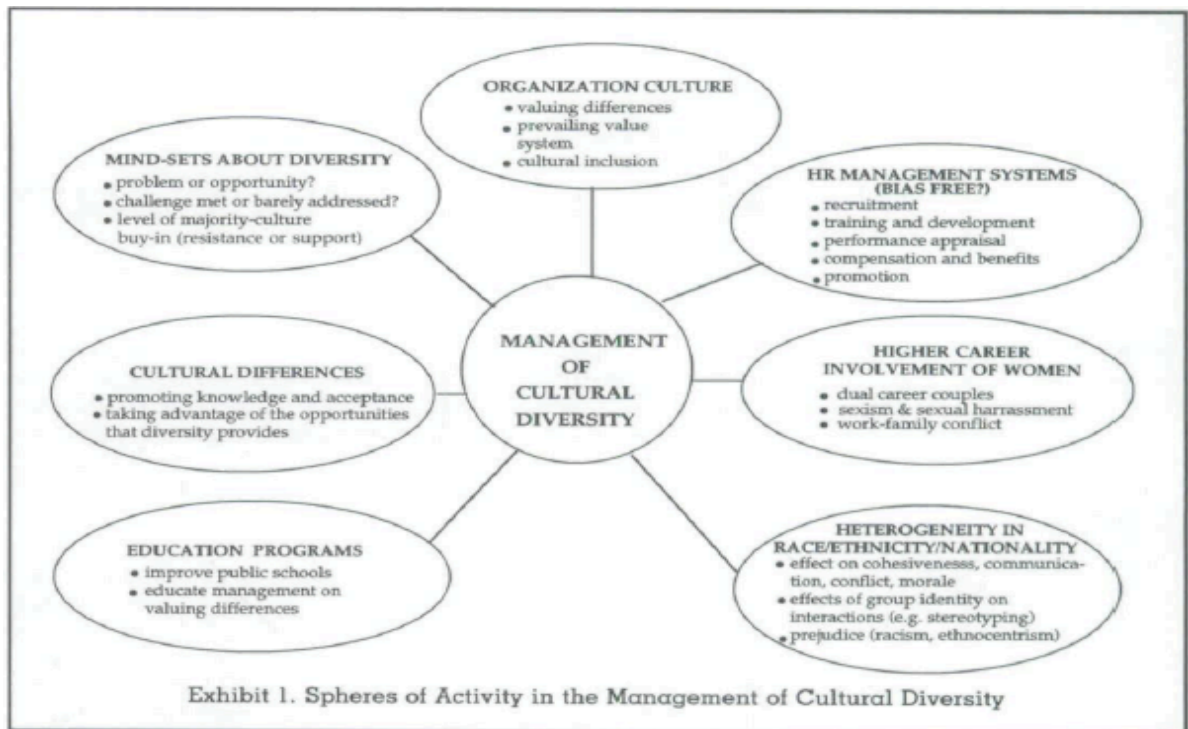


Figure 1: Factors to consider in management of diversity (Cox et al., 1991, p. 46).

As per the figure above, these factors are as follows:

- **Mind sets about diversity:** Organisations need to reframe their thinking about diversity and the management thereof, whether they see this as a problem or an opportunity, a challenge to be met or simply addressed, and lastly to consider how to get buy-in from the majority in the organisation.
- **Organisational culture:** The organisation needs to be one that embraces differences and is willing to take steps that include and make space for the different cultures within the organisation in order to promote diversity.
- **Cultural differences:** In their management of diversity, organisations need to promote a culture of knowledge and acceptance where they do not only see diversity as a problem but as an opportunity to be taken advantage of, thus leveraging the opportunities that it provides.
- **Educational programmes:** From an organisational perspective, this entails educating management on diversity and valuing differences.

- **HR management systems:** This is possibly one of the most important factors in diversity management because it entails ensuring bias-free recruitment processes. There needs to be equal opportunity for training and development of all employees and bias-free promotions, compensation, benefits and performance appraisals.
- **Higher career involvement of women:** Organisations must consider the involvement of women in the workplace, as a previously disadvantaged group. It must be considered how they are affected by sexism and sexual harassment and the possible conflicts that exist for women between their work lives and family responsibilities.
- **Heterogeneity in race, equality, ethnicity and nationality:** Organisations must consider the effects that group identities have on interactions in the workplace. They need to do as much as they can to eliminate any form of prejudice in the workplace and strive to create cohesiveness in organisations where the lines of communication are open and conflict as well as employee morale are dealt with promptly.

Literature indicates that diversity management, which is aimed at creating an inclusive environment, yields positive outcomes for all (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015). In addition to leading to inclusion, diversity management could also be used as a means to attract, retain as well as manage a diverse workforce to contribute to the organisation's performance and should be targeted at the inclusion of all groups in the organisation (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015). The integration and inclusion of all groups by organisations provides the opportunity for these diverse groups to learn from each other and to embrace their differences. Diversity management therefore provides a source of growth, learning and intuition when it is adequately managed (Choi & Rainey, 2010). This leads into the next section of how diversity can be a source of competitive advantage.

2.2.3. Diversity as a competitive advantage

Most organisations carry out diversity practices so that they can meet their legal and social responsibility objectives such as meeting their quotas (Cox et al., 1991). In recent years however, diversity management has sought to improve various issues relating to and experienced by previously disadvantaged groups such as women and ethnic minorities

and to remove bias, discrimination and conflicts experienced by these groups in the workplace (Xiaotao, Yang, Diaz, & Yu, 2018).

In addition to the above, diversity could provide organisations with a wealth of other competitive advantages ranging from resource acquisition, problem-solving creativity, marketing and organisational flexibility (Cox et al., 1991). Further to this, it has been asserted that diversity strengthens the organisation's brand image and also pulls in new talent (Kundu & Mor, 2017).

When we look at diversity and its advantages, most academics and business leaders have recommended that organisations embrace and implement diversity practices in their organisations (Cox et al., 1991). The fact that an organisation comprises of a workforce made up of different people from different backgrounds, who generate different ideas, translates into a different form of creative potential which results in innovative ideas that come from that workforce, and this in itself may be a competitive advantage (Pless & Maak, 2004).

In addition to the above and if we consider the resourced-based view, studies have shown that an organisation's diverse workforce can in itself be considered a competitive advantage because this workforce cannot be easily duplicated (Kundu & Mor, 2017). Advocating for diversity in organisations and encouraging organisations to value diversity should therefore not only relate to meeting quotas but should extend to the realisation that when organisations have a diverse workforce, this holds potential competitive advantages for that organisation (Cox et al., 1991).

While diversity is an important starting point for organisations to bring about change in their workforce and to see benefits in their workforce, these benefits are seldom realised because organisations do not follow through on diversity practices with the creation of an atmosphere of inclusion (Pless & Maak, 2004). This study intends to bring to light the possible benefits that may exist, such as competitive advantages and increased performance, when organisations foster inclusive workplaces and/or include employees.

This leads to the next section of this paper, namely the discussion of inclusion and its constructs.

2.3 Inclusion

2.3.1 Defining inclusion

In recent years, research relating to diversity has shifted from a diversity-centred approach to that of inclusion (Xiaotao et al., 2018). This further highlights the importance of inclusion at this juncture in both practice and theory.

The concept of inclusion has been part of organisational literature for over a decade and although it is receiving increased attention, it remains a fairly new concept (Shore et al., 2011; Xiaotao et al., 2018). Inclusion is a concept that goes beyond diversity (Chen & Tang, 2018). It has, over the years, evolved and expanded beyond the interpersonal level to self-leadership where individuals need to manage their own stereotypes and prejudices (April & Blass, 2010).

As in the case of diversity, authors differ on the definition of inclusion and thus there are various definitions offered for inclusion. Inclusion can firstly be defined as “the degree to which an employee is accepted and treated as an insider in the work system” (Pelled et al., 1999, p. 1014). Roberson (2006) on the other hand saw inclusion as the removal of obstacles which allows for the full contribution and participation of employees in the organisation. This definition is in line with Miller’s (1998), who also stated that inclusion is where employees enabled to contribute fully and allowed to participate.

A further definition of inclusion refers to a situation when individuals feel a sense of belonging in an organisation (Lirio, Lee, Williams, Haugen, & Kossek, 2008). This definition is in line with that provided by Shore et al. (2011) who defined inclusion to include the concepts of uniqueness, belongingness and valuing contribution. All these definitions thus indicate an emphasis on belonging as a pivotal part of inclusion (Xiaotao et al., 2018). These definitions make it clear that for an employee to feel included or to experience inclusion, they have to feel like they belong to a certain group (Buengeler et al., 2018), that they are accepted as part of the group and that their contributions are valued and heard (Shore et al., 2011). The inclusion framework in Figure 2 shows the levels of inclusion, the associated feelings that come with that, and how these feelings influence performance.

Inclusion Framework		
	Low Belongingness	High Belongingness
Low Value in Uniqueness	<p align="center">Exclusion</p> <p>Individual is not treated as an organizational insider with unique value in the work group but there are other employees or groups who are insiders.</p>	<p align="center">Assimilation</p> <p>Individual is treated as an insider in the work group when they conform to organizational/dominant culture norms and downplay uniqueness.</p>
High Value in Uniqueness	<p align="center">Differentiation</p> <p>Individual is not treated as an organizational insider in the work group but their unique characteristics are seen as valuable and required for group/ organization success.</p>	<p align="center">Inclusion</p> <p>Individual is treated as an insider and also allowed/encouraged to retain uniqueness within the work group.</p>

Figure 2: Inclusion framework (Shore et al., 2011, p. 1266).

The inclusion framework is important because it shows the effect that inclusion and belonging has on an individual. The framework relays that when an individual is excluded, the feeling that is associated with that is one of low belongingness. This also shows that when individuals are excluded, there is low value placed on the uniqueness of the individual and they are not treated as an insider. On the other hand, when an individual is included, the feeling associated with this is one of belonging. When they are included, the framework shows that this indicates that there is a high value placed on their uniqueness and they are treated as an insider (Shore et al., 2011).

This framework is important for this study because it provided a basis from which to build, in relation to performance. The framework shows the levels of inclusion and exclusion and the resultant feelings of belongingness. In addition, this paper adds the dimension of performance to this framework to show how both inclusion and exclusion influence performance.

In contrast to diversity, inclusion relates more to how individuals feel part of their employer organisation. It therefore talks to unlegislated, informal practices and efforts that the organisation makes to create this type of environment (Barak & Michalle, 2019). It is therefore important that for employees to feel included, an inclusive environment is created which brings together both minority and majority employees and which allows for elimination of bias and the benefit of all employees of diversity practices (Buengeler

et al., 2018). This inclusion aspect is important because this study aimed to show how this influences performance. Even though there has been increased discussion on inclusion in recent years, there is still much doubt on how to operationalise inclusion (Xiaotao et al., 2018)

The next section therefore discusses inclusive workplaces and environments, what they are, how these can be fostered, and how they contribute to employee performance.

2.3.2 Inclusive culture/environment

The concept of inclusive climates or environments is a field recently studied by various scholars (Shore et al., 2018). The increase in literature relating to this concept evidences that organisations are recognising that with a diverse workforce comes the need to create an inclusive environment (Shore et al., 2018).

According to Pless and Maak (2004), an inclusive environment is one where the organisation deliberately brings together people from different backgrounds, with different ways of thinking, to use those differences to the best of their abilities and for organisational success. While organisations may have diverse workplaces and diversity policies, these do not automatically translate into inclusive workplaces (Buengeler et al., 2018). Inclusive workplaces embrace all facets of inclusion, including but not limited to inclusive policies and practices, individual inclusion, leader inclusion and group inclusion, in order to create a wholistic inclusive environment (Shore et al., 2018). It is therefore important to discuss what inclusive workplaces look like.

In addition to the above, an inclusive environment is one where individual employees are treated as insiders and are encouraged to express their uniqueness (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015). It is an environment where employees collectively perceive the norms of the organisation to allow for the expression of their “self” and all identities that they hold. Such an environment involves employees in company decision-making processes, and also allows employees to openly share their views (Shore et al., 2018). It is also where the organisation ensures that its inclusion processes and practices are core to the organisation and are applied consistently at all levels (Shore et al., 2018). These practices are important as an inclusive environment shows that employees are included and, for the purposes of this study, it is important to understand how this inclusion of employees influences employee performance.

Characteristics of an inclusive environment are that there is no discrimination, individuals from all backgrounds are treated fairly, involved in decision-making and are ultimately valued and respected for who they truly are and for the views that they have (Nishii, 2013; Shore et al., 2018). Figure 3 shows a model of inclusive organisations (Shore et al., 2018).

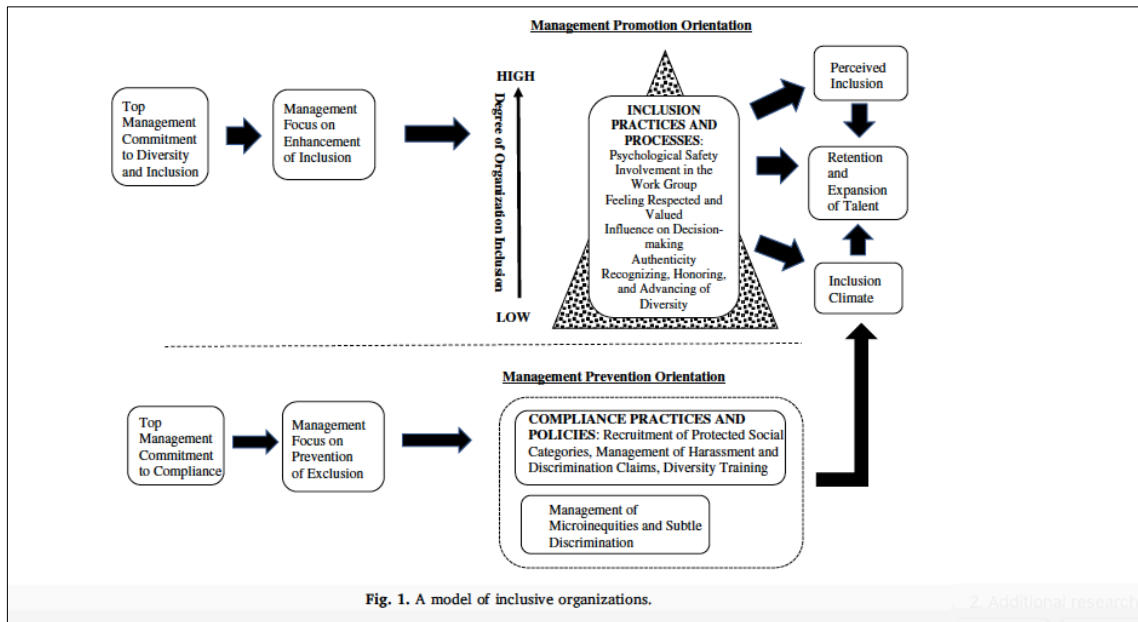


Figure 3: Model of inclusive organisations (Shore et al., 2018, p. 185).

This model shows that when an organisation is inclusive, top management must be committed to both diversity and inclusion. In addition to this commitment, management needs a clear focus on the enhancement of inclusion. Once this commitment and focus are clear, it is important to create and apply inclusion practices and processes to create an inclusive environment. These practices and processes will seek to create an inclusive climate or organisation. It is not enough to stop there; a further step is to ensure that there is compliance with the practices and policies. This will also need management commitment and focus. Compliance entails the training on inclusion and the management of various subtleties related to inclusion (Shore et al., 2018).

Inclusiveness therefore exists in organisations when employees feel a sense of belonging, are free to contribute fully and when the organisation itself fosters an environment where employees can be productive while balancing their work and life in general (Lirio et al., 2008).

When organisations develop inclusive cultures, it shows employees that they are appreciated, and this appreciation goes beyond short-term economic benefit; it also contributes to the long-term sustainability of the organisation (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015). Organisations that are inclusive ensure that their practices and process relating to inclusion form the core of the organisation and are applied and actively adhered to at all levels of the organisation (Shore et al., 2018). When employees experience inclusion, they feel valued and recognised (Sabharwal, 2014) and this inclusion positively relates to their job satisfaction (Shore et al., 2011). Therefore, organisational behaviours that foster inclusion are important if organisations seek to increase both employee and organisational performance (Sabharwal, 2014). This study sought to explore how those organisational behaviours and the resultant inclusion of employees contributes to the increased performance of the employee.

When we consider that people from diverse groups are not included in networks of information and have limited opportunities compared to other more included cultural groups, inclusion then becomes important because it fosters empowerment of these individuals and promotes worker involvement (Roberson, 2006). An inclusive culture is therefore one where people come together. The environment in which they operate creates a space for their voices and ideas to be heard, respected and valued and this enables them to make meaningful contributions (Pless & Maak, 2004).

With this being said, certain authors believe that when inclusion only focuses on a select group of people, this creates discrimination of other groups. The focus should therefore be on turning all groups into beneficiaries of inclusive practices which results in fairness and the elimination of bias towards certain groups (Buengeler et al., 2018). The benefit of this in terms of this study is that if all employees are beneficiaries of inclusion, it leads to greater performance by all employees and not only the select group, which in turn contributes to greater organisational performance without any employee being left behind. Further, if organisations include all employees, they mitigate the risk of creating a vicious cycle of dealing with inclusion of some employees and then the exclusion of others.

The paper aimed to look at the how employee inclusion influences performance (Buengeler et al., 2018), and in so doing considered Social Identity Theory. This theory looks at an individual's attachment to a social group and explains how social structures impact people and their commitment and also how commitment and processes by an organisation influences behaviour of employees (Chen & Tang, 2018; Barak & Michalle,

2019). It is important to note that the building of an inclusive organisation requires serious commitment and must be based on reciprocal understanding, trust, integrity and mutual enabling (April & Blass, 2010). As per the model of inclusive organisations by Shore et al. (2018), if there is not serious commitment then building inclusive organisation will not happen. This in turn means that organisations will not realise the possible benefits that come with such environments and how it may influence employee performance.

2.3.3 Advantages of inclusion

In considering why organisations should foster inclusive environments, we had to consider what the advantages of these are. There are numerous advantages that come with individuals feeling included and these relate to loyalty, exuding positive characteristics to group members, which leads to a feeling of safety and security (Shore et al., 2011). When individuals feel included and accepted as a member of the group, this allows individuals to attribute positive characteristics (Shore et al., 2011). An important aspect of inclusion is that it acknowledges and uses individual differences in the work environment to allow for the individual to be engaged and this causes subsequent enhanced performance (Daya, 2014).

Inclusion also creates an environment where employees participate and think more comprehensively, which leads to consideration of broader issues (Xiaotao et al., 2018). This, of course, leads to increased performance and organisational commitment and research has shown that inclusion of employees has resulted in positive outcomes for both employee and the organisation (Shore et al., 2011).

As previously stated, uniqueness provides opportunities for improved group performance, more so when the individual feels included and the group values their unique characteristics (Shore et al., 2011). However, there are limited studies that have measured organisational inclusive behaviours and viewed how this influences performance (Sabharwal, 2014; April & Blass, 2010). There does however seem to be support for the idea that creating an inclusive environment leads to greater job performance (Sabharwal, 2014).

While there has been extensive research on diversity, it is surprising that not more research has been done on the promotion and understanding of inclusion in the workplace and its beneficial consequences (Shore et al., 2011). It is for this reason that this paper sought to consider inclusion and how it influences employee performance. For

organisations to fully recognise the advantages of inclusion, they must create an environment that fosters inclusion and that embraces all cultures and fosters integration (Pless & Maak, 2004). As in the case of diversity, not all authors agree that inclusion results in positive results (Barak & Michalle, 2019; Shore et al., 2018; Buengeler et al., 2018).

