

The effect of diversity on teams in selected manufacturing organisations

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates employees' perceptions of diversity and its impact on the workplace, as perceived by employees themselves. The focus will specifically be on external diversity factors such as culture, race and gender and to what extent these factors can possibly be linked to differences in perceptions of the influence of diversity in the workplace.

We know that equality and diversity programmes should be aligned with an organisation's core strategic objectives. Not only is this alignment critical to achieving equality and diversity goals, but it also enables organisations to benefit from the business opportunities that diversity offers.

To better understand the role and importance of diversity and gain insight into social systems, quantitative measures of diversity were examined by means of questionnaires.

A major consideration for managers is the wide scope of behaviours, attitudes, and values of the diverse staff across socio-cultural boundaries, which are bound to affect organisational processes. Thus, it is crucial for managers to distinguish how staff of different socio-cultural backgrounds could be interacting within the organisation, and identify how perceptual effects may be manifested in multicultural group relationships.

Keywords

Diversity

Conflict

Alienation

Human resource management

Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE)

Culture

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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

Workforce planning can be viewed as the process of developing and implementing plans and programs to ensure that the right number and types of individuals are available at the right time and place to perform the work necessary to achieve the organisation's objectives (Swanepoel, Erasmus, Van Wyk & Schenk, 2005:3).

In effective workforce planning, there must be a diverse workforce in the organisation. For the organisation to function effectively, reach their goals and to work together in harmony, the diversity of the workforce must be managed to perfection.

The value of diversity has been verified in a wide range of performance settings. Groups with individuals who have very different opinions generate more innovative solutions and detect errors in their group's decisions (Forsyth, 1999:11).

Diverse groups may be better at coping with changing work conditions, because their wider range of talents and traits enhances their flexibility. Diversity should also help groups seek alternative solutions to problems and increase creativity and innovation (Forsyth, 1999:11).

Organisations that want to remain competitive in today's environment must be knowledgeable about the diversity that is present in their workforce, in the overall labour force, and in the marketplace if they hope to run a viable business. Those leading modern organisations are facing many new challenges and opportunities that our growing national diversity presents. These new challenges include attempting to understand the differences between how work used to be done and how it will likely change in an increasingly diverse environment (Thomas, 2005:118).

Other challenges include attempting to understand the legal, ethical, and mundane issues that come with employing a more diverse workforce comprised of immigrants, racial and ethnic minorities, women, older workers, sexual minorities and the

disabled. Along with these challenges there are many opportunities as well, such as providing services, products, and information to a new segment of the market (Thomas, 2005:2).

Diversity does not, however, always help the group perform better. Much of the advantages of diverse groups occur when members are all highly skilled but these skills do not overlap (Forsyth, 1999:13).

The typical South African organisation is a melting pot of diverse cultures, the members of which each bring with them to the workplace their own sets of values, beliefs, and also ideological standards. Cross-cultural exposure has been prevented by the forced segregation of South African's population for so long that the impact of contact at this stage tends to accentuate differences rather than highlight common interests. Improperly managed, and without due tolerance, the integration of so many different cultural groups in an organisation can create a hotbed of conflict (Venter, 2004:18).

When diversity is managed successfully, a multicultural organisation is the result. A multicultural organisation is one in which the organisational culture fosters and values cultural differences. People of all gender, ethnic, racial, and cultural backgrounds are then integrated and represented at all levels and positions in the organisation. Because of the effective management of diversity, there is little intergroup conflict (Hitt, Miller & Colella, 2006:41).

Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) is a form of economic empowerment initiated by the South African government in response to criticism against Narrow-based Empowerment instituted in the country during 2003/2004. B-BBEE has been received with mixed feelings especially by white South African cultural groups and this feeling could possibly fuel the conflict.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

In South Africa we have a great variety of employees in the work force and each one's uniqueness adds to the diversity profile of the company. These differences

bring certain dynamics into play that can either be managed to the benefit of the company or can become an obstacle that hinders performance. The possible impact of these dynamics is accentuated by the fact that the companies targeted by this investigation predominantly operate on team-based structures that require interdependence of team members to perform. The question of how well diversity is managed within this context is of the utmost importance.

The notion and management of diversity is not new. It is an old idea in a new context. More often than not the commotion around diversity has been about the inclusion of people from different racial and cultural backgrounds into organisations, a philosophy embedded in the foundations of black economic empowerment (BEE). Once this has been achieved, the question that then arises is how this diverse workforce can be preserved, retained, and used to the organisation's best advantage. How do we ease cultural tension, gain insight into individual cultural backgrounds and create a workforce that is knowledgeable about the different cultures and values found in our society? The aim is to enable acceptance of people from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds within organisations, to allow for efficiency in productivity and to create effective communication among fellow workers.