Because this study relates to how performance is influenced by inclusion, we now turn our attention to performance and the discussion of its various constructs applicable to this paper.

2.4 Performance

2.4.1 Defining performance

This section reviews what is meant by performance and how it is applied in this paper.

Despite the extensive usage of the term 'performance', there has not been much effort in explaining and clarifying what it means (Sonnentag & Frese, 2002). The question of how performance is defined still causes confusion and conflict today (Micheli & Mari, 2014; Bourne, Melnyk, & Bititci, 2018). Performance in its simplest form can be defined as the ability to assess individual and collective efforts (Bourne et al., 2018). It is what the organisation appoints one to do and for one to do it well (Sonnentag & Frese, 2002). This definition, applicable to this study, is in line with the definition of performance as provided for by Schechner and Brady (2013, p. 28) who stated that to perform is to "do something up to a certain standard, to succeed, to excel".

Performance is multifaceted and addresses a range of goals at any given moment (Andrews, Boyne, & Walker, 2006). It can be divided into five dimensions namely: outputs, efficiency, effectiveness, responsiveness and democratic outcomes (Andrews et al., 2006). Even with these criteria, uncertainty still exists on how to operationalise performance (Andrews et al., 2006). Taking into consideration the outputs as set out above, for performance to be considered as good, it requires that the employee has completed and accomplished their job-related responsibilities to the satisfaction of their employer (Ribeiro, Duarte, & Filipe, 2018). This is the basis on which performance is considered for the purposes of this paper.

When considering performance, however, one has to differentiate between an action and an outcome, where the action refers to behavioural aspects of what the individual does,

and the outcome refers to the consequence of that behaviour (Sonnentag & Frese, 2002). Performance can therefore not be defined in relation to an action only but to a judgmental and evaluative process (Sonnentag & Frese, 2002). This was important for purposes of this study because inclusion of the employee may cause them to act a certain way and that action may either result in increased or decreased performance, which will contribute to answering the overall research question.

In this paper, the focus was primarily on the performance of the individual. It is a concept that needs to be explained and predicted in relation to various factors that influence it and in the current paper, in relation to the concept of inclusion (Sonnentag, 2002). This was important to note because performance does not only depend on individual behaviours but also on factors beyond the control of the individual (Sonnentag & Frese, 2002). These factors beyond their control could relate to organisations creating inclusive environments or the employee being included in the workplace. Individual performance in this instance and for the purpose of this paper can therefore be defined as “the set of individual actions and behaviours that are relevant to their organisational goals” (Ribeiro et al., 2018, p. 1589).

In addition to the above, performance is also a multi-dimensional concept, where task performance focuses on the technical ability to carry out the task and contextual performance refers to activities that are not related to technical ability (Sonnentag & Frese, 2002). In its simplest form, performance is essentially the extent to which a job is done well (Ribeiro et al., 2018).

2.4.2 Performance indicators

When we consider the definitions of performance as set out above, the measure that will be used to consider whether an employee has performed would relate to the outputs of that employee (Andrews et al., 2006). In this study, this was looked at from the perspective of the employee who advised how inclusion enabled them to achieve their set goals or to perform at a set standard. This is important because this would ultimately relate to benefits for the organisation which is also an important aspect to consider.

In addition to this and most importantly, the ultimate measure and indicator of performance is the extent to which the employee has done the job well and how well the employee has accomplished their job-related responsibilities (Ribeiro et al., 2018). The employees were asked to compare their performance from when they were included and

excluded, and the two responses will be compared in order to ascertain whether there was indeed performance and whether inclusion influenced it.

This chapter now moves on to discuss the theoretical anchor on which the study was based, namely Social Identity Theory.

2.5 Theoretical anchor: Social Identity Theory

As part of the study, this paper sought to consider a theory which would underpin the study and which explains the relationship between individuals and how this relates to inclusion as well as performance. The appropriate theory was identified as Social Identity Theory.

Social Identity Theory according to its originators, Tajfel and Turner (1986), refers to a circumstance where individuals classify themselves into different social categories which allows them to determine their own identity and belongingness to a particular group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Ashforth & Mael, 1989). The premise of Social Identity Theory is that people group themselves and those around them into various social categories (Scheepers, Douman, & Moodley, 2018). These social categories seem to originate from “prototypical characteristics abstracted from members” (Ashforth & Mael, 1989. p. 20) and these categories could relate to race, ethnicity, gender, age, religious affiliation and organisational membership (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Barak & Michalle, 2019).

Social Identity Theory is underpinned by the assumption that individuals have a strong desire to belong to groups that have positive and strong identities and persons who belong to these groups with perceived superior status are more likely to include and accept individuals who they consider to be like them, and consequently exclude those different from them (Barak & Michalle, 2019). This is important for the purposes of this study because it looked at how this inclusion or exclusion from a group, and the work group in this case, influences performance.

When individuals see themselves as belonging to a group, this provides them with a sense of social identity and makes them feel like they fit in. This belonging to the group is also a source of self-esteem for these individuals (Sabharwal, 2014). In addition to this, being part of the group fosters a sense of commonality which allows individuals to work together in either a positive or negative way (Barak & Michalle, 2019). It is therefore important to explore how an individual's performance is influenced when they identify as part of a group or when they are accepted into a group (Randel & Jaussi, 2003).

The forming of these various groupings and how individuals categorise themselves is different for each individual and is influenced by various factors including but not limited to historical, social, political and economic factors (Scheepers et al., 2018; Ashforth & Mael, 1989). The outcome of this is that when people identify with these categories, they become attached to each other through their common connection, and this could be seen as a symbolic attachment to the group (Shore et al., 2011).

As a social-psychological theory, an important aspect of Social Identity Theory is that it relays the fact that people develop their own identity and attach personal meaning to it through their membership of these various groups (Barak & Michalle, 2019). This is important because it means that there is then an emotional attachment created between the individual and the group/social category with which they relate (Scheepers et al., 2018). The understanding of this theory is therefore pivotal in understanding how diversity and inclusion influences how people perceive themselves and ultimately relate to or include others (Barak & Michalle, 2019).

According to Ashforth and Mael (1989), these categories that individuals develop are defined by two main elements. First it is cognitive, where individuals order and segment their environment which provides a frame within which to define others. Here, an individual assigns characteristics to themselves relevant to their related category, for example, "I am a woman" or "I am South African". In this step of identification, individuals need not see themselves as supportive of the efforts or the goals of the group, but merely need to see themselves as psychologically intertwined with the fate of the group. Secondly, social or group identification is where individuals personally experience the failures or success of the group.

The application of Social Identity Theory is important for the purposes of this paper because this theory was created to address situations dealing with intergroup relations as well as social change (Scheepers et al., 2018). In addition to the above, its applicability to diversity and inclusion literature and role identification and how this creates in-groups and out-groups and the effect of that, is also important and warrants discussion (Shore et al., 2011).

Further to the above and most importantly is that when individuals work in an inclusive climate, they feel like they are part of a shared social identity with that group. This in turn generates shared interests amongst the group and reduces boundaries and allows for individuals to relate to each other (Barak & Michalle, 2019). This theory ties directly into

inclusion and relays to us that if an individual feels as though they belong and that they form part of a group, that makes them feel secure. This theory has therefore been argued to form the basis of inclusion (Sabharwal, 2014).

The premise is that when individuals identify with a group or an organisation, this has been proven to affect the effectiveness of the individual and the organisation (Randel & Jaussi, 2003). Social Identity Theory can also restore some coherence to organisational identification, and it suggests fruitful implications for organisational behaviour (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Ultimately, this theory is important and applicable to this study because there have been findings that suggest that when an individual possesses a strong social identity and belongs to a group, this could lead to increased individual performance. This is so because the individual will cooperate more with the team members with whom they identify (Randel & Jaussi, 2003). Lastly, Social Identity Theory informs that when individuals feel part of a group, this fosters a sense of commonality amongst the members and being included in a group with a superior status results in higher self-esteem and thus positive individual outcomes (Barak & Michalle, 2019).

When this inclusion happens in an organisational setting, the organisation becomes a wider group to which the individual belongs and this feeling of belonging and inclusion in work groups results in positive consequences and effects on the individual and in turn the organisation (Shore et al., 2018; Barak & Michalle, 2019). This is important for this study because if indeed group belonging increases self-esteem and performance as Social Identity Theory suggests, then this relates directly to inclusion and its influence on performance.

Important for the purposes of this study is how an individual's need for belonging and uniqueness, as well as the ensuing sense of connection with the team in an organisational setting, influences their performance (Shore et al., 2011). Social Identity Theory talks directly to that need for belonging and being part of a group.

2.6 Conclusion

The aim of this research paper was to explore the influence of workplace inclusion on employee performance. From the literature review above it was clear that much has been written about diversity and inclusion. One of the main issues that present with regard to diversity and inclusion is the fact that these terms are seen as synonymous with each

other and are used interchangeably and, in so doing, detract from the importance of each of these terms individually (Roberson, 2006; Shore et al., 2018).

What we know about diversity is that authors have stated that when an organisation is comprised of diverse individuals, this may result in competitive advantages for the organisation (Pless & Maak, 2004). These advantages however can only be realised when the organisation implements proper diversity management practices which aim to include all these individuals in aim to leverage off of their differences (Kundu & Mor, 2017). This then leads us to inclusion.

Although in its early stages, the rhetoric and writing around inclusion specifically is increasing but still needs development (Shore et al., 2018). Research which has been conducted seems to indicate the value of inclusion (Shore et al., 2018) and suggests that inclusion results in a positive experience by employees and this leads to increased performance as well as psychological satisfaction by those employees (Chen & Tang, 2018). Research further shows that when employees experience a feeling of inclusion, they are more likely to reciprocate this with higher performance (Hui et al., 2015). This leads us to believe that inclusion indeed influences performance (Shore et al., 2018).

With the above having been said, one of the areas that needs to be developed upon specifically relates to the value and potential of inclusion and how this influences performance (Shore et al., 2018; Roberson, 2006; Sonnentag & Frese, 2002). In addition to the above, what also needs to be discussed is how inclusion in general translates into change in performance (April & Blass, 2010). This is ultimately what the paper sought to research and what the overall research question sought to answer.

From the above, Figure 4 sets out the key constructs which were considered as part of this paper in order to answer the overall research question:

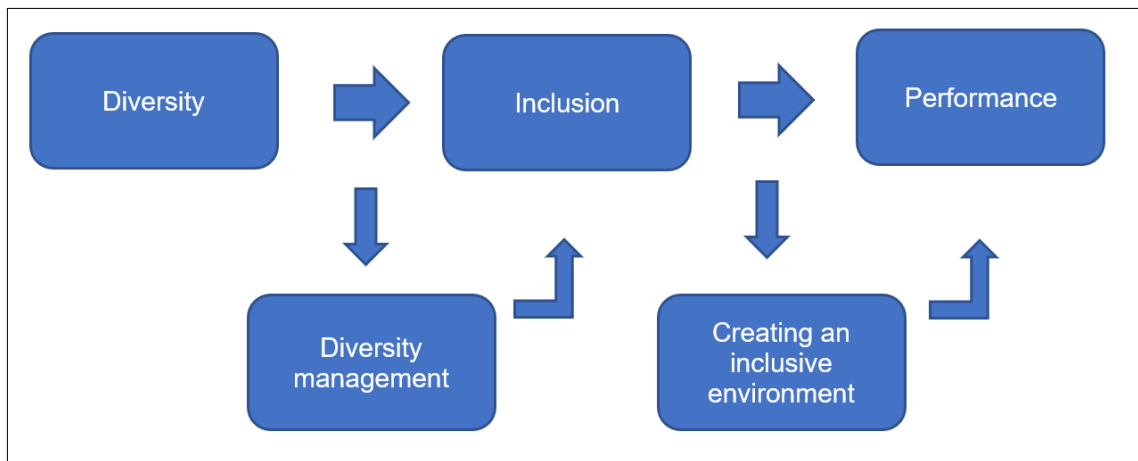


Figure 4: Key constructs considered.

The diagram shows that in order to answer the overall question, the construct of diversity must be discussed and differentiated from inclusion. This is important because as noted above, these terms are commonly confused. In order for this paper to adequately answer the research question, the meaning of inclusion must be made clear. Following the definition of diversity, this chapter considered diversity management. This was important because without adequate diversity management which seeks to bring people from diverse groups together, we cannot move to inclusion which seeks to include all those diverse individuals. Once diversity management was discussed, the chapter moved on to inclusion, to define this construct and ensure understanding of what it means for the purposes of this paper. Once this was done, the chapter discussed what an inclusive environment is and how this presents, and why creating an inclusive environment is important for individual inclusion. Lastly, the chapter addressed performance and how the inclusive experience of the employee has influenced their performance.

The aim of this paper is to make contributions to both theory and practice in order to ultimately understand whether inclusion influences employee performance. In answering this, the chapter discussed Social Identity Theory (Farndale et al., 2015). It also considered the concepts of diversity and inclusion and how these relate to each other and ultimately the performance of the employee.

2.7 Research questions

Because this study is based on inclusion and its influence on employee performance, based on the above literature review four research questions (discussed in detail in the next chapter) were developed and are as follows:

1. What inclusive behaviours have employees experienced? (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015; Chen & Tang, 2018; Jordan et al., 2019)
2. How does an inclusive workplace affect employees? (Shore et al., 2011; Chen & Tang, 2018)
3. How does inclusion influence employee performance? (Chen & Tang, 2018; Sabharwal, 2014; Shore et al., 2011).
4. What are the benefits of inclusion and should organisations consider putting in place practices to promote inclusion and to enhance employee and organisational performance? (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015; Kundu & Mor, 2017; Shore et al, 2018).

Chapter 3: Research Questions

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the influence of inclusion on employee performance. Based on the literature review in the previous chapter, the following research questions were developed in order to gain insights and to answer the overall research question:

3.2 Research Question 1

What inclusive behaviours have employees experienced? (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015; Chen & Tang, 2018; Jordan et al., 2019)

In order to establish whether inclusion does indeed influence employee performance, the employees' understanding of inclusion had to first be assessed. Once the employees advised what their understanding of inclusion was, they were then able to relay their experience of inclusion or exclusion which set the foundation of whether this experience of inclusion contributed positively or influenced the performance of the employee. Important to note as part of this question was that a distinction also had to be drawn between the definitions of diversity and inclusion because, as per the literature, these terms are often confused. Certain employees confused the two concepts and this clarification between the two had to be reinforced so as to enable the employee to provide response on their inclusive experience and not a diversity experience.

3.3 Research Question 2

How does an inclusive workplace affect employees? (Shore et al., 2011; Chen & Tang, 2018)

Once the employees had explained their understanding of inclusion, they needed to point out specific instances where they had been included or where the workplace was an inclusive environment. Once the employee had reflected on their inclusion experience and what an inclusive workplace presents as, they then needed to compare the inclusion experience or instance to that of a workplace that is not inclusive or where the employee was not included. This foreground was important for answering this question because employees needed to adequately be able to differentiate an inclusive workplace versus a workplace where they were excluded. Only once employees were able to differentiate

between the two, were they able to adequately reflect on the inclusive workplace experience and ultimately answer the research question advising how an inclusive workplace affected them. This question also ultimately highlighted the difference in how employees feel in workplaces where there were included versus workplaces where they were not included.

3.4 Research Question 3

How does inclusion influence employee performance? (Chen & Tang, 2018; Sabharwal, 2014; Shore et al., 2011)

Once the employee had considered their experience of being included or working in an inclusive organisation, the employee then had to draw from that experience and advise how they performed around that time. The preceding questions are therefore important because without the employee ensuring that they understand inclusion and how they experienced it during that phase, they would not be able to adequately draw from that experience and advise how that experience influenced their performance. This question specifically intended to draw from that experience and explore how it influenced employee performance. As part of this question, employees also relayed how being excluded influenced their performance and this is discussed in chapters 5 and 6.

3.5 Research Question 4

What are the benefits of inclusion and should organisations consider putting in place practices to promote inclusion and to enhance employee and organisational performance? (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015; Kundu & Mor, 2017; Shore et al., 2018).

This question relates mainly to the business/practical need for this study. Once all the questions had been answered, the employee's responses were viewed and considered and provided clarity on whether there are benefits to inclusion and whether the experience of inclusion indeed contributed to increased performance of the employee. Employees shared their thoughts and insights on whether inclusion practices should be implemented by organisations to enhance performance. This was important because organisations will see the findings in this regard and decide whether inclusion and implementing inclusive practices is an important consideration for them. This is further important because literature has advised that increased performance of an employee results in increased performance of the organisation, which could be an important consideration for organisations.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The following section outlines the research methodology and design that was applied in the study. The chosen design used a qualitative approach and was informed by the literature review and the research questions as outlined in the chapters above. Because the study sought to explore how inclusion influences employee performance, it lends itself to an exploratory study. This informed the choice for a qualitative, rather than quantitative research approach (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

The sections below outline and reinforce the selection of the chosen design.

4.2 Choice of methodology

A research philosophy relates to the system of beliefs as well as assumptions about the development of knowledge (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Because the research sought to understand what was occurring in a work organisation, the applicable philosophy was interpretivism (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Interpretivism is “a philosophy which advocates the necessity to understand differences between humans in their role as social actors” (Saunders & Lewis, 2018, p. 109). An interpretivist approach was best suited because the research related to the unique experience of an individual in a unique set of circumstances and how they interpret the experience (Quinlan, Babin, Carr, Griffin, & Zikmund, 2019, p. 63).

The research methodology refers to the steps taken to procure reliable answers to the questions that have been posed and also determines whether the research tool used is correct and appropriate (Ellis & Levy, 2008). Given that the research sought to explore how inclusion influences performance, the methodology took the form of a qualitative approach (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). A qualitative approach was important because it offers new ways of seeing (Bansal, Smith, & Vaara, 2018) which is what one needs when engaging in an exploratory study. A quantitative approach would not have been suitable because “it mainly deals with numbers and does not leave room for exploration” (Quinlan et al., 2019, p. 63).

A qualitative research design allowed for the questioning, evaluation, probing, reflection and rejection of versions of events as presented in the interviews. This was important for obtaining valid and strong evidence for derivative knowledge claims (Schaefer &

Alvesson, 2020). In addition to this, reflection and careful consideration and reference to the discourse and narrative during the interviews were important in developing a robust study (Schaefer & Alvesson, 2020).

As mentioned, this paper sought to look at whether inclusion influences performance. The approach was therefore moving from a specific observation where one observes patterns and repeated occurrences, allowing for the formulation of propositions and/or conclusions from what has been observed (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The approach that the study followed was therefore inductive as it sought to gain an understanding of certain events and the meanings that humans attach to these events (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Using an inductive approach allowed for the building on theory that already exists and also provided insights which may have otherwise not been uncovered, had a quantitative approach been used. It also allowed for development of new theory and for the steering theories in new directions (Bansal et al., 2018).

The purpose of the research design as stated above was to explore the topic and gain insights about it that are not clearly understood (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The study thus followed an exploratory approach, which aimed to ask new questions and assess topics in a new light (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). This approach also went hand in hand with the qualitative inductive approach as discussed above because it is was carried out in an emergent and flexible design that allowed for decisions about the data and its analysis to be made as the study unfolded (Locke, 2011).

It is beneficial to note that a quantitative approach would not have been suited to this study because this study sought to explore feelings, thoughts, ideas and experiences of individuals; it is not numeric (Quinlan et al., 2019, p.63). A quantitative approach is concerned with data in the form of numbers which could be readily coded (Quinlan et al., 2019, p.63) and which could also be manipulated, added to and transformed into efficient data displays (Bansal et al., 2018). It would therefore not have yielded the requisite results required for this study.

The researcher used a mono method of data collection through semi-structured interviews (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Interviews were used because they deliver reliable data and provide the interviewee with an opportunity to provide a rich an authentic account of their experience which lends to richer data (Schaefer & Alvesson, 2020). Interviews also strengthen observations and are one of the most popular ways in which data is collected (Schaefer & Alvesson, 2020). Unstructured interviews (Saunders &

Lewis, 2018) would not have been appropriate in this instance as they may have caused the interview and resultant research to not be centred and thus go off track; semi-structured interviews allowed for data collection to stay on course (Myers, 2020).

Because the paper sought to consider a series of events as presented and experienced by the interviewees as well as aimed to focus on the discourse (Sandelowski, 1991), it lent itself to a narrative approach. A narrative approach takes the form of storytelling and relays an experience in a sequenced way, detailing the flow of events (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). This approach was important for collecting the appropriate data and ensuring that it was collated adequately to construct the narrative (Bansal et al., 2018).

The time horizon that was used for the paper was cross sectional. Because the paper was drafted over a period of a few months, there were time constraint issues (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). This meant that a cross-sectional approach was best suited in this instance. The researcher collected data from the participants at one period in time (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

In addition to the above and because the study was exploratory in nature, research was collected through conducting of interviews. The interviews took the format of semi-structured interviews which allowed the interviewer to ask certain questions which varied depending on the themes covered in the interview (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). An example of this was questions pertaining to clarifying the difference between diversity and inclusion. Interviews, unlike in the case of surveys, allowed the interviewee to provide authentic information about their experiences, feelings and beliefs, and this makes the information provided reliable and robust (Schaefer & Alvesson, 2020).

As the interviews were predominantly carried out during COVID 19 and during lockdown, they were carried out via digital communication platforms such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom.

4.3 Population

Population refers to the complete set of group members which can either be people, organisations or places, it does not necessarily have to be people (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The population chosen for this study was females, both white and black ("black" to be defined in accordance with the South African BEE codes to include African, Coloured and Indian females) (Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment Act 46 of 2013). The reason for the use of black females in addition to white females is because

black females are a previously disadvantaged group from both a racial and gender perspective (Kundu & Mor, 2017). This provided a richer research result which showed the inclusion pattern relating to race and gender.

4.4 Unit of analysis

The unit of analysis was the perceptions of females about the influence of inclusion on performance. This related to the research question and the objective of this paper more so because females as a vulnerable group are more excluded in the workplace and would be able to provide more detail on the influence of inclusion on their performance.

4.5 Sampling method, size and description of sample

The researcher used a non-probability, purposive sampling technique to collect a small sample in the process of collecting data (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The sample was identified by secondary research through the review of articles which highlighted the issues faced by females as previously disadvantaged people. By compiling this sample, it aimed to draw greater understanding of the question to be answered in this paper (Schaefer & Alvesson, 2020). The sample the study used was female employees at a junior, middle and senior management level to understand how inclusion influenced their performance at various levels. The sample was obtained from informal and formal networks and was directly connected to the research question because merely interviewing a large sample from different workplaces who are not directly connected in their experience to the research question would not have assisted in bringing understanding or building theory (Schaefer & Alvesson, 2020). Saturation was therefore important and was reached at interview 8.

When one considers the sample set for qualitative studies these are generally much lower than those as used or required in a quantitative study (Mason, 2010). The guiding principle for choosing a sample size should be the concept of saturation (Mason, 2010; Myers, 2020). The size of the sample should be dictated by saturation, however, a sample size of 15 is the smallest acceptable number recommended for a qualitative study and should be sufficient (Myers, 2020; Mason, 2010). The sample size in total was 15 female employees from different levels and industries. Table 1 below presents the sample and their details.

Table 1: Participant summary.

4.6 Measurement instrument

Participant No.	Race	Title
Participant 1	Black – African	Senior Attorney, Director of own company
Participant 2	Black – African	Senior Legal Counsel
Participant 3	Black – African	Legal Advisor
Participant 4	Black – African	Marketing Assistant, Owner of Business
Participant 5	Black – Coloured	Advertising Executive
Participant 6	White	Senior Manager – Business Operations
Participant 7	White	Senior Manager – Business Development
Participant 8	Black – Indian	Global Bid Manager
Participant 9	Black – Indian	Company Secretary, Head of Regulatory Compliance
Participant 10	Black – African	Group Company Secretary
Participant 11	Black – Coloured	Chief Health Officer
Participant 12	White	Senior Manager – Scheduling Systems
Participant 13	Black – African	Senior Consultant
Participant 14	Black – African	Legal Advisor
Participant 15	Black – African	Senior Legal Advisor

An interview guide attached hereto as Appendix 1 was developed by the researcher and was used in all interviews (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The interview guide was compiled based on the literature review and was aimed at gaining insights on the research questions. The interviews, although predominately held on digital communication platforms, were set up in a way that established a close rapport with the interviewee and the subject so as to procure relevant and authentic information (Schaefer & Alvesson, 2020). The interviews were carried out in a semi-structured format which enabled the interviewer to probe any additional details but also to not stray (Saunders & Lewis, 2018; Myers, 2020).

4.7 Data gathering tool/process

Data was gathered through interviews both online and face-to-face. Because most interviews were not held in person, the researcher had to ensure that these were recorded on the online platforms used (Zoom or Microsoft Teams). The researcher ensured that there would be necessary backups to ensure data integrity in the event that devices fail. These backups were a voice recorder as well as Otter, an online recording platform. All interviews were recorded, backed up and stored in a password protected folder to prevent unauthorised access. The interviews were semi-structured, and the

conversation was guided but not strictly controlled (Myers, 2020). Notes were also taken in the event that additional questions needed to be asked to the interviewee. The time allotted for the interviews was between 60 and 90 minutes.

The interview questions as set out in Appendix 1 have been mapped to the research questions in Chapter 3 as set out in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Consistency matrix for research questions mapped to interview questions.

Research Question	Data Collection Tool/Questions in Interview Guide
<p>Research Question 1</p> <p>What inclusive behaviours have employees experienced?</p>	<p>Questions 1,3, 6 and 9</p> <p>Question 1: What does inclusion mean to you?</p> <p>Question 3: Tell me about a time when you felt included in a team.</p> <p>3.1 Who you were with?</p> <p>3.2 What was going on?</p> <p>3.3 What behaviours/practices led you to feel included?</p> <p>Question 6: Tell me about a time when you felt excluded.</p> <p>6.1 Who you were with?</p> <p>6.2 What was going on?</p> <p>6.3 What behaviours/practices led you to feel excluded?</p> <p>Question 9: On what basis do you think the exclusion occurred? Was it based on race, gender, team dynamics, organisational culture etc?</p>
<p>Research Question 2</p> <p>How does an inclusive workplace affect employees?</p>	<p>Questions 5 and 8</p> <p>Question 5: When you were included, how did that make you feel about yourself/team/the work, etc.?</p> <p>Question 8: When you were excluded, how did that make you feel about yourself/team/the work, etc.?</p>
<p>Research Question 3</p> <p>How does inclusion influence employee performance?</p>	<p>Question 2, 4, and 7</p> <p>Question 2: What does performance mean to you?</p>

	<p>Question 4: How was your performance around that time?</p> <p>4.1 What did being included have to do with your performance, if at all?</p> <p>Question 7: How was your performance around that time?</p> <p>7.1 What did being excluded have to do with your performance it, if at all?</p>
<p>Research Question 4</p> <p>What are the benefits of inclusion and should organisations consider putting in place practices to promote inclusion and to enhance employee and organisational performance?</p>	<p>Questions 10 and 11</p> <p>Question 10: In general, how would inclusion influence on performance?</p> <p>Question 11: How might inclusion benefit organisations?</p>

4.8 Data Analysis Approach

Interviews were recorded and the interviewer took hand-written notes. There must be a tight fit between the collection of data and the analysis of that data (Schaefer & Alvesson, 2020), therefore the interview recordings were transcribed using Otter and further transcribed by the researcher. The hand-written notes were incorporated into the transcripts where required before they were analysed. The transcriptions were then uploaded into Atlas.ti and were coded. The process of analysing data was an iterative process (Cassell & Symon, 2011) and consisted of the following steps (Myers, 2020; Saunders & Lewis, 2018):

- Data was read when received.
- Portions of data were coded in order to focus on the analysis.
- Coding was done by looking at the meaning of the statement and finding a word or phrase to sum up the meaning of the statement.
- Data was categorised.
- Coded themes were built in order to find meaning (Chapter five provides further detail about the codes generated, categories and themes).
- Findings were organised thematically which entails identifying and analysing themes and/or patterns in qualitative data (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

It is important to note that no amount of analysis and coding can compensate for poorly conducted interviews and information gathering (Schaefer & Alvesson, 2020), it was therefore important to ensure that interviews were carried out correctly.

4.9 Quality controls (reliability, trustworthiness and validity)

As part of the quality controls, the researcher ensured that the data collected was valid, reliable and that it had been collected without bias. When data was collected, the researcher ensured that the participants were comfortable (one of the ways this was done was by asking them whether they wanted to proceed with a video call or simply a voice call), that they did not feel coerced and they were not presented with any incentives for providing data. The participants were therefore provided with consent forms to ensure their willing participation (Myers, 2020; Saunders & Lewis, 2018). See consent form attached as Appendix 2.

The researcher ensured scientific rigour of the data in that it must be credible (which entails internal validity), it must be transferable, it must be dependable and objective (Myers, 2020). An audit trail was created to show the process of data collection and analysis and triangulation, and this was part of the entire process to ensure quality and credibility (Myers, 2020).

The researcher ensured validity by eliminating all factors that threaten the validity of the process (Saunders & Lewis, 2018), for example the researcher did not provide any incentive or gifts to the participants for their participation in the study (Myers, 2020). The researcher also ensured that there was no ambiguity or confusion about the causal direction of the study (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). An example of this was clarifying meanings if certain concepts upfront (i.e., diversity versus inclusion)

In addition, the researcher also ensured reliability by employing data collection methods that produced consistent findings such as triangulation as discussed above and further ensured that he remained aware of any bias which may arise relating to the subject matter and the researcher (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The researcher also ensured that information or statements made in the interview were cross checked where possible to ensure validity (Schaefer & Alvesson, 2020).

In order to ensure quality of interviews, the researcher conducted pilot tests the interview on two parties before carrying out the actual interviews for the study (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). This helped with ensuring that when the interview was carried out, it was done in

a professional manner which had eliminated all the initial problems which may occur (Myers, 2020; Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

4.10 Limitations

Because the researcher is not an expert interviewer, one of the limitations was conducting the interviews. Another limitation was the time horizon over which the study was done. As the study was cross sectional and was done over a six-month period, the results may have been more rigorous if conducted over a longer period. Other limitations were the preparation of the questionnaire where the drafting of the questions and carrying out of the interviews may have been based on personal opinions and bias. The sample size may also not be fully representative, broad enough or generalisable.

4.11 Ethical considerations

The researcher ensured that research was conducted in an ethical manner by firstly obtaining ethical clearance from the university's ethics committee (see ethical clearance attached as Appendix 3). In addition to this, all interviewees were asked to sign informed consent before interviews commenced detailing research objectives and informing them that they could choose to not participate at any time. Lastly, anonymity of the participants was guaranteed and all data which was obtained from the participants was reported without identifiers.

Chapter 5: Results

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the influence of inclusion on employee performance. In this chapter, the results obtained from the one-on-one in-depth interviews are presented. Chapter 3 of the paper formulated four research questions which would aid in answering the overall research question. In order to procure information pertaining to the overall question as well as the research questions, in-depth interviews were conducted in line with the methodology as set out in chapter 4. Through these interviews, information was obtained from the participants. The questions asked in the interview were crafted in line with each of the research objectives and ultimately sought to answer each individual research objectives as well as the overall research question. A summary of the most relevant portions of the interviews is set out in this chapter and this summary aims to provide answers and further clarity into the questions and the overall research question.

This chapter therefore presents the results and key findings according to the study's research questions and the information obtained from the responses received from the 15 participants.

5.2 Description of participants

As part of the methodology, the sample that was chosen for the study was females (both black and white). The participants originated from a wide variety of industries and organisations and also form part of various levels within their respective organisations. This provided for a holistic and rich view of the responses. The sample in total consisted of 15 participants. See Table 1 under Chapter 4 which provides details of the participants, their roles, and their race.

In line with the confidentiality undertakings outlined in Chapter 4, the names and organisations of the participants have been removed from this report. The participants were recorded without identifiers; however, their respective races and job titles have been kept in showing the mix of participants from both a level and racial perspective. The variety in both race and role was done to ensure that this study provides a rich and well-rounded experience from a variety of participants.

5.3 Presentation of results

The paper presents the results in line with the four research questions set out in Chapter 3. The research questions are discussed through the presentation of themes under each of the research questions which present the variety of information obtained for that particular research question.

In analysing the information (transcriptions from interviews), a number of codes were generated, and the table below shows the frequency at which codes were generated. It demonstrates the principle of saturation in that the last five participants generated minimal codes. See Table 3 below which shows the codes generated and the frequency at each participant.

Table 3: Generation of codes and frequency.

	Participant number	Codes generated	New codes generated	Total Codes
1.	Participant 1	90	90	90
2.	Participant 2	159	69	159
3.	Participant 3	221	62	221
4.	Participant 4	235	14	235
5.	Participant 5	242	7	242
6.	Participant 6	252	10	252
7.	Participant 7	265	13	265
8.	Participant 8	285	20	285
9.	Participant 9	293	8	293
10.	Participant 10	300	7	300
11.	Participant 11	306	6	306
12.	Participant 12	307	1	307
13.	Participant 13	308	1	308
14.	Participant 14	310	2	310
15.	Participant 15	311	1	311

*The initial code list was 311 as per Table 3, however after merging similar codes in Atlas.ti to avoid repetition, the final list of codes amounted to 151 codes. The final code list is attached as Appendix 4.

In addition to the codes generated in Atlas ti, see Appendix 5 which sets out the relevant research question paired with the relevant groupings into codes, categories and themes. Because some of the categories and themes had a numerous amount of codes assigned to them, only the top ten codes were inserted into the table for those categories and themes.

5.4 Research Question 1: What inclusive behaviours have employees experienced?

The purpose of this question was to understand what inclusion means to employees and what inclusive behaviours they have experienced. However, before the participants answered the question, it was clear that the researcher had to first establish participants' understanding of what inclusion was. Only thereafter could they relay their experience of inclusion and exclusion.

Interestingly, some participants used the terms diversity and inclusion interchangeably, thus the researcher had to ask the participants to define diversity. Understanding participants' understanding of diversity and inclusion set the foundation for understanding how the experience of inclusion and/or exclusion contributed to the performance of the employee. The questions in the interview guide which relate to this research question are questions 1, 3, 6 and 9.

5.4.1 Defining diversity

As mentioned above, one of the constructs discussed in the literature review was diversity. Diversity is so closely linked to inclusion that some of the participants used the words interchangeably and confused it with inclusion. To clarify their understanding of diversity, participants were asked how diversity differs from inclusion. This question of "what does diversity mean to you?" or "how does diversity differ from exclusion?" was not a standard question in the interview guide and was asked only where the interview diverted to a situation where the definitions of inclusion and diversity were confused. This lends to the exploratory nature of a qualitative study, where one can ask adhoc questions flowing from the main set of questions in the interview guide. Table 4 below shows the codes, categories and themes reflecting what participants thought diversity is.

Table 4: Definitions of diversity.

No.	Theme	Category	Code/construct	Frequency
1	The broadness of diversity	Defining diversity	variety of people with different skills	7
			diversity is broad	3
2	Diversity limited to physical traits	Defining diversity	diversity deals with race and gender	4
			not being discriminated against	3

3	Diversity different from inclusion	Defining diversity	diversity is purposeful	1
			diversity is important for inclusion	1

From the above, three themes emerged from the responses of the participants:

1. The broadness of diversity.
2. Diversity relating to race and gender.
3. Diversity differing from inclusion.

Theme one, **the broadness of diversity**, relayed that diversity comprised not only of gender and race but of various other components. The quotes below highlight different people and different perspectives.

Participant 1: *“Diversity is an environment that is occupied by different people with different characters and traits.”*

Participant 2: *“Getting different kind of voices and having different areas.”*

Some of the participants said diversity related to people with a variety of thoughts, ideas and skills.

Participant 12: *“Diversity is about a thought process. It has nothing to do with what a person looks like...I would certainly not consider diversity to be as limiting as race and gender.”*

The second theme which arose in relation to the definition of diversity was that of having a **diverse workforce in terms of race and gender**.

Participant 3: *“Diversity for me would mean as an organisation, are we taking steps to make sure that females particularly black, black females.”*

Participant 9: *“If you look at top management or the executive level and you see only white males, that means there's a lack of diversity... Also, if you look at the executive level, and there's only 50% white males and 50%, black, black, and by black, I mean coloured Indian and African males, and there are no females, there's also a lack of diversity.”*

The last theme which arose from this section was that the participants saw **diversity being different from inclusion**.

Participant 2: *“But I think diversity is an additional step to inclusion.”*

Participant 11: *“Because diversity looks at multiple criteria. So as an example, it's not, it's not static. These are certain criteria that include you whereas diversity could be a lot broader.”*

The key findings here was that diversity does not merely relate to inherent characteristics but consists of a wealth of other factors including thought processes. It is not limited to race and gender.

5.4.2 Criteria/behaviours leading to inclusion

One of the most important research results was the aspect of how participants saw inclusion in practice and what they deem to be behaviours and criterion that demonstrate or promote inclusion. This is important because the participants' experience of inclusion in relation to the participants' performance is relevant in this paper. There were several behaviours that participants felt contributed to their experience of inclusion. The top ten are captured in the table below. Table 5 shows what the participants considered to be inclusive behaviours and criteria for inclusion, and the resultant themes.

Table 5: Inclusive behaviours/criteria.

No.	Theme	Category	Code/construct	Frequency
1	Belongingness and being part of something	Inclusive behaviours/criteria	belonging, welcomed and being part of a team/group	37
			being trusted or trusting	15
2	Personal involvement and participation	Inclusive behaviours/criteria	being involved and included in decision making	37
			provided with/included in opportunities	10
			involvement and participation	7
3	Listened to and knowing your opinions matter	Inclusive behaviours/criteria	asked for your opinions/views – they matter/respected/noticed	34
			team interaction, synergy and communication	34

			being heard/listened to and helped	24
			sharing ideas/information	9
4	Inclusion at an organisational level	Inclusive behaviours/ criteria	to be part of company/ organisation strategy	8

From the above there were four main themes that emerged which dealt with inclusive behaviours and/or criteria, these were:

1. Belongingness and being part of.
2. Personal involvement and participation,
3. Being listened to and knowing your opinions matter.
4. Inclusion at an organisational level.

The first theme that presented as part of this section was the theme of **belongingness and being a part of**. Several of the participants reflected that when they most felt included or when they deemed an environment to be inclusive, was when they felt a sense of belonging and being part of a group or team.

Participant 1: *“Yes. I was part of the team. I belonged.”*

Participant 3: *“Means that I am part of something, that I am part of an organisation.”*

Participant 10: *“It's a sense of belonging and psychological safety.”*

A second theme that arose was how participants felt that **personal involvement and participation** in the various initiatives within the team and organisation (both in and out of the workplace) and being provided with equal opportunities was a sign of inclusion and evidenced an inclusive environment.

Participant 2: *“Inclusion means that you know, you are involved.”*

Participant 8: *“So for me to be part and parcel and included in decisions and activities that organisation was part of... to be included in terms of opportunities or ventures that company has... the opportunity to grow and to develop myself.”*

Participant 13: *“Inclusion for me means having equal opportunity to go for any target.”*

The third theme which presented was that of being **listened to and knowing that your opinions matter**. When participants felt that they were called upon to provide opinions, share ideas, were listened to and that their opinions and advice was taken into consideration, they felt like they were included and that that was a sign of an inclusive environment.

Participant 3: *“Number one is your voice heard, or is it being taken seriously... do the opinions that I express matter?”*

Participant 4: *“So it made me feel that my input was important... I felt heard and I felt that they trusted me.”*

Participant 6: *“Reason that made me feel included and part of the project and not just a bystander was that I was asked my opinion.”*

The last theme which emerged from this section was inclusion at an **organisational level**. Participants felt that being included in the organisational strategy and being seen as part of it was a sign that the organisation was inclusive, and this was also considered as behaviour leading to and/or showing inclusion.

Participant 4: *“... means that I am part of something, that I am part of an organisation.”*

Participant 5: *“What our strategy will be based on, the organisational strategy for the new financial year and because the info came from the top you are able to understand why the business is making a certain decision and how you as the individual can fit in and contribute within the bigger scheme of things.”*

Participant 8: *“Inclusion in terms of the company's strategy and mission and vision to being part and parcel.”*

The key findings here was that one of the main criteria that show employees that they are included is when they feel a sense of belonging and/or part of the group, when they feel like they are listened to and that their opinions matter.

5.4.3 Criteria/behaviours leading to exclusion

Participants' experiences of inclusion was juxtaposed with their experience of exclusion. This was important because it enabled the drawing of a distinction between the two and contributed to the question of whether their performance was affected. For participants to be clear on inclusion, they had to also be clear on exclusion. There were number of behaviours and the relevant themes that participants deemed to be indicative of exclusion have been captured in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Exclusion behaviours/criteria.

No.	Theme	Category	Code/construct	Frequency
1	Not being seen as valuable	Criteria/ behaviours leading to exclusion	not valued and recognised	12
			opinion ideas not valued or sought	10
2	Not belonging to the group	Criteria/ behaviours leading to exclusion	no involvement or participation/in decision making	11
			not being accepted as part of the group	7
3	No or unequal access to opportunities	Criteria/ behaviours	excluded from activities and opportunities	5

As part of this section, three main themes emerged which dealt with behaviours that are associated with exclusion. These were:

1. Not being seen as valuable.
2. Not belonging to a group.
3. No or unequal access to opportunities.

The first theme that emerged from this section is that of participants **not being seen as valuable**. Participants advised that in instances where they were not valued or recognised, and where they felt that their opinions did not matter, these instances were indicative of an environment where they felt excluded.

Participant 2: *"Meetings were happening and then my involvement was not required or requested."*

Participant 3: *"I was stopped in the middle of it to say, this is not practice, we really don't need your opinion."*

Participant 8: *"I was not included in meetings, I was not included in the company's strategy, I wasn't included in the 2020 plan... you know, I was put on a shelf in the corner of the shop and stuck and trapped."*

The second theme was **not belonging to the group**. Participants noted that when they were not welcomed or seen as part of the group or felt like they did not belong, that made them feel excluded and was evidence of an environment that was not inclusive.

Participant 1: *"... challenged, disrespected and unwelcome."*

Participant 6: *"I wasn't part of the boys club, or whatever it was."*

Participant 9: *"It made me feel like this was not part of a team I wanted to be part of at all... excluded from an inner circle."*

The last theme was when participants stated that an environment where there was **no access to opportunities** was indicative of exclusion and they felt excluded in that environment.

Participant 4: *"I had applied for a position... the business knew that I worked for that position, but it almost felt like it was reserved for certain people."*

Participant 14: *"I feel like I haven't even been given the opportunity."*

The key finding here was that when employees feel like they don't belong, are not provided with equal opportunities and when they are not seen as valuable members of the team and/or organisation, this makes them feel excluded.

5.4.4 Basis for exclusion

When participants spoke about inclusion and exclusion and the behaviours associated with same, they were asked what they would consider the basis or reason for their exclusion was. Table 7 below shows what the participants considered to be the main basis for exclusion.

Table 7: Reasons for exclusion.

No.	Theme	Category	Code/construct	Frequency
1	Exclusion based on inherent traits	Basis for exclusion	discrimination/excluded on race and gender	72
			age and career lifecycle	3
			people felt intimidated and therefore excluded me	1
2	Exclusion based on organisational factors	Basis for exclusion	exclusion based on team dynamics	8
			exclusion based on organisational culture	6

Under this section, two themes emerged which dealt with the reasons for exclusion and these were:

1. Excluded based on inherent traits.
2. Exclusion based on team and organisational factors.

The first theme that presented itself as part of this section was that participants were **excluded on inherent traits** i.e. race and gender. This is something beyond their control. It is interesting to note that the Participant 6, 7 and 12 (the only white participants) did not feel that their exclusion was based on either race or gender, but the black participants did.

Participant 1: *"I actually left because I found the company to be very racist and sexist."*

Participant 6: *"Wasn't sure if it was a woman thing, or just because I wasn't part of the boys club... team dynamics."*

Participant 7: *"Exclusion in my experience has been more as a result of team dynamics."*

Participant 12: *"I think the latter (team dynamics), I trust that everybody else has the same view that gender and colour have no influence in their thought processes. It would be a sad day to think that it was."*

Participant 13: *“I definitely feel like being black and being a female.”*

Participant 15: *“If you're black and if you're female it's like a double-edged sword.”*

In the second theme, participants advised that the main factor here was that they were excluded on additional factors which were also beyond their control. Thus, in addition to the above, the second theme was that **exclusion occurred due to team and organisational factors.**

Participant 3: *“In my view, the exclusion occurred on the basis of organisational culture.”*

Participant 7: *“Exclusion in my experience has been more as a result of team dynamics.”*

Participant 14: *“... Exclusion related to our team dynamics.”*

The key finding here was that exclusion does not only occur on the basis of inherent characteristics but also due to a wealth of other factors. The organisation as well as team dynamics can also lend to exclusion. What was further key here was that white females did not see race and gender as basis for exclusion as opposed to black females, who did.

5.4.5 Summary of key findings for question 1

Research question 1 aimed to look at the inclusive behaviours that employees have experienced. For the research question to adequately highlight these behaviours it was important, in addition to considering the inclusive behaviours, to also look at additional components such as diversity, exclusion and reasons for exclusion as explained above. What is quite clear from the results presented above and pertaining to research question 1, is that there are distinct behaviours that need to be present for employees to feel included and these mostly relate to belonging, involvement, participation and generally feeling like they are part of a group. We now turn our attention to research question 2.

5.5 Research Question 2: How does an inclusive workplace affect employees?

The aim of this research question was to explore how experiencing inclusion affects employees emotions. After the participants had explained their understanding of inclusion and reflected on their inclusive experiences, it was important for them to advise how that experience made them feel. This inclusive experience would be compared to their experience of not being included or excluded. The participants were then required to reflect on this and draw a distinction between the feelings associated with the two experiences so that it could be ascertained whether there was a difference in the participants' experiences when these two different circumstances presented. Should there have been no difference, the research question would have been answered and there would be no need to delve further. However, a number of insights emerged in the responses. The questions in the interview guide which relate to this research question are questions 5 and 8.

5.5.1 Feelings associated with inclusion

When participants spoke about their inclusion experience, they were asked about how they felt when they were included or how they felt that the environment that they were part of was an inclusive environment. Table 8 below shows the main feelings that participants experienced when they were included as well as the resultant themes:

Table 8: Feelings associated with inclusion.

No.	Theme	Category	Code/construct	Frequency
1	Feel important and valued	Feelings associated with inclusion	belonging, welcomed and being part of a team/group	37
			asked for your opinions/views – they matter/respected/noticed	34
			input is valued	6
			recognised and engaged, seen	2
2	Increase in confidence and positivity	Feelings associated with inclusion	increased performance, input and discretionary effort	18
			increased confidence in abilities and personal growth	17
			they believe in your abilities/capabilities	5
			felt positive about self	5
			feeling of affirmation	3

Under this section, two main themes emerged which dealt with the feelings associated with inclusion, namely:

1. Feeling important and valued.
2. Increase in confidence and positivity

The first theme that presented itself was that the participants **felt important and valued** when they were included. Participants advised that when they experienced inclusion, not only did it make them feel important, but it made them feel seen and heard and that they were valued by the team and the organisation:

Participant 2: *“You’re not just a number or just an employee but that you’re viewed as important.”*

Participant 6: *“Actually made me feel important and that I was actually worth something.”*

Participant 14: *“Number one, it makes you feel valued, it makes you feel like your views matter.”*

In the second theme that emerged, participants advised that when they were included, they felt that the inclusive experience lead to an increase in **their confidence and their positivity**:

Participant 2: *“How it felt was that it felt affirming and it increased confidence.”*

Participant 8: *“You know I got so confident; I was actually radiating from the inside out.”*

Participant 15: *“It made me feel very good about myself. It increased my confidence.”*

The key findings here was that when employees feel like they are included in an organisation or a team, that makes them feel valued and important. It makes them feel like they are worthy, and this leads to increased self-confidence and a positive outlook of the employee.

5.5.2 Feelings associated with exclusion

In order to ensure that participants were considering both sides of the coin, they were asked to compare their feelings associated with their inclusive experience to that of when they were excluded. Participants provided numerous responses detailing how they felt when they were excluded. These responses and the themes generated from those responses are captured in Table 9 below.

Table 9: Feelings associated with exclusion.

No.	Theme	Category	Code/construct	Frequency
1	Demotivated and unappreciated	Feelings associated with exclusion	demotivated and less discretionary/additional effort	24
			not valued and recognised	12
			not interested and demotivated	11
			feeling unappreciated /undermined	8
2	Hurt and disappointment and self-doubt	Feelings associated with inclusion	feeling demotivated/ disappointed/ anger	12
			felt hurt, disappointed, annoyed	11
			exclusion affects self-esteem/doubt in capabilities	10
			doubting your abilities and qualification	9
			hate for group/organisation and considered leaving	8

Under this section, two main themes emerged which dealt with how participants felt when they were excluded, namely:

1. Feeling demotivated and unappreciated.
2. Hurt, disappointment and self-doubt.

The first theme that emerged was that the participants experienced a variety of emotions which led to them **feeling demotivated and unappreciated**. The participants stated that their experience of exclusion made them feel like they were not valued and that their contribution was not worth it. This led to them being demotivated:

Participant 3: *"I just felt demotivated and uninspired... why do I even try?"*

Participant 7: *"It makes you question the value that you add."*

Participant 9 *“It dampened me and affected my confidence. It basically killed my spirit, if I can put it that way.”*

In the second theme that emerged, the participants relayed how their experience of being excluded affected their self-confidence and resulted in a wealth of negative emotions which culminated in the theme of **hurt, disappointment and self-doubt**.

Participant 3: *“So it had a huge impact on my own self esteem... I started doubting my own capabilities. Am I really cut out for the legal world?”*

Participant 8: *“That left me feeling very very hurt. It breaks you down as an individual...makes you feel very disappointed.”*

Participant 14: *“I felt angry, annoyed... it's a huge knock on my confidence. It's a huge knock on my self-esteem.”*

The key findings here was that exclusion negatively affects employees deeply and emotionally, they feel hurt and disappointed that they are not part of the group or that they do not belong. This exclusion leads the employee to doubt themselves and their abilities and ultimately demotivates the employee.

5.5.3 Summary of key findings for research question 2

In answering this research question, the purpose was to look at how an inclusive workplace affects employees. From the responses received from the participants, it became clear that the feelings associated with inclusion were positive. The fact that participants relayed that they felt motivated, that they experienced increased confidence and that they felt valued, just to mention a few, is indicative that an inclusive environment has a positive influence on the participants. On the other hand, the experience of exclusion seemed to have a negative influence on the participants, with participants citing that they felt demotivated, unappreciated and in certain instances annoyed and angry with being excluded. This leads to research question 3, which aimed to ascertain how this inclusive experience influenced the performance of the employee.

5.6 Research Question 3: How does inclusion influence employee performance?

The purpose of this research question was to understand whether the participants' experience of inclusion in any way influenced their performance. As part of answering

this question, the researcher had to first establish what performance meant to the participants. Once this was achieved, the participants were then called upon to consider the experiences of inclusion and exclusion (which have been discussed above) and reflect on their performance in those respective situations. Once the participant had considered their experience of being included and/excluded, the participant would then be able to adequately advise how they performed around that time. The answers to the preceding research questions were therefore important because without the participant ensuring that they understood inclusion, how they experienced it, they would not have been able to adequately draw from that experience and advise how that experience influenced their performance. The questions in the interview guide which relate to this research question are questions 2, 4 and 7.

5.6.1 Defining performance

Before establishing how inclusion influences performance, it first had to be established what performance meant to the participants. Participants relayed what performance meant to them and how it looked in practice in the workplace. Table 10 below shows what the participants deemed to be performance and sets out the resultant themes.

Table 10: Defining performance.

No.	Theme	Category	Code/construct	Frequency
1	Performance means meeting performance objectives and criteria	What is performance	meeting objectives and delivering on KPI's	12
			perform in accordance with measures	8
			being set up to perform	5
			doing something relating to work	3
2	Performance means going above and beyond of performance expectations	What is performance	going beyond normal KPIs	3
			exceeded performance standards	3

Under this section, two main themes emerged which dealt with what performance meant to participants, and these were:

1. Performance means meeting performance objectives and criteria.
2. Performance means going above and beyond of performance expectations

In relation to theme one, a segment of the participants advised that as part of any role that they served in, they had certain objectives to meet and certain key performance indicators (KPIs) that they needed to fulfil. For those participants, performance therefore meant **meeting those KPIs or objectives**, but in addition to that, also included being provided with the tools to perform i.e. being set up to perform.

Participant 3: *"I would say in terms of my KPIs and my objectives that I've agreed to, am I delivering on those objectives."*

Participant 4: *"Delivering based on my KPIs."*

Participant 7: *"Performance is the delivery of goals and objectives."*

With regard to theme two, the participants felt that performance was not merely meeting your objectives or KPIs but rather that it meant **going above and beyond** what you are required to do on a daily basis at work:

Participant 1: *"Did you go over and above what was required of you?"*

Participant 6: *"I think for me, going the extra mile is part of performance."*

Participant 9: *"Performance for me means doing more than what's required in your role, so you don't just do the basics, or just what's necessary, but you do what's required of you and you go the extra mile."*

The key findings here was that performance does not only relate to carrying out what you have to have to do on daily basis or achieving your objectives or KPIs, but it can go further and relate to what are you doing over and above your daily responsibilities. It is about whether you are doing more than what is necessary and exceeding those expectations.

5.6.2 How employees perform when included

Based on the definition of performance offered by the participants, the next step was for them to reflect on their inclusive experience as well as their definitions of performance and advise whether and how their inclusive experiences influenced their performance. Table 11 below addresses how inclusion influences performance and the themes that resulted from the participant responses.

Table 11: How performance is influenced when included.

No.	Theme	Category	Code/construct	Frequency
1	Positive influence on performance	How employees perform when included	Inclusion – positive influence on performance	37
			doing your best/ excellence	4
2	Motivated and more discretionary effort	How employees perform when included	increased performance, input and discretionary effort	18
			motivation to participate and contribute more	10
			motivated to do better	8
			exceeded performance standards	3

The themes which emerged from this were the following:

1. Positive influence on performance.
2. Motivated and more discretionary effort.

Theme one was important in answering the main research question. One of the main questions in this study related to how the participants experienced inclusion and whether that inclusion experience had any influence on their performance. The majority of the participants relayed that being included indeed had a **positive influence on their performance**.

Participant 5: *“It positively contributes to an individual's performance.”*

Participant 13: *“It definitely does impact and has a positive impact on my performance.”*

Participant 15: *“It enhances your performance... it actually made me perform better.”*

In addition to the fact that inclusion had a positive influence on their performance, the participants also relayed that when they were included, it **motivated them to perform better and** that they wanted to put in **more work or additional discretionary effort**.

Participant 10: *“I was motivated to do more... I think inclusion absolutely influences performance.”*

Participant 13: *“I definitely think inclusion encourages me to want to do more than required, so for me it's like going above and beyond just putting in the extra hours.”*

Participant 15: *“It had a lot to do with my performance because that inclusion makes you want to do more.”*

The key findings from this section was that inclusion had a positive influence on their performance. Participants relayed that when they were included it made them feel like they belong and that motivated them to perform as well as to go above and beyond. Inclusion leads to increased performance.

5.6.3 How employees perform when excluded

To present a well-rounded and complete argument and in order to compare the positions and consider the overall experience of the participants, the participants were asked to consider their experience of exclusion and compare their performance in that situation to that of when they were included. Once this was done, they would then be able to advise whether that experience of being excluded influenced their performance, and if so, how. This would enable them to compare the two experiences and the resultant performance in each of those experiences. Table 12 below addresses how being excluded influenced participant performance and sets out the themes that resulted from the participant responses.

Table 12: How performance is influenced when excluded.

No.	Theme	Category	Code/construct	Frequency
1	Demotivated and decrease in performance	How employees perform when excluded	demotivated and less discretionary/additional effort	24
			not interested and demotivated	11
			bare minimum in contribution in performance	11
			exclusion influences performance negatively	10
			performance negatively affected	6
2	Doubt in self and abilities	How employees perform when excluded	doubting your abilities and qualification	9

			decreased self confidence in self and abilities	6
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The themes which emerged regarding participant performance when excluded were the following:

1. Demotivated and decrease in performance.
2. Doubt in self and abilities.

With regard to theme one, participants advised that when they were excluded, they felt **demotivated** and that influenced their performance negatively. As a result of this exclusion and demotivation there was a **decrease in their performance**. Participants felt that when they were excluded, there was no purpose or incentive to perform because they felt that they would have nothing to contribute anyway and that their opinions were not valued.

Participant 2: *“Definitely demotivating to do better and be better... I only contributed the basics and the bare minimum. I feel like I shouldn't even be overextending myself and overexerting myself.”*

Participant 3: *“I was very demotivated performance wise. I don't even think I was interested... December 2015 is possibly the lowest rating from a performance appraisal point of view that I've ever received so it definitely affected my performance.”*

Participant 13: *“So, the minute you realise that you've been excluded, then you're just like what's the point, I don't care, I'm just getting my salary like everyone else. So, it does affect your performance and you feel, why must I go above and beyond?”*

In addition to the above, theme two relayed that exclusion caused the participants to doubt **themselves** as well as their **abilities and capabilities** which also lead to decreased performance and is a further negative result of exclusion.

Participant 6: *“I doubt my capability, I start to think, well maybe actually I don't know what I'm doing... so I'm therefore giving the bare minimum.”*

Participant 8: *“Yeah, it breaks you down as an individual because you feel like you are not worthy of producing anything better than the white boys or the white girls.”*

Participant 10: *“So you start questioning yourself, you start doubting yourself, you start doubting your work, you start doubting how you do things, and it definitely in my mind would affect how you do what you do.”*

The key finding from this section was that being excluded influenced performance negatively. Participants relayed that when they were excluded, this led to them doubting their abilities which also made them feel demotivated. Because they were demotivated, they were not interested in performing and only gave the bare minimum in effort and no additional discretionary effort.

5.6.4 Summary of key findings for research question 3

This research question sought to consider one of the main issues of this paper, namely the influence of inclusion on employee performance. From this section and more specifically 5.6.2 and 5.6.3, it was clear from the responses received and the themes developed that there may be a relationship that exists between these constructs. Participants made it quite clear in their responses that there was a decrease in performance when they were excluded, and this experience also resulted in negative emotions experienced by the participants. Participants also advised that there was a positive influence on them and their performance when they were included. Their performance increased and they also felt like doing more and contributing more.

5.6.5 Additional results/outliers

A theme arose where some participants felt that inclusion and exclusion did not affect performance and that it was more about one's morality. They averred that one would still perform for various reasons whether excluded or included.

Another participant mentioned that inclusion could negatively influence performance whilst another felt that exclusion could positively influence performance because you would want to prove yourself more.

We now turn our attention to the final research question which deals with the benefits of inclusion as well as the benefits of inclusion to the organisation

5.7 Research Question 4: What are the benefits of inclusion and should organisations consider putting in place practices to promote inclusion and to enhance employee and organisational performance?

The purpose of the final research question was to consider the benefits of inclusion and inclusive practices and ascertain how these practices would be beneficial to both the employees' performance as well as organisational performance. The participants were asked whether inclusion in any way benefits organisations. This research question was important because it ties into the business rationale and practical need of the overall study and research paper. It makes a clear business case for inclusion. The questions in the interview guide which relate to this research question are questions 10 and 11.

5.7.1 Benefits of inclusion to the organisation

An important aspect of this study was to ascertain whether there was a business rationale for inclusion. This business rationale would advise whether there is any organisational benefit gained from creating an inclusive work environment. A question was posed to the participants enquiring whether inclusion might be beneficial to organisations. Table 13 below addresses what participants thought the benefits of inclusion to the organisation would be, and also sets out the themes that resulted from the participant responses.

Table 13: Organisational benefits of inclusion.

No.	Theme	Category	Code/construct	Frequency
1	Increased output, value and organisational performance	Benefits of inclusion to the organisation	inclusion beneficial for organisations increased performance	16
			optimal performance contributes to organisation – ROI	6
2	Increased employee and team cohesiveness	Benefits of inclusion to the organisation	team interaction, synergy and communication	34
			increased performance, input and discretionary effort	18
3	Engendered loyalty and commitment to the organisation	Benefits of inclusion to the organisation	could foresee future at organisation	7
			increases performance and loyalty	3
			longer tenure of employees	1
			talented and will remain at company	1

From the responses received from the participants, three main themes emerged, namely:

1. Increased output, value and organisational performance.
2. Increased employee and team cohesiveness.
3. Engendered loyalty and commitment to the organisation.

Pertaining to the first theme, a large component of the participants stated that when an organisation is inclusive or when it encourages inclusion, not only does it influence employees' performance positively, this increased employee performance translates into **increased output, value and organisational performance** as well, which is beneficial for the organisation:

Participant 8: *"At the end of the day the organisation benefits wholeheartedly because when you have inclusion, everybody and everyone is driving towards the same goal, same objective, so you have increased performance, better results."*

Participant 14: *"I mean, organisations could get a whole lot more out of the employees than what they currently do just based on inclusion. So, performance outputs would be much higher than what they currently are... it means the organisation itself performs better and therefore it's more profitable."*

Participant 15: *"It also benefits the organisation in the sense that it creates an employer value proposition because people will actually want to come and work there, because they will know that the company actually values its people, and a company that has good talent is more likely to perform better."*

The second theme which emerged is **increased employee and team cohesiveness**. Participants noted that when you have inclusion, it creates a space where employees and teams interact more and are more cohesive because they feel that they are working to fulfil a shared goal. In addition to this, because they are included, they also feel that they are able to share ideas more freely which contributes to knowledge sharing:

Participant 2: *"It created a great team morale because there was that camaraderie and that was wonderful... you want to participate and give input."*

Participant 8: *"It was one team one goal. We had obvious objectives. It was a very cohesive environment where everybody gelled together working towards the same goals same objectives."*

Participant 15: *"It made me feel like we have a nice genuine team, where we care about each other, so it's not just about the work but we also understand that we're humans."*

The last theme which emerged in relation to the benefits of inclusion for the organisation was that of **loyalty and commitment to the organisation**. Participants advised that it was more likely that they themselves as well as other employees would be loyal and committed to organisations where they felt included as opposed to ones where they were excluded:

Participant 1: *"No matter how difficult it is, like you hear stories about companies that are struggling financially, they cannot pay their employees the full salary, but employees remain committed."*

Participant 2: *"Definitely benefits because people will have a lot more loyalty to organisations. And when people have loyalty to an organisation they stay longer."*

Participant 13: *"Long term vision. I'm for the business as opposed to, I've got a job today and tomorrow I'm out of here. So, you know, most of us actually want to build careers, it's about advancing my career. You want people to build careers with you, and build a profile with you, not to just come in to do a job and then walk out. You want that passion."*

The key findings from this section were that there are various benefits that inclusion affords organisations – predominantly that it allows for increased organisational performance because employees also perform better. Employees also remain loyal and committed to the organisation allowing the organisation to achieve a return on investment on what has been invested in the employee. Lastly, teams are more cohesive, which makes for greater teamwork and sharing of ideas.

5.7.2 Benefits of inclusion

In addition to the benefits of inclusion to the organisation as well as the other benefits discussed, participants also advised that there were additional benefits that present with an inclusive workplace. Table 14 sets out some of the additional benefits as well as the themes.

Table 14: Benefits of inclusion.

No.	Theme	Category	Code/construct	Frequency
1	Employees feel like they belong and are valued	Benefits of inclusion	belonging, welcomed and being part of a team/group	37
			team interaction, synergy and communication	34
			being heard/listened to and helped	24
			increased confidence in abilities and personal growth	17
			value/potential/contribution recognised – seen as important	15
			being trusted or trusting	15
2	Increased employee performance	Benefits of inclusion	inclusion – positive influences performance	37
			Motivation to participate and contribute more	10
			increased performance, input and discretionary effort	18

From this section, two main themes presented:

1. Employees feel like they belong.
2. Increased employee performance.

With regard to theme one, participants advised that as humans we all need to feel like we belong to a group and thus an inclusive workplace feeds into that need for belonging. A benefit inclusion was therefore that **employees feeling like they belong** which is considered an important benefit of inclusion:

Participant 1: *“They saw me. Yes, they spoke to me, engaged me. I was part of the team. I belonged.”*

Participant 8: *“It really makes me feel part and parcel.”*

Participant 10: *“They’re likely to put everything in because they feel like they also have a sense of belonging and that you’re a part of a group.”*

Insofar as relates to theme two, which is the final theme for this section and chapter, participants spoke extensively of how inclusion has a positive influence on performance. The result of this is that with inclusion comes **increased employee performance**:

Participant 1: *“Being included makes you shine even more, makes you perform beyond what you actually do and what you’re capable of.”*

Participant 13: *“When you are included, you go the extra mile, you think about the place like it’s your own... you know that someone sees you as more than just the worker bee, then you want to prove yourself.”*

Participant 9: *“You’re more driven, more focused, more willing to go the extra mile because you are included. You feel like part of the greater whole, you feel like you added value and you want the organisation to actually succeed.”*

The key findings from this section relay that in addition to organisational benefits such as increased organisational performance and increased loyalty and commitment of employees, other benefits that come with inclusion are that employees feel like they belong and that they are part of a group and something greater than themselves. This is important for performance. In addition to this and most importantly for this paper, the benefit of increased employee performance which results from inclusion was also highlighted.

5.7.3 Summary of key findings for research question 4

When we consider this research question and the responses from the participants in relation to the questions that are tied to this research question, it became clear that there are indeed benefits to the organisation as well as additional benefits that present with inclusion. Participants advised that inclusion and inclusive cultures lead to increased team interaction which allows for more sharing of ideas. When employees are included, they feel free to share ideas which they ordinarily would not have shared. In addition to this, the additional benefits of inclusion are that employees seem to become more confident in their abilities and capabilities which in turn increases their motivation, causing them to perform better and wanting to go the extra mile. This increased

performance translates into increased performance for the organisation. The participants relayed that there is indeed a business case for inclusion and that organisations should seek to create inclusive environments as this will assist them in their performance and also motivate their employees.

5.8 Summary of research findings

The researcher, in this chapter, sought to present the research findings which were based on the responses received from the 15 interview participants. The findings were presented sequentially and in line with the research questions which were recorded in Chapter 3 of this paper, and ultimately sought to consider the overall research question which explored the influence of inclusion on employee performance.

Numerous themes emerged from the findings, but these themes ultimately relayed that inclusion influences both employee and organisational performance positively. As part of discussing these findings, new insights were discovered in relation to various aspects of this topic, some of which were recorded in this chapter.

With regard to research question 1, the aim was to consider what inclusive behaviours employees had experienced. For this to be done, first it had to be established whether the participants understood the difference between inclusion and diversity. Once this was done, they were then able to advise of the inclusive behaviours they experienced. What was clear from this question and the various themes that emerged under the different categories was firstly that diversity is broad. It is not limited to physical traits and inherent factors but could also include diversity of thought processes. When inclusion was discussed, the participants made it clear that the central theme of inclusion was belonging and being part of. This was essential for inclusion. The participants further articulated that for them to feel included, the behaviours that would have be present were those of being involved, being listened to, knowing that your opinions matter and also being included at an organisational level. Lastly when the discussion moved onto exclusion, the participants relayed that behaviours leading to exclusion were when they were not seen as valuable, not respected or when they were excluded from opportunities. It was unexpected that most of the black female participants stated that they were excluded on either race or gender whereas the white female participants all said that their exclusion was based on either team dynamics or organisational factors; these are factors not related to their inherent characteristics.

Research question 2 sought to understand how employees felt or how they were affected when they were included. With considering the inclusive experience, the question also looked at the experience when employees were excluded. This question revealed that when employees were included, they felt valued, recognised and that they were important. This increased their confidence and their belief in their abilities and capabilities. On the other hand, when they were excluded, this made them feel hurt and disappointed, and led to employees being demotivated and feeling unappreciated and as though they had nothing to contribute. This made them doubt themselves, their abilities and capabilities.

Research question 3 dealt with one of the main questions in this paper, namely how inclusion influenced performance. Before the research question could be answered, it had to be established what performance meant to the participants. They relayed that performance was both meeting goals, KPIs and objectives as set by the organisation and, in certain instances, meant going above and beyond those set standards. Participants advised that when they were included, this contributed positively to their performance. They advised that when they were included, they were motivated to do better and wanted to contribute more and provide more discretionary effort. They stated that inclusion was essential for performance. When they reflected on their performance while being excluded, they relayed that there was clear negative influence. They no longer felt like going above and beyond, and rather only contributed the bare minimum. They were demotivated and felt like they had nothing to contribute and this also led to a decrease in their confidence and their abilities.

The last research question sought to consider the benefits of inclusion and more specifically to the organisation. The responses to this question and the themes generated highlighted that there are indeed benefits to the organisation when they create an inclusive environment. These benefits ranged from increased organisational performance as a result of increased employee performance, to increased employee loyalty and commitment and team cohesiveness. It made a case for organisations to implement inclusive practices and foster inclusion. Another benefit of inclusion was that employees felt that they belonged, and this also increased employee performance.

The paper now moves on to Chapter 6, which explores the findings as captured in this chapter. The findings are explored in line with existing literature and theory that were presented in Chapter 2 of this paper.

Chapter 6: Discussion of Results

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the influence of inclusion on employee performance. The preceding Chapter 5 presented the findings obtained from the interviews conducted in line with the research questions formulated from the literature review. This chapter analyses and discusses the findings as presented in Chapter 5 in line with the research questions as set out in Chapter 3.

The aim of this chapter is therefore to discuss findings of each of the research questions while drawing on the literature discussed in Chapter 2 of this paper. It seeks to contribute to the improved understanding of whether inclusion does indeed influence employee performance.

6.2 Discussion of research question 1: What inclusive behaviours have employees experienced?

6.2.1 Introduction

The aim of research question 1 was to establish what inclusive behaviours employees have experienced. To achieve this, their understanding of inclusion and how it differed from diversity had to be established. Further, as part of this question, it had to be established how employees experienced the opposite of inclusion (i.e., exclusion) and on what basis they deemed that they were excluded. Once all these had been ascertained, only then could employees adequately relay what inclusive behaviours they had experienced.

6.2.2 Defining diversity

When defining diversity, participants presented definitions similar to those as referred to in the literature review. The definitions in line with those as offered by the participants were those as offered by Larkey (1996) who stated that diversity relates to people having different perspectives which results in different behaviours amongst group members. This was also substantiated by Kochan et al. (2003) who advised that diversity relates to both observable and non-observable characteristics and lastly by Milliken and Martins (1996), who defined diversity with reference to physical and non-physical characteristics. This is in line with the themes discussed under diversity which recognise that diversity,

although it includes race and gender, goes much broader and extends to thought processes as well.

The participants defined diversity in terms of their own experiences. These definitions however fell into different themes. Participants firstly sought to define diversity quite broadly. It was specifically conveyed that under this broad definition of diversity, it does not and should not only relate to gender and race but rather to a wealth of other factors. Limiting diversity to physical and/or inherent factors such as race and gender was not considered an accurate definition and representation of what diversity truly is. This definition of diversity is in line with the definition of diversity as presented by Larkey (1996) who stated that diversity is when persons have different perspectives and different behaviours. This definition is clearly not limited to race and gender (inherent physical characteristics) but goes much broader. In furtherance of the broad definition of diversity as put forward by the participants and other researchers, Milliken and Martins (1996) define diversity with reference to physical and non-physical characteristics with the non-observable characteristics including cognitive and technical differences and the observable differences including age, race, ethnicity and gender of employees (Kochan et al., 2003).

Participants also defined diversity with respect to race and gender. This definition as presented by the participants was in line with the definition as provided for by Roberson (2006) who stated that diversity could be defined in terms of demographic differences amongst members of a group. This definition does not seek to consider any other diverse attributes and limits it to demographic differences. This limited definition of diversity is supported by Walker et al. (2019) who defined diversity as an instance that focuses on the numeric representation of individuals, for example members of certain protected classes.

It is clear from the above that the participants understood that diversity is not limited to only physical or inherent characteristics but comprises of a wealth of various characteristics which include observable, non-observable, inherent and cognitive characteristics. This definition of diversity is in line with those definitions as presented by previous researchers and provides a broader view of diversity as opposed to a limited view. We now turn to discuss the difference between diversity and inclusion.

6.2.3 Understanding the difference between diversity and inclusion

An important aspect of this paper and which had to be clarified in the interviews conducted was to establish whether the participants had an adequate understanding of the difference between diversity and inclusion.

This had to be done because there still exists some confusion regarding these two concepts and they are often used interchangeably, which causes confusion in their meaning. Shore et al. (2018) support this assertion and write that because the terms of diversity and inclusion are so closely related, they have over the past few years still been used and have been seen as synonymous terms. It was therefore important to differentiate these terms because the paper sought to explore how inclusion influences performance. If participants interpreted inclusion to mean diversity or vice versa, the results of the study would not have been accurate.

Participants were duly called upon to provide their understanding pertaining to the difference in these two terms and conveyed that these two terms are indeed separate and should be defined differently. Upon reflection by the participants, the general response was that diversity and inclusion are steps and processes that are distinct but are interlinked and follow each other. This was further substantiated when certain participants drew a distinction between the fact that diversity deals with bringing different people into an organisation whereas inclusion deals with making those people feel like they are a part of the organisation and that they belong. This was supported by Chen and Tang (2018) who stated that diversity and inclusion are not the same; inclusion unlike diversity goes further and can be considered the second step after the organisation has implemented diversity practices.

Once participants had been able to adequately relay the difference between the two concepts, they were able to provide insight on what they thought inclusion was and what behaviours led to inclusion. This was the foundation for the participants to consider their inclusive experience and advise how this inclusion influenced their performance. We now turn to defining inclusion and considering what behaviours are representative of inclusion and an inclusive environment / workplace.

6.2.4 Defining inclusion

The main aim of his paper was to look at inclusion and consider how it influences performance. This section was therefore important in order to ascertain whether participants fully understood what inclusion meant and also which behaviours they saw as being inclusive or representative of an inclusive environment. This was important because it would allow the participants to consider their inclusive experience or inclusive environment and advise how their performance was influenced around the time when they experienced inclusion. This would bring us closer to exploring the influence of inclusion on employee performance.

With regard to what inclusion meant to the participants, there was consensus amongst the majority with regard to its meaning. The participants all relayed that at its basic form, inclusion meant that individuals were included in a group, team or organisation and that they were made to feel like they belonged to that particular group, team or organisation. This meant that they were not excluded or isolated on any basis or grounds. This general consensus of the definition of inclusion is in line with the definition as provided by Pelled et al., (1999, p. 1014) who define inclusion to be “the degree to which an employee is accepted and treated as an insider in the work system”.

6.2.5 Inclusive behaviours

In addition to the above, participants also reflected on the behaviours that led to them feeling included. Participants advised that the behaviours that promoted inclusion was firstly being included and involved in various initiatives and activities by the organisation and the team, being listened to, knowing that their opinions mattered and also that they were valued. This in line with the definition as provided by Miller (1998) who stated that inclusion is where employees are allowed to participate and are enabled to contribute fully. In addition to this, Shore et al. (2011) also wrote that inclusion includes the concepts of uniqueness, belongingness and valuing contribution, and further stated that an inclusive environment is one where employees are accepted as part of the group and when their contributions are valued and heard.

Participants also stated that being treated equally and being afforded similar opportunities as other parties and not being excluded from those activities and opportunities within an organisation also represented inclusive behaviours and was representative of an inclusive environment. This included being set up to perform as well

as action being taken by the organisation to remove obstacles that may hinder performance. This definition was substantiated by literature and is specifically in line with the assertion made by Roberson (2006) who states that inclusion is the removal of obstacles to the full participation and contribution of employees in the organisation.

Considering the definition and the behaviours pertaining to how inclusion presents itself, the participants ultimately agreed upon and relayed that to be included in an organisation and in a team meant that one had to feel a sense of belonging and being “part of” that team or organisation. It was important to note that the way participants defined inclusion was similar across the board. It was something that made you feel welcome and part of, at both a team and organisational level, both inside the organisation and outside of the work setting. This definition as presented by the participants is echoed by Lirio et al. (2008) who defined inclusion as when individuals feel a sense of belonging in an organisation. This is further supported by Shore et al. (2011) and Buengeler et al. (2018) who stated that for an employee to feel included or to experience inclusion, they have to feel like they belong.

Now that we have discussed the definition of inclusion, we turn the discussion to the basis on which the participants felt that they were excluded. This was important because the sample chosen was black and white females and this enabled us to ascertain whether their exclusion was based on race, gender or both. It was interesting to note that other exclusion factors were presented in the responses by the participants, but these were not explored as part of this study and can be considered for future research.

6.2.6 Exclusion and basis for exclusion

As part of research question 1, for the participants to fully understand their experience of inclusion it was fitting for them to also relay their experience of exclusion. Because the sample chosen were females from various industries and who originated from various levels within their particular organisations, it was important to ascertain if their experiences of exclusion was similar or whether it was based on additional factors. This would present us with a broad, rich and well-rounded perspective.

The participants compared their experience of exclusion to that of being included and considered which behaviours were evident in an environment where they were excluded. In addition to this, they also defined what exclusion meant to them. The participants relayed that an environment where they were excluded was one where:

- They experienced behaviours where they were not seen as valuable.
- Their thoughts and ideas were not respected or listened to.
- They were not respected (Pless & Maak, 2004)
- They did not have access to opportunities in the same manner as would be available to others in the same environment or team and in a similar position (Shore et al., 2018).

In addition to the above, participants reported that when they were not part of the group, involved in group activities or asked to participate in various initiatives in the organisation (Roberson, 2006; Miller, 1998), this would be indicative of an environment where they were not included in the team. It is important to note that the responses regarding behaviours that lead to exclusion are a direct opposite of those that lead to inclusion. By using and juxtaposing the definition of Roberson (2006), it can be said that exclusion would be when employees are not allowed to fully participate and contribute in the organisation and further when obstacles which allow them to perform are not removed. Similarly, we could also negatively phrase the definition as provided for by Shore et al. (2011) and Lirio et al. (2008) and state that the exclusion would be when employees do not feel like they belong to the group or the team within which they work.

When we consider the basis upon which the participants were excluded, it was clear that these were split into three main components: race, gender and team or organisational factors. What was interesting to note was that the majority of the black female participants communicated that their exclusion seemed to be due to inherent characteristics such as race and gender. This was different for the white females, who unanimously stated that their exclusion was based on factors not related to their person but rather on team and organisational factors.

Exclusion seeks to divide and is the direct opposite of an inclusive environment which Nishii (2013) explained to be an environment where there is no discrimination and individuals from all backgrounds are treated fairly, are involved in decision making and are ultimately valued and respected for who they truly are and the views that they have.

6.2.7 Inclusion framework

Considering what has been discussed above pertaining to inclusion, it would be prudent at this juncture to consider the inclusion framework as presented by Shore et al. (2011) which has been included as Figure 2 above. As mentioned in the literature review, this framework was applicable in this study because it evidenced the interplay between inclusion and belongingness. This study sought to take it further and consider another dimension, namely performance, in order to ascertain how this was influenced by inclusion. When we consider this framework, it is clear that when one looks at inclusion, it records that when an individual is included, they are treated as an insider in the group and this results in high belongingness as well as a high value in their uniqueness (Shore et al., 2011). On the other hand, when an individual is excluded, this is evidenced by the fact that the individual is not treated as an insider and is not valued. This exclusion results in a low belongingness by the individual and consequently a low value in the uniqueness of the individual (Shore et al., 2011).

This inclusion framework supports the results achieved when answering research question 1. Participants noted that when they were included, it made them feel like they belong to the group, team and organisation. Inclusion further made them feel like they are valued and that their contributions and opinions mattered and were respected. When participants presented how they felt when they were excluded this was also in line with the framework in that when they were excluded, they did not feel like they belonged. They did not feel respected and welcomed and did not feel like they were a part of the group or that they were valued. The inclusion framework as presented also ties into and supports the results of research in question 2 which explored how employees feel when they are included and excluded.

6.2.8 Conclusion

To answer research question 1, various aspects had to be considered before we could get to the final answer of what inclusive behaviours employees had experienced. These aspects were first to define what diversity meant and ascertain how this definition differs from inclusion.

From the discussion above, participants defined diversity broadly to include race, gender as well as various other abilities such as thought processes. This is in line with the definition presented by Larkey (1996), Milliken and Martins (1996) and Kochan et al.

(2003) who all stated that that diversity is not limited to race and gender (i.e. inherent characteristics) but includes different perspectives, physical and non-physical characteristics and observable and non-observable characteristics.

In defining inclusion, participants understood how it differed from diversity because they advised that the following behaviours were seen as inclusive: being involved and included in various initiatives at both a team and organisational level, being heard and listened to, being provided with opportunities to succeed and also being valued; and knowing that your opinion matters (Nishii, 2013; Shore et al., 2018; Pless & Maak, 2004).

These behaviours assisted in defining what inclusion means to employees. The definition is in line with literature, specifically with those definitions provided for by Shore et al. (2018) who stated that employees feel like they belong when they have equal opportunity for success. Pless and Maak (2004) advised that inclusion creates a space for peoples' voices and ideas to be heard, respected and valued which ultimately enables them to make meaningful contributions. This also aligns to Nishii (2013) who stated that inclusion means that individuals are involved in decision making and are valued and respected for who they are and the views that they have.

This ultimately presents us with the main characteristics for being included. These behaviours and the resultant definition of inclusion were important in answering the overall research question because these behaviours showed how employees interpreted inclusion, which ultimately contributed to employee performance. A graphic representation of this research question and the results is as follows:

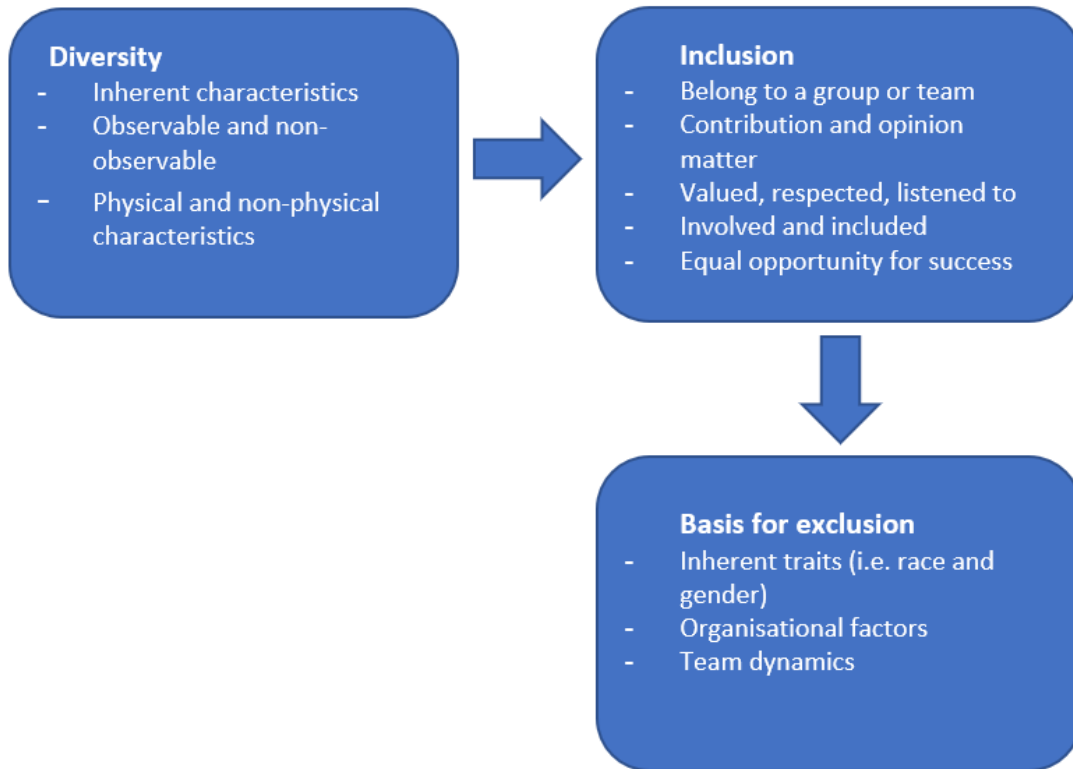


Figure 5: Findings for research question 1.

We now move on to discuss research question 2, which deals with how an inclusive workplace affects employees.

6.3 Discussion of research question 2: How does an inclusive workplace affect employees?

6.3.1 Introduction

This research question sought to explore the feelings that presented with the inclusion of the employees. These feelings had to be considered in order to ascertain how employees feel when they are included because that would ultimately dictate how the employee performs.

6.3.2 How inclusion makes employees feel

An important aspect of this paper was to ascertain from the participants how they felt when they were included. These feelings contributed to the next research question which asks how employees performed when included. These feelings were important because

if employees felt motivated, they would possibly then perform better and if they did not feel anything, that would mean that inclusion had no influence on their performance.

When participants reflected on their experience of being included, some stated that when they were included, they felt motivated, important and valued by the team and the organisation. This is in line with the assertions made Barak and Michalle (2019) who stated that when individual feels like they belong, this results in positive outcomes for the individual. This is further substantiated by Sabharwal (2014) who stated that when employees are included, this makes them feel valued and recognised. They advised that because they were welcomed into the group, this made them feel that they could share their opinions, it made them feel like they were needed, their contribution was valuable and that their presence in the group and organisation was important (Pless & Maak, 2004). They were not merely another number. They once again felt like they belonged, and this made them want to contribute more. Lirio et al. (2008) stated that inclusiveness exists in organisations when employees feel a sense of belonging, are free to contribute fully and when the organisation itself fosters an environment where employees can be productive.

In addition to the above, participants also felt an increase in their morale and advised that they were far more confident in themselves and their abilities. They felt positive about themselves, their teams, and the organisation. The increased self-confidence led to increased confidence in their own abilities and capabilities. The participants further relayed that when they were included in the team, they felt important and heard and like their opinion matters. That feeling of importance and being heard resulted in them knowing that their contribution was welcomed, valued and heard and that led to an increase in confidence and positivity. Sabharwal (2014) supports this assertion and stated that when employees experience inclusion, they feel valued and recognised. This assertion is also supported by Shore et al. (2011) who stated that when employees feel a sense of inclusion, it positively relates to their job satisfaction.

Ultimately, when employees experience inclusion it makes them feel like they are a part of an environment where they are allowed to express themselves. This inclusive environment is one that involves employees in decision making and allows employees to openly share their views and values their opinions (Shore et al., 2018). This makes employees feel like they belong and fosters a positive work environment which produces positives results.

6.3.3 How exclusion makes employees feel

In contrast to the above, participants advised that when they were excluded, they felt the opposite of what they felt when they were included. In this instance, the employees relayed that when they were excluded it made them feel unappreciated, that their opinion did not matter and that led them to feel demotivated. They could therefore not contribute fully and also had a lower self-esteem due to the fact that they were not listened to and their opinion did not matter (Roberson, 2006; Miller, 1998).

In addition to this, participants also felt that when they were excluded, they did not feel like part of the group and this exclusion made them feel hurt and disappointed. They were not treated as an insider as one would be when one is included (Pelled et al., 1999). This also led to the participants questioning why they had been excluded which led to self-doubt and doubt in their own abilities and capabilities. These were not in line with the definition of an inclusive environment which allows employees to share their ideas and views express their uniqueness (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015; Shore et al., 2018). There were negative emotions associated with exclusion which resulted in negative consequences for the majority of the participants.

6.3.4 Conclusion

The aim of this research question was to catalogue the emotions that participants experienced when they were included. In order to fully understand these, it also had to be considered how the participants felt when they were excluded. This was important because it enabled analysis of how these feelings contributed to performance.

Participants advised that when they were included, it came with a wealth of positive emotions and feelings. These emotions amongst others were feeling valued, feeling motivated and feeling important (Sabharwal, 2014). These feelings led to increased self-confidence and an increased feeling of self-worth which ultimately had a positive influence on the participants' performance (Shore et al., 2011; Daya, 2014).

When the participants were excluded, the resultant feelings and outcomes were negative. Participants felt demotivated, hurt, unappreciated and doubted themselves and their capabilities. These feelings also had a negative influence on employee performance and are discussed in detail under research question 3.

A graphic representation of this research question and the results is as follows:



Figure 6: Findings for research question 2.

We now proceed to discussing research question 3, which deals with how inclusion influences employee performance.

6.4 Discussion of research question 3: How does inclusion influence employee performance?

6.4.1 Introduction

Performance was one of the most important factors to consider as part of this paper. First the researcher set out to define what performance means to the participant and how it presented itself in the mind of the participant as well as in literature. The next step was for the participants to consider their experience of inclusion and advise how it influenced their performance. This question was essential for the overall research purpose and links closely to answering the overall research question.

6.4.2 Defining performance

When participants considered what performance meant to them, there were two main components that arose in their definition. Participants firstly advised that with any job or employment situation within an organisation, that an organisation would provide an employee with certain KPIs or objectives which they would need to achieve in order to fulfil the requirements of the job and ultimately perform. These objectives are in most instances tied to the greater goals of the organisation and are merely broken down to various levels, departments and individual employees. Participants therefore noted that performance ultimately meant the achievement of those set standards, objectives or KPIs in the fulfilment of your daily duties.

The definition of performance as presented by participants is in line with the definition of performance as presented by Ribeiro et al. (2018) who advised that performance is a set of actions and behaviours which are taken by an individual in relation to the achievement

of organisational goals. Essentially, this talks to how individuals show up in their own right in order to achieve the goals that have been assigned to them to ultimately achieve the greater organisational goals.

Participants also pointed out that performance does not only deal with achieving the minimum objectives or KPIs that have been assigned to an individual, but it means going above and beyond that. The notion is that having achieved the bare minimum would be just that, achieving your KPIs and objectives, whereas performance would be going above what you were tasked to do. This interpretation or definition of performance is in line with the definition of performance as presented by Sonnentag and Frese (2002), who stated that performance means that the individual is doing what the organisation appoints them to do and doing it well. This is supported by and Schechner and Brady (2013) who stated that performance is doing something up to a certain standard, succeeding in achieving that standard, exceeding it, and excelling in it.

In summary what has been said above is that ultimately for performance to be considered good it would mean that the employee has achieved their KPIs or objectives and that they have done their job well (Ribeiro et al., 2018). It would further be considered good performance if the employee has accomplished their job-related responsibilities to the satisfaction of their employer (Ribeiro et al., 2018).

6.4.3 How employees perform when included

When participants reflected on their inclusive experience and the resultant feelings that came with that experience, their responses pertaining to how they performed around that time was almost unanimous. Participants advised that when they experienced inclusion, their performance increased, and they wanted to contribute more. At the onset, participants agreed that inclusion had a positive influence on their performance. This is supported by literature which stated that an inclusive environment where all employees feel included leads to greater job performance (Sabharwal, 2014). This was further substantiated by Shore et al. (2011) who wrote that when individuals feel included and accepted, this allows individuals to attribute positive characteristics.

Participants also relayed that inclusion motivated them and caused them to want to do more for the team and the organisation (Daya, 2014). When included, they put in more discretionary effort and wanted to perform better because they were firstly positive about their abilities and their contribution, and secondly did not want to disappoint the team

(Sabharwal, 2014; Shore et al., 2011; Daya, 2014; Pless & Maak, 2004). They felt valued and trusted as part of the group, felt like they belonged, and this caused them to want to work harder so that the team and organisational goals were achieved. They felt as though they were in it together. This is supported by Shore et al. (2011) who stated that inclusion leads to increased performance of both the employee and the organisation. It results in increased organisational commitment and inclusion of employees results in positive outcomes for both employee and the organisation; it also contributes positively to employee job satisfaction (Shore et al., 2011).

When participants were included, they felt like they belonged. This ultimately resulted in positive outcomes for the participants and the organisation, and consequently increased their performance. This is echoed by Lirio et al. (2008) who wrote that inclusiveness exists in organisations when employees feel a sense of belonging, are free to contribute fully and when the organisation itself fosters an environment where employees can be productive.

6.4.4 How employees perform when excluded

The inclusion framework by Shore et al. (2011) shows that when exclusion occurs, there is a low sense of belonging and the individual's unique value is not recognised. When participants reflected on their performance when they were excluded and compared it to their performance when they were included, the majority of participants stated that there was a vast difference in their performance when they were excluded. In addition to this, Shore et al. (2018) stated that there are positive results which come with inclusion. Participants however relayed that when they were excluded, they experienced a wealth of negative emotions and those led them to feeling demotivated, which in turn led to a decrease in performance.

Sabharwal (2014) noted that belonging to the group is a source of self-esteem for these individuals. Participants reflected that the exclusion led them to feel like they did not belong, and this led them to doubt themselves, their abilities and capabilities and this contributed to a decrease in their performance. It must be noted that participants stated that when they were excluded it caused them to deliver the bare minimum. They had no desire to put in any discretionary effort as they did not see the benefit of contributing more than what is necessary, when they were in essence not seen as part of the team, did not belong and consequently were not valued or included. There was no motivation to contribute to a team and organisation where they did not belong.

6.4.5 Building on the inclusion framework

Following the discussion on how employees perform when they are included and excluded, it is fitting to build on the inclusion framework as presented by Shore et al. (2011). This was done by adding another dimension to the framework, namely that of performance.

The inclusion framework relays what happens when an individual is included or excluded and the results of that experience in relation to belonging and value in uniqueness. It has been established that inclusion has a positive influence on performance which motivates employees to do better and put in more discretionary effort. It was confirmed that exclusion has a negative influence on the individual, causes demotivation and less discretionary effort, and consequently has a negative influence on performance. In line with this, the inclusion framework has been adapted as follows to include performance:

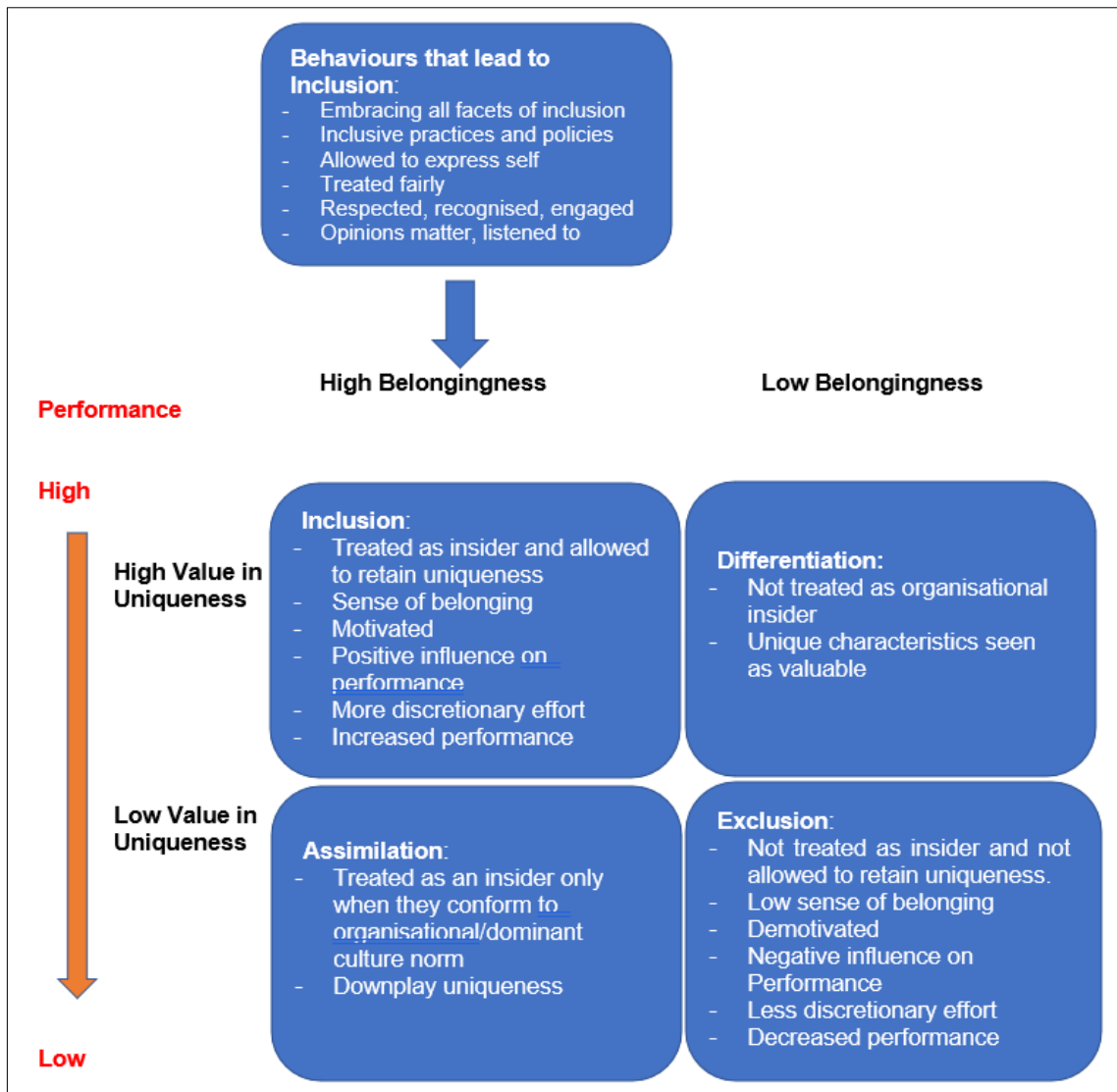


Figure 7: Inclusion-performance framework (adapted from Shore et al., 2011, p. 1266).

The inclusion-performance framework above was adapted from the inclusion framework as presented by Shore et al. (2011). This adapted framework firstly adds another dimension to the original inclusion framework, namely the dimension of performance. In addition to that and unlike the original framework, the inclusion-performance framework also sets out the behaviours that lead to inclusion, how inclusion presents itself and how exclusion presents itself.

The new framework shows that there first has to be an inclusive environment for inclusion to occur. This environment is one that embraces all aspects of inclusion, develops policies and practices for inclusion (Shore et al., 2018), and ensures that individuals are valued, respected and listened to. The new framework then shows that once you have

an inclusive environment, this leads to inclusion which shows up when individuals feel like they belong, and are treated as an insider (Shore et al., 2011). When this inclusion presents itself, employees are motivated, and this results in a positive influence on their performance (Jordan et al., 2019; Barak & Michalle, 2019). This is further indicated by the performance arrow which conveys that when there is inclusion and high belonging, this results in increased performance and when there is exclusion, it results in low belonging and consequently low performance.

6.4.6 Conclusion

The purpose of this research question was to consider how employees perform when they are included. When the majority of the participants reflected on their inclusion experience, they advised that inclusion influenced their performance positively (Chen & Tang, 2018; Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015; Jordan et al., 2019; Barak & Michalle, 2019). They advised that when they were included, they felt like they belong, that they were valued, seen and recognised and that they their opinions and ideas mattered (Pless & Maak, 2004). This led to them being motivated and consequently wanting to contribute more and provide additional discretionary effort, which resulted in an increase in performance.

Two of the participants, however, advised that inclusion had no influence on their performance. One participant went as far as saying that inclusion may have a negative influence on performance (Barak & Michalle, 2019). The general consensus however was that the influence of inclusion on performance was positive and even vital to create a culture of performance. In contrast, exclusion outcomes were negative and contributed to decreased performance.

The end result of answering this research question was the development of a new framework which is an adaptation from Shore's et al. (2011) inclusion framework. The adapted framework, namely the performance – inclusion framework highlights that for inclusion to occur, there needs to be an inclusive environment. It further highlights the criteria for both inclusion as well as an inclusive environment and ultimately includes a performance dimension to the framework, showing how inclusion positively influences performance.

6.5 Discussion of research question 4: What are the benefits of inclusion and should organisations consider putting in place practices to promote inclusion and to enhance employee and organisational performance?

6.5.1 Introduction

Having discussed all the above research questions, this research question sought to consider the benefits of inclusion for employees as well as the benefits that inclusion affords organisations. The reason for this research question is that it ties into the practical purpose of the study, which sought to advise organisations on the benefits of implementing inclusive practices. This is important because if there are no benefits to organisations, then there would be no business case for them to create inclusive environments or implement inclusive practices. These benefits do not only need to be financial but can relate to other non-financial benefits.

6.5.2 Benefits of inclusion to the organisation

When it comes to organisational benefits that present with inclusion, there were three main benefits that presented from the analysis: increased organisational performance, increased team communication and cohesiveness and employee loyalty and commitment.

Important to note was that when employees perform, this leads to greater organisational performance. The two are therefore interlinked (Meyer et al., 2015). It has been stated in the previous research questions that inclusion positively influences employee performance (Chen & Tang, 2018, Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015). This would lead to increased and positive organisational performance. Participants advised that they view inclusion as essential for organisational performance as it creates a culture where employees can perform and contribute (Pless & Maak, 2004). Kundu and Mor (2017) agreed with this and stated that when there is a positive impact on employees, this translates into good overall organisational performance. The two therefore go hand in hand.

In addition to this, Ashikali and Groeneveld (2015) also stated that when organisations develop inclusive cultures, employees become aware of the fact that they are appreciated and valued. This appreciation does not stop with the employee but goes beyond short-term economic benefit and contributes to the long-term sustainability of the organisation.

What also transpired was that when participants were included, they seemed to interact with their teams more. This allowed for the free sharing of ideas and contributed to a culture of innovation and the creation of new solutions. Chen and Tang (2018) support this finding and stated that when there are diverse views shared amongst employees, this creates greater ideas and innovation. This is of course also beneficial to the organisation.

Loyalty and commitment of employees was another organisational benefit of inclusion. When employees are included, they remain loyal and committed to the organisation. There is a sense of psychological satisfaction which leads to employees feeling comfortable and wanting to grow with the organisations (Chen & Tang, 2018). This ensures that the organisation retains talent and in so doing, has less staff turnover and ultimately gets a return on their investment in the relevant employee.

This is echoed by Chen and Tang (2018) who stated that inclusion results in a positive experience by employees and this leads to increased performance by those employees, as well as psychological satisfaction. In support of this assertion, Shore et al. (2011) also stated that there are number of benefits that inclusion leads to, including loyalty, exuding positive characteristics to group members, feelings of safety and security, increased performance and organisational commitment. This evidences that inclusion results in positive outcomes for both employee and the organisation (Shore et al., 2011).

It is clear from the above discussion that one of the main benefits of creating an inclusive culture for employees is increased performance by those employees which translates into increased organisational performance. Increased team interaction, freely sharing of ideas and an ensuing an innovative culture, the increase in organisational performance, coupled with increased loyalty of employees seem to be the major benefits for organisations. Considering that the aim of organisation is ultimately to perform and make profit, this should be reason enough for organisations to create inclusive environments and implement practices to foster inclusion.

6.5.3 Benefits of inclusion

In addition to what has been discussed above, other benefits of inclusion relate to employees feeling like they belong and increased employee performance.

It has been made clear above that when employees are included, they feel a sense of safety and feel like they are valued and appreciated (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015; Sabharwal, 2014). This leads to employees feeling motivated and providing more

discretionary effort. This leads to increased performance by employees and organisational performance.

Ultimately the benefit of inclusion is that it creates a space for employees' voices and ideas to be heard, respected and valued, and this enables them to make meaningful contributions (Pless & Maak, 2004).

6.5.4 Conclusion

This research question sought to discuss the benefits of inclusion to organisations as well as any additional benefits that present with inclusion. It further sought to consider whether organisations should implement inclusive practices and create inclusive environments.

From what has been discussed in this research question, it is clear that both literature and the participants support the assertion that there are benefits of inclusion (Nishii, 2013). These benefits range from increased organisational performance to increased employee loyalty and commitment and, lastly, team cohesiveness. In addition to these, other benefits of inclusion are increased employee performance, sense of belonging by employees and a feeling that they are valued and appreciated (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015; Sabharwal, 2014).

The intention of this research question and paper as a whole was not to provide an exhaustive list of benefits but only the main benefits that were reported by the participants and the literature reviewed. A graphic representation of these are featured in the figure below.



Figure 8: Benefits of inclusion.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter set out to discuss the findings based on data gathered from the interviews in conjunction with what literature records about inclusion and its influence on performance.

From the discussion of the four research questions and in aim to answer the overall research question which sought to explore the influence of workplace inclusion on employee performance, the results suggest that inclusion indeed positively influences performance.

Employees stated that when they experienced inclusive behaviours, this led to them experiencing a sense of belonging (Lirio et al., 2008). This allowed them to share their ideas and engage more with their teams and made them feel valued, appreciated and listened to (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015). This resulted in them feeling motivated which led to positive outcomes as well them wanting to contribute more to the team and the organisation (Barak & Michalle, 2019; Lirio et al., 2008). This ultimately resulted in an increase in the performance of the employee.

The resultant increase in performance by the employees consequently also contributed to increased organisational performance. This in turn leads to the rationale why organisations should consider implementing inclusive practices and seek to foster inclusive environments and ensure that they make inclusion part of their organisational goals and strategy. The result is that inclusion contributes positively to organisational performance as well (Meyer et al., 2015).

Building on the findings and the inclusion framework as developed by Shore et al. (2011), this paper adapted the inclusion framework and developed an inclusion-performance framework which includes a performance leg. This framework shows that inclusion has a positive influence on performance and motivates employees to tender additional discretionary effort. Factors as presented by Shore et al. (2018) in their model for inclusive organisations were also incorporated in this framework. The inclusion-performance framework added in a section dealing criteria for inclusive organisations as well as criteria for inclusion. In addition to this, the framework also showed that exclusion on the other hand results in negative emotions, demotivates employees and negatively influences employee performance.

This chapter ultimately sought to answer the main research question which considers whether inclusion influences employee performance. From the findings and the literature reviewed, it can be confirmed that inclusion indeed positively influences employee performance and this in turn contributes to increased organisational performance (Barak & Michalle, 2019; Shore et al., 2011; Daya, 2014). The analysis of the findings also suggest that exclusion negatively influences performance.

Chapter 7: Conclusion and Recommendations

7.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the influence of inclusion on employee performance. Chapter 6 discussed the research findings in conjunction with the literature pertaining to the overall research question. This final chapter reflects on the entire research project and ascertains whether this study has indeed delivered on both its theoretical and practical purposes.

A key purpose of this chapter in addition to the above is to draw conclusions from the findings discussed in the previous chapter and to make recommendations. This chapter will provide an overview of the of the entire paper, including the overall research problem and the four research objectives that were developed through the literature review. It will discuss the key findings, present the framework developed and provide recommendations. In closing it will table the research limitations and ultimately suggest areas that could be considered for future research.

7.2 Research background and objectives

The paper started off with defining diversity. This had to be done because literature has shown how closely linked to inclusion diversity is, so much so that various authors and organisations alike use these two concepts interchangeably and also confuse them. In the context of the paper, the definition for diversity which was most applicable and confirmed by participants was that diversity is not limited to race and gender but goes much broader, to include observable and non-observable factors as well as physical and non-physical characteristics such as thought processes (Kochan et al., 2003; Larkey, 1996). This evidenced the fact that diversity is broad and should not be seen as limited to only inherent characteristics.

Once diversity had been defined the next step was to define and provide meaning to the concept of inclusion. This was important for two main reasons, firstly to differentiate it from diversity, and secondly to ensure understanding by the participants of the two separate concepts so as to enable them to reflect adequately on their inclusive experience and not their experience of diversity. The definition of inclusion which was most applicable to this paper was that as provided for by Lirio et al. (2008), Shore et al. (2011) and Buengeler et al. (2018) which relates to inclusion as an experience by an employee where they feel like they belong. It further relates to the removal of obstacles

so that employees can fully participate in and contribute to the organisation (Roberson, 2006). This was important because the results communicated that inclusion for participants was feeling like they belong and also being provided with opportunities akin to those provided to others that enable them to succeed. Following the definition of inclusion, the next step was to define another important concept, namely performance.

Performance was defined through the lens of how the participants observed performance to present itself. This was important because participants had to provide insights on how their performance was influenced when they were included. Once the participants were able to reflect on their inclusive experience and simultaneously reflect on their performance, this assisted in answering the overall research question. Performance was accordingly defined as meeting or exceeding organisational goals, objectives or KPIs which form part of your daily responsibilities (Ribeiro et al., 2018). Participants felt that performance meant delivering on your objectives, doing well or exceeding these objectives (Schechner & Brady, 2013).

In order for this paper to answer the overall research question, four research questions were developed after a thorough literature review. The next section will discuss in short, the findings of each research question.

7.3 Main findings per research question

7.3.1 Question 1: What inclusive behaviours have employees experienced?

This research question sought to catalogue the inclusive behaviours that employees have experienced. To uncover these behaviours, it was first established whether participants understood what was meant by inclusion. In line with what literature had recorded, some participants confused the meaning of inclusion with that of diversity and this had to be clarified (Roberson, 2006). The findings under this question were therefore that participants firstly found that diversity was not limited to race and gender, but ultimately comprises of a wealth of physical and non-physical factors and this led to a definition of diversity which was quite broad (Kochan et al., 2003; Larkey, 1996).

Pursuant to the discussion on diversity, participants relayed what they thought inclusion was. The crux of their definition was that inclusion meant that an individual had to be part of something, part of a group and that they have to feel a sense of a belonging (Lirio et

al., 2008; Shore et al, 2011; Buengeler et al., 2018). They further said that inclusion and diversity are two different concepts and should be treated as such (Chen & Tang, 2018). They can at best be seen as separate steps within a process.

Once inclusion was defined, participants relayed their inclusive experience and advised which inclusive behaviours they viewed to be reflective of an inclusive environment (Nishii, 2013; Shore et al., 2018). Participants stated that inclusive behaviours related to mainly being involved in activities, being asked for their opinion, being listened to, being respected and ultimately being welcomed as part of a group (Kundu & Mor, 2017; Chen & Tang, 2018). Participants relayed that these inclusive behaviours were reflective of an inclusive environment and without these behaviours, an organisation cannot claim to be inclusive.

This question brought to light that participants did indeed understand the difference between diversity and inclusion even though those terms are commonly confused and used interchangeably (Shore et al., 2018). Further, they were able to reflect on their inclusive experiences and advised what criteria was needed to be included namely, being called to participate, being respected and being allowed to contribute. They lastly were able to advise what an inclusive environment was and how that made them feel like they belong, and this led them to feeling as though they are part of the team, group or organisation.

7.3.2 Question 2: How does an inclusive workplace affect employees?

When addressing this question, from the primary and secondary research, it was clear that inclusion had a positive influence on employees. The participants advised that when they were included it had positive outcomes for them (Shore et al, 2011) in that it made them feel welcome, valued and it made them feel like they were important, and this led to an increase in their confidence (Barak & Michalle, 2019). Participants further advised that inclusion had a positive influence on them because they felt valued and part of a team and organisation (Sabharwal, 2014). Because of this, their self confidence in their abilities and capabilities also increased and they felt that they could contribute more. From this we can ascertain that inclusion resulted in positive outcomes for the employees, because they felt like they belong (Barak & Michalle, 2019).

This ultimately means that if organisations seek to create an environment where employees experience positive outcomes, they should consider creating inclusive

environments/workplaces where employees feel like they are included. This will positively influence employees.

7.3.3 Question 3: How does inclusion influence employee performance?

Before it could be ascertained how the participants' inclusion experiences influenced their performance, it first had to be established what performance meant to the participants. The participants relayed that performance meant the delivering on KPIs or the meeting their objectives (Ribeiro et al., 2018). Some participants stated that performance could also mean going above and beyond those KPIs and objectives and exceeding expectations (Schechner & Brady 2013; Sonnentag & Frese, 2002).

Based on the definition of performance, and when participants reflected on their experience of inclusion, they advised that inclusion positively influenced their performance (Sabharwal, 2014). Further to this, they also advised that inclusion is an important aspect of performance and that organisations should consider same as a factor to improve performance. Participants noted that when they were included, they were more confident in themselves, their abilities and capabilities. They advised that because they were part of a group and felt like they have a shared goal, that they did not want to disappoint the group (Sabharwal, 2014; Shore et al., 2011; Daya, 2014; Pless & Maak, 2004). The inclusion therefore motivated them to do better and contribute more discretionary effort.

Not only did they want to do better but they also wanted to go above and beyond their normal KPIs and objectives. Because they knew that their opinions mattered, that they were valued and were seen as a valuable part of the team, they wanted to contribute more to the shared team goals and to the organisation at large. The inclusion therefore influenced their performance positively and this led to an increase in performance.

Meyer et al. (2015) noted that there have been no conclusive findings with regard to what the influence of inclusion is on performance. The results from this question three are important because it ultimately contributes to literature and confirms that inclusion influences performance positively.

As part of this finding, a performance-inclusion framework was developed. This framework was adapted from the inclusion framework as presented by Shore et al. (2011). See Figure 7 for the performance – inclusion framework.

This framework adapted the inclusion framework by adding in a performance leg. It shows the interplay between inclusion and performance and explains that when there is inclusion, there is higher belongingness and increased performance. The opposite of this is when there is exclusion, there is low belongingness, and this consequently results in a drop in performance.

This question sought to consider how employees perform when they are included and was essential for answering the overall research question. The findings suggest that inclusion has a positive influence on performance.

7.3.4 Question 4: What are the benefits of inclusion and should organisations consider putting in place practices to promote inclusion and to enhance employee and organisational performance?

The last question sought to look at the benefits that come with inclusion, more specifically those that present to an organisation. One of the main benefits of inclusion was identified as increased performance of an individual employee (Chen & Tang, 2018, Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015) which results in improved organisational performance (Kundu and Mor, 2017). These two are interlinked because inclusion is essential for organisational performance as it creates a culture where employees can perform and contribute (Pless & Maak, 2004).

The benefits of inclusion also include increased team interaction and the ability to share ideas freely which leads to innovation and the generation of new solutions (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015). The participants advised that when they were included, they felt like their ideas and contributions mattered and that they could share them. In addition to this, inclusion also increased employee loyalty and commitment and reduces staff turnover (Shore et al., 2011). The last benefit, however, relates to the intention behind inclusion: it makes people feel like they belong, like they are part of something, and this makes them feel heard and listened to which ultimately allows them to be their authentic self (Lirio et al., 2008; Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015).

These benefits are important for this paper and contribute to the literature as well as to organisational knowledge, because it demonstrates that inclusive practices are essential for both individual and organisational performance. With this research, organisations are provided with the benefits of inclusive practices in the furtherance of their own performance goals. It also provides organisations with the rationale for implementing

inclusive practices and creating inclusive environments/workplaces. It further shows that when individuals are included, this leads to increased performance. Managers must therefore ensure that they foster inclusion in their teams to enable performance and organisations must develop policies and practices for inclusion and ensure compliance and commitment with these throughout the organisation, for inclusion to be successful and yield the requisite benefits (Shore et al., 2018).

7.4 Interplay between all concepts

The figure below represents how the various research questions and the findings resulting from those research questions are interlinked. The diagram shows that as a starting point, organisations must first consider diversity which talks to a variety of individuals with different observable and non-observable characteristics coming together in a workplace (Roberson, 2006; Kochan et al., 2003). Once organisations have this diverse workforce, they must ensure that they have adequate diversity policies and practices in place to manage diversity (Cox et al., 1991), and ensure that these diverse individuals are included in the organisation (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015). Once this has been done, organisations must set the foundation for creating an inclusive environment; here, all facets of inclusion are embraced (Shore et al., 2018) and employees are treated as insiders and are encouraged to express their uniqueness (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015).

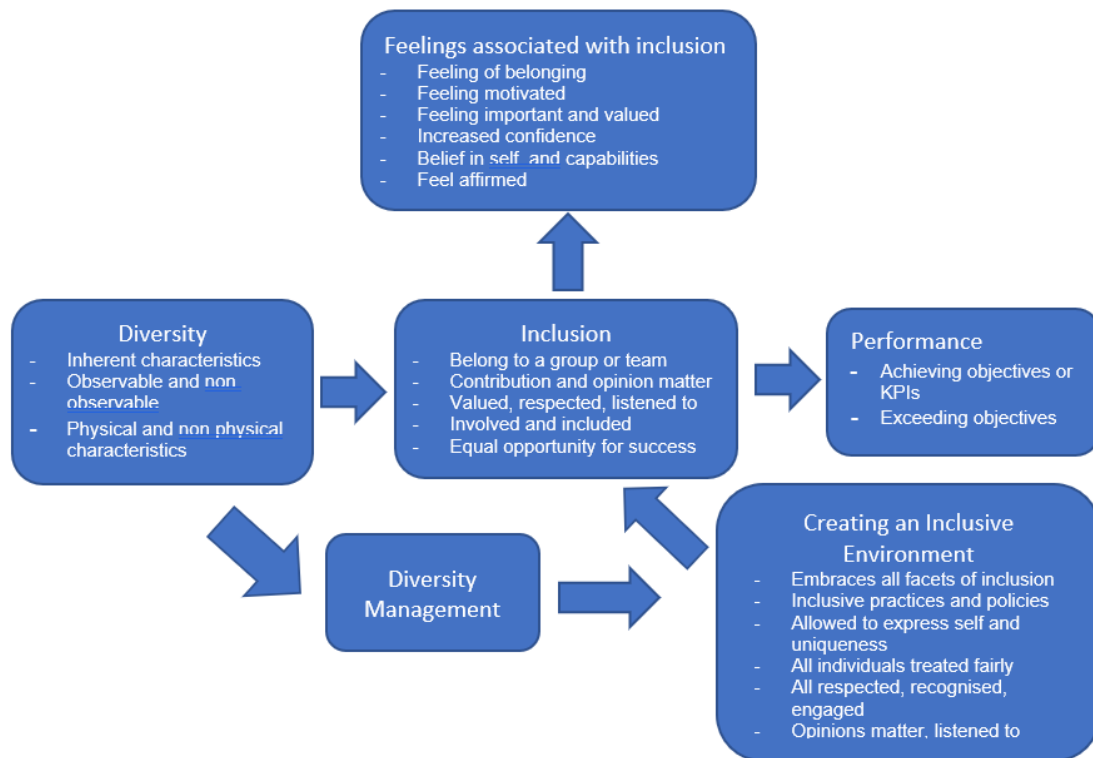


Figure 9: Interplay between concepts.

Once an inclusive environment is created, employees will then experience inclusion and the resultant feelings that come with inclusion. They will amongst others experience belonging (Lirio et al., 2008), they will feel valued, appreciated and recognised (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015; Shore et al., 2011), that their opinions matter (Pless & Maak, 2004) and ultimately that they are part of the group and organisation (Shore et al 2011). This inclusion ultimately leads to employee performance.

7.5 Recommendations

The recommendations based on the findings relate mainly to managers and leaders responsible for implementing these processes and ultimately organisations. Because inclusion influences employee performance, and employee performance influences organisational performance (Meyer et al., 2015), organisational leaders must be committed to inclusion. They must ensure that it becomes part of their strategy, and not merely another thing to consider but something that is given serious consideration and actively invested in (Shore et al., 2018).

Should organisations want to increase their performance as well as gain maximum performance from their employees, organisations should ensure that they start with

implementing robust inclusion policies (Shore et al., 2018). These policies must not only exist on paper; organisations need to actively follow up these policies with action. Organisations need to ensure that they create inclusive environments, all the way from the top down and ensure that inclusion is fostered at both an organisational and a team level so that employees know that they are valued, and that the organisation is serious about inclusion (Shore et al., 2018; April & Blass, 2010).

In addition to the above, organisations need to ensure that they separate their diversity portfolios from their inclusion portfolios, to make it clear that these two are separate, though related, and need to be treated as such (Shore et al., 2018). They need to appoint an inclusion officer and have them deal solely with inclusion and related practices, so that the focus is not split with diversity. Each of these require their own attention in order to fully derive the benefits from each.

Knowing that inclusion has an influence on performance, organisations need to take it seriously and invest time and resources in inclusion for both the benefit of improved organisational performance and also for increased staff performance, staff loyalty and team synergy.

7.6 Research limitations

The limitations as part of the study were the following:

- The employees that were interviewed were females. The research may have presented with more or varied findings had the sample been opened to a broader variety of participants, including but not limited to males from different races and different sexual orientations.
- Although the study asked about various inclusive practices, it was mainly limited to race and gender, and did not consider ageism, career lifecycle and the benefit of sponsorships in fostering inclusion.
- The sample interviewed were all from organisations in Johannesburg and this may be considered a similar environment with similar experiences and thus may not be easily generalisable.
- Lastly, a larger sample could have been used. The sample was 15 females; a broader and greater sample would have possibly generated greater insights, which could've been more generalisable.

7.7 Recommendations for future research

Upon interviewing the various participants as well drafting the findings, a few areas for further research in this field exists, including:

- Research with a more varied sample (as opposed to only females also include males from different backgrounds).
- Research on other areas of exclusion such as sexuality, career lifecycle and ageism.
- Research pertaining to the effects of exclusion on previously advantaged groups when organisations seek to foster inclusion only with regard to previously disadvantaged groups.
- Research on the impact of being in an organisation where you experience a change from inclusion to exclusion and how that influences performance or makes people feel.
- Research on how inclusion may foster negative behaviour and how exclusion may foster positive behaviour and drive to perform.
- Research on whether inclusion is as important given the advanced age and experience of an employee or individual.

7.8 Conclusion

Sabharwal (2014) and April and Blass (2010) wrote that there have not been many studies that have measured how inclusive behaviours influence performance. Meyer et al. (2015) added to this and noted that there have been no conclusive findings in research with regard to the influence of inclusion on performance. This gap in the literature was the main basis or purpose of this study.

The purpose of this study was to explore the influence of inclusion on employee performance. The study was of an exploratory nature and sought to consider the views from various women who form part of various industries and who sit at different levels within organisations. The study enquired about their inclusive experiences and how those experiences influenced their performance. The study looked at various components relating to inclusion, namely diversity, exclusion and ultimately performance.

The study firstly found that there are number of behaviours and criteria that are needed for inclusion. Most importantly, the study found that inclusion has a positive influence on performance. With this finding, an inclusion-performance framework based on the inclusion framework by Shore et al. (2011) was developed.

In addition, the paper found that there are benefits that present when organisations implement inclusive practices. These benefits range from increased employee performance, an increased sense of belonging of employees, increased organisational performance, increase team cohesion, and ultimately increased employee loyalty and commitment. This provides a business case for implementing inclusive practices and fostering inclusive environments and workplaces.

In considering all the research, both primary and secondary, the conclusion and answer to the overall research purpose is that inclusion influences performance positively.

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Appendix 1: Interview guide

Interview Guide

1. Introduction

- Interview length: No longer than **60 minutes**.
- Questions: 6 – 10 open-ended/explorative questions.
- Interview to be recorded and only brief notes taken if needed. Makes sure equipment is working and you have a backup plan if the equipment fails.
- Studying an MBA on the topic and research objectives as stated below.
- **Research question:** Exploring the influence of workplace inclusion on employee performance.
- **Research objectives:**
 - Catalogue the inclusive behaviours employees have experienced.
 - Explore how an inclusive workplace affects and their performance
 - How does inclusion influence employee performance?
 - Uncover inclusive practices that influenced performance most and that organisations should consider promoting inclusion to enhance employee performance?

2. What is informed consent?

Informed consent is permission granted in full knowledge of the possible risks and benefits of providing the consent.

3. Confidentiality assurances, including anonymity

All information gathered from the interview will be kept completely confidential in terms of interviewee and company names. The data gathered will be used to draw broad findings on a no-names and completely anonymous basis.

4. **Signature of the informed consent form (If they don't sign, do not continue).**

See form attached. Will not proceed with interview without signed consent.

The entire research will be completed and submitted to GIBS for assessment on 1 December 2020. The benefits of participation in the research by the interviewee will be (1) its contribution to vital research in this area and (2) receipt if desired of a copy of the final research report and analysis.

5. **Interview Questions:**

A. **Interviewee background questions:**

1. What is your name?
2. Tell me about your current position, how long you have served in it, your level at your organisation and what you are responsible for?

B. **Research-related questions:**

1. What does inclusion mean to you?
2. What does performance mean to you?
3. Tell me about a time when you felt included in a team.
 - 3.1 Who you were with?
 - 3.2 What was going on?
 - 3.3 What behaviours/practices led you to feel included?
4. How was your performance around that time?

- 4.1 What did being included have to do with your performance, if at all?
5. When you were included, how did that make you feel about yourself/team/the work etc?
6. Tell me about a time when you felt excluded.
 - 6.1 Who you were with?
 - 6.2 What was going on?
 - 6.3 What behaviours/practices led you to feel excluded?
7. How was your performance around that time?
 - 7.1 What did being excluded have to do with your performance it, if at all?
8. When you were excluded, how did that make you feel about yourself/team/the work etc?
9. On what basis do you think the exclusion occurred, was it based on race, gender, team dynamics, organisational culture etc?
10. In general, how would inclusion influence on performance?
11. How might inclusion benefit organisations?

C. On the spot questions:

1. Make a note of what you ask as an interviewer, so that this question can be repeated with remaining interviewees.
2. Any other comments from the interviewee?

D. Script for the end of the interview

- Thank interviewee again for their time.
- Interviewer to provide information about how he/she will proceed with the study after the interview and what the interviewee can expect.
- Let interviewee know that there may be subsequent contact to clarify

information, ask additional information or solicit feedback from interviewee on findings.

- Obtain agreement to such subsequent contact and set up time and date for such subsequent contact (i.e. a shorter clarification interview or call.)
- Interviewer provides his/her contact information

Appendix 2: Informed consent

Informed consent letter for participation in interview

Title – Exploring the influence of workplace inclusion on employee performance

Dear Research Participant

I am required to complete a research project as part of my Masters in Business Administration qualification and as such am conducting research on workplace inclusion and its influence on employee performance. I would like to learn about your experience of inclusion in the workplace and whether this has had an influence on your performance and, if so, how.

Our interview is expected to last about **60 minutes**. **You confirm that 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 myself or my supervisor. Our details are as follows:

Researcher Name: Jason Olifant

Supervisor: Dr Dorothy Ndletyana

Email: 04934785@mygibs.co.za

Email: ndletyanad@gibs.co.za

Phone: 0825393688

Phone: 0823785769

Please complete:

Name of participant _____

Signature of participant: _____

Date: _____

Name of researcher: _____

Signature of researcher: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 3: Ethical clearance

Ethical Clearance Approved MBA - Applied Research x



MastersResearch2020 <MBAResearch2020@gibssa.mail.onmicrosoft.com>
to me ▾

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

**Ethical Clearance
Approved**

Dear Jason Olifant,

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

You are therefore allowed to continue collecting your data.

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

[Ethical Clearance Form](#)

Kind Regards

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

Appendix 4: Code list

Name	Groundedness
additional – age and career life cycle	3
additional – consider a broader field	1
additional – sponsorship	1
allowed to ask questions	6
asked for your opinions/views – they matter/respected/noticed	34
bare minimum in contribution in performance	11
being engaged, efficient and diligent	2
being heard/listened to and helped	24
being honest, open and transparent	4
being involved and included/in decision making	37
being set up for failure	2
being set up to perform	5
being trusted or trusting	15
being understood	2
belonging, welcomed and being part of a team/group	37
check in sessions	2
comfortable working environment	2
communication is important	2
completing tasks	1
contributing and making a difference	5
could foresee future at organisation	7
decreased productivity – company loses if they exclude	4
decreased self confidence in self and abilities	6
demotivated team	3
demotivating and question contribution	5
demotivated and less discretionary/additional effort	24
discouraging participation	2
discrimination/excluded on race and gender	27
disrespected and unwelcomed	3
diversity deals with race/gender	4

diversity is broad	3
diversity is important for inclusion	1
diversity is purposeful	1
do best for sake of client	4
doing something relating to work	3
doing your best/excellence	4
doubting your abilities and qualification	9
effort to get attention	2
eliminated gossip and office politics	1
employees not on par/different groups	2
engaging with colleagues	2
enhanced performance	2
exceeded performance standards	3
excluded from activities and opportunities	5
excluded from team	2
exclusion affects performance positively	4
exclusion affects self-esteem/doubt in capabilities	10
exclusion based on organisational culture	6
exclusion based on team dynamics	8
exclusion has no effect on performance	6
exclusion influences performance negatively	16
exclusion makes it difficult to perform	5
facing opposition	2
feeling demotivated/disappointed/anger	12
feeling judged and less than	3
feeling of affirmation	4
feeling unappreciated/undermined	8
felt fearful	1
felt hurt, disappointed, annoyed	11
felt positive about self	5
felt unwelcomed and not at home	2
felt worthy	2
freedom important to perform	2
freedom to be, being comfortable	3
freedom to speak/ask for help	3
from the top down	1

given support to fulfil	4
going beyond normal KPIs	3
good pressure to perform better	1
hate for group/organisation and considered leaving	8
having an agenda	1
helping each other	2
how you produce results	1
human need for acceptance	1
inclusion – positive influences performance	37
inclusion also means freedom to be	1
Inclusion beneficial for organisations increased performance	16
inclusion has no effect on performance	4
inclusion influences performance negatively	2
increased confidence in abilities and personal growth	17
increased loyalty and commitment	3
increased performance, input and discretionary effort	18
increased productivity	2
increased workload	1
increases performance and loyalty	3
innovative and not bored	1
input is valued	6
instils fear	1
integration outside work	2
involvement and participation	7
knowledge sharing and learning	2
legal advisor	0
less conflict and misunderstanding	1
longer tenure of employees	1
meeting objectives and delivering on KPI's	12
meeting various personal and professional standards	2
moral compass dictates effect of exclusion/inclusion on performance	2
motivated and additional drive	2

motivated to do better	8
motivation to participate and contribute more	10
moving into a different/new environment	1
needs are considered	1
no barriers or limitations	3
no consultation or communication	4
no exclusion or hierarchy	1
no interest	1
no involvement or participation/in decision making	11
no respect, trust and communication in team	9
no sense of care and stressed	1
no solid support structure influence performance	3
not being accepted as part of the group	7
not being an afterthought	3
not being criticised for not knowing	2
not being discriminated against/judged	3
not being taken seriously	1
not correct colour appointed me	1
not feeling left out and useless	4
not having voice and misunderstood	1
not interested and demotivated	11
not limited to role spec but practical	1
not physically present made inclusion hard	1
not sharing information	3
not valued and recognised	12
opinion ideas not valued or sought	10
optimal performance contributes to organisation – ROI	6
painful and environment not positive	1
part of the journey	3
people felt intimidated and therefore excluded me	1
perform in accordance with measures	8
performance not good	2
provided with/included in opportunities	10
reaching objectives and work-related tasks	4

recognised and engaged, seen	2
relation and common ground	1
rely on colleagues	1
sense of psychological safety	1
sharing ideas/information	9
showing appreciation/care	4
talented and will remain at company	1
team interaction, synergy and communication	34
they believe in your abilities/capabilities	5
to be part of company/organisation strategy	8
top-down approach, hierarchical	1
treated differently than others	5
treated fairly	2
understanding different environments	1
value/potential/contribution recognised – seen as important	15
variety of people with different skills	7
withdrew from team	11
work is validated	3
work was taken away	1
additional – age and career life cycle	3

Appendix 5: Themes, categories and codes per research question

	Themes	Categories	Code	
Research Question 1 What inclusive behaviours have employees experienced?	Theme 1 The broadness of diversity Theme 2 Diversity limited to physical traits Theme 3 Diversity different from inclusion	Defining diversity	variety of people with different skills	
			diversity deals with race/ gender	
			not being discriminated against/judged	
			diversity is broad	
			diversity is important for inclusion	
				diversity is purposeful
	Theme 1 Belongingness and being part of something Theme 2 Personal involvement and participation Theme 3 Listened to and knowing your opinions matter Theme 4 organisational inclusion	Criteria/ behaviours leading to inclusion	belonging, welcomed and being part of a team/ group	
			being involved and included in decision making	
			asked for your opinions/views - they matter/respected/noticed	
			team interaction, synergy and communication	
			being heard/listened to and helped	
			being trusted or trusting	
			provided with/included in opportunities	
			sharing ideas/information	
	Theme 1 Not being seen as valuable Theme 2 Not belonging to the group Theme 3 No access to opportunities	Criteria/ behaviours leading to exclusion	not valued and recognised	
			no involvement or participation/ in decision making	
opinion ideas not valued or sought				
not being accepted as part of the group				
			excluded from activities and opportunities	
Theme 1 Exclusion based on inherent Theme 2 Exclusion based on organisational factors	Basis for exclusion	discrimination/excluded on race and gender		
		exclusion based on team dynamics		
		exclusion based on organisational culture		
		age and career lifecycle		

Research Question 2 How does an inclusive workplace affect employees?	Theme 1 Feel important and valued Theme 2 Increase in confidence and positivity	Feelings associated with inclusion	belonging, welcomed and being part of a team/group
			asked for your opinions/views - they matter/respected/noticed
			increased confidence in abilities and personal growth
			input is valued
			they believe in your abilities/capabilities
			felt positive about self
			feeling of affirmation
	felt worthy		
	Theme 1 Demotivated and unappreciated resulting in less effort Theme 2 Hurt and disappointment and self-doubt	Feelings associated with exclusion	demotivated and less discretionary/additional effort
			not valued and recognised
			feeling demotivated /disappointed/anger
			felt hurt, disappointed, annoyed
			not interested and demotivated
			withdrew from team
exclusion affects self-esteem/doubt in capabilities			
doubting your abilities and qualification			
feeling unappreciated/undermined			
hate for group/ organisation and considered leaving			
Research Question 3 How does inclusion influence employee performance?	Theme 1 Performance means meeting performance objectives and criteria	What is performance	meeting objectives and delivering on KPI's
			perform in accordance with measures
			being set up to perform
	Theme 2 Performance means going above and beyond		doing your best/excellence
			exceeded performance standards
			going beyond normal KPIs

	of performance expectations		doing something relating to work
	Theme 1 Positive influence on performance Theme 2 Motivated and more discretionary effort	How employees perform when included	inclusion – positive influence on performance increased performance, input and discretionary effort motivation to participate and contribute more motivated to do better doing your best/excellence exceeded performance standards going beyond normal KPIs
	Theme 1 Demotivated and decrease in performance Theme 2 Doubt in self and abilities	How employees perform when excluded	demotivated and less discretionary/additional effort exclusion influences performance negatively not interested and demotivated bare minimum in contribution in performance doubting your abilities and qualification exclusion makes it difficult to perform demotivating and question contribution decreased productivity – company loses if they exclude
Research Question 4 What are the benefits of inclusion and should organisations consider putting in place such practices to promote inclusion in order to enhance employee and organisational performance?	Theme 1 Increased output, value and organisational performance Theme 2 Increased employee and team cohesiveness Theme 3 Engendered loyalty and commitment to the organisation	Benefits of inclusion to the organisation	team interaction, synergy and communication increased performance, input and discretionary effort inclusion beneficial for organisations increased performance could foresee future at organisation optimal performance contributes to organisation - ROI increased loyalty and commitment

	Theme 1 Employees feel like they belong and are valued	Benefits of inclusion	belonging, welcomed and being part of a team/group
	Theme 2 Increased employee performance		inclusion – positive influences performance
			asked for your opinions/views - they matter/respected/noticed
			team interaction, synergy and communication
			being heard/ listened to and helped
			increased performance, input and discretionary effort
			being trusted or trusting
			motivation to participate and contribute more
			sharing ideas/information