This study investigates employees' perceptions of diversity and its impact on the workplace, as perceived by employees themselves. The focus will specifically be on external diversity factors such as culture, race and gender and to what extent these factors can possibly be linked to differences in perceptions of the influence of diversity in the workplace.

1.3 STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

Evaluating the abovementioned problem statement, the following objectives were formulated for this study.

The main objective of this study was:

- To determine the possible differences in perceptions of diversity on teams in selected manufacturing organisations.

Out of the primary goal, we can formulate the secondary goals of the research.

The secondary objectives of this study were:

- To determine whether diversity in some instances leads to conflict.
- To determine if diversity is perceived to contribute to feelings of alienation among employees.

1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

There are two phases associated with the research method. The first phase focuses on the literature review of the subject, and the second phase is an empirical study where questionnaires were sent out and the collected data analysed.

1.4.1 Literature review

The literature study will focus mainly on diversity and the interactions between employees. To reach the goals of this research, the researcher will explore the following in more detail:

- The meaning of diversity
- Conflict
- Alienation

Academic books, relevant subject magazines, and scientific publications will be studied to obtain relevant information.

The rationale of this study can be outlined as follows:

- Diversity can be seen as the driving force of this study; diversity theories will form the core focus point of the literature analysis.
- Diversity could lead to conflict; the effect of conflict owing to diversity will also be analysed.
- Diversity can lead to an employee or employees experiencing a sense of alienation.

The literature review will be discussed in Chapter 2.

1.4.2 Empirical review

The empirical review will be addressed in more detail in Chapter 3. A brief overview follows:

The research field data were collected at British American Tobacco, Sasol and NCP Chloorchem. The research was in the form of structured questionnaires. The questionnaires were completed during meetings they were was completely anonymous. The purpose of the questionnaires is to gain insight about the thoughts and feelings of respondents regarding cultural diversity.

The empirical study consists of three stages namely:

- Data collection phase
- Analysis phase
- Review phase

The findings of the empirical study will be discussed in Chapter 3.

1.4.2.1 Research design

The research design to be used is the descriptive approach. This type of research presents facts concerning the nature and status of a situation, as it exists at the time of the study (Creswell, 1994:8). This also includes the relationships and practices that exist, beliefs and processes that are ongoing, effects that are being felt, or trends that are developing (Best, 1970:5). Furthermore, such an approach tries to describe present conditions, events or systems based on the impressions or reactions of the respondents in the research (Creswell, 1994:9).

A quantitative design will be used in collecting data by means of questionnaires. This quantitative method is compatible with the study because it allows the research problem to be conducted in very specific and set terms (Creswell, 1994:9).

1.4.2.2. Participants

A participant can be defined as including all people or items with the characteristic one wishes to understand. Because there is very rarely enough time or money to gather information from everyone or everything in a population, the goal becomes the finding of a representative sample (or subset) of that population.

Employees at British American Tobacco, Sasol and NCP Chlorchem were selected to complete the questionnaires. This was due to convenience sampling as the researcher knew employees at these companies. The questionnaires were completed by employees at all levels of the organisations, during their scheduled meetings days. There was not a fixed time limit to complete the questionnaires but it was requested that the questionnaires be completed in one uninterrupted session. Ethical considerations were adhered to by the fact that completion of the questionnaires was voluntary. The questionnaires were completely anonymous and confidentiality was kept by sealing the questionnaire in an envelope after completion.

The demographic composition of the target group was as follows:

- 53% male respondents, 47% female respondents
- 44% respondents were aged between 20 and 30
- 47% respondents were white, 32% black, 13% Indian and 8% were 'other'

1.4.2.3 Measuring instrument

The data for the study will be collected through surveys. Surveys are the chosen method to collect data because its function is to generalise results from a sample to a larger population. The primary purpose and advantage of surveys is generalisation of the results.

A structured questionnaire will be used to collect data. The purpose of the set of statements is to determine the level of agreement or disagreement using a Likert response scale. In the Likert technique, the degree of agreement or disagreement is

given a numerical value, thus a total numerical value can be calculated from all the responses (Underwood, 2004:12).

The questionnaires based on the literature study, will be developed by the researcher.

1.5 Limitations/Anticipated problems

The study is limited to three organisations. Results may only be generalisable to organisations with proximal similarity.

Respondents might not take the questionnaires seriously since it is structured, meaning answer choices are already provided and may elicit random choices. So, in order to promote participation among respondents, the study's purpose will be clearly explained on the survey questionnaire.

Other potential problems are that there is no standardised research questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed by the researcher based on relevant themes that emerged from the literature study.

Owing to the groundbreaking work of many of the authors some of the references and books used are slightly outdated, but still relevant to date. As this is merely an initial investigation, problems may arise in the application that will inform improvements in a follow-up study.

The research is merely descriptive in nature, and will not attempt to provide in-depth explanations of underlying patterns that might emerge.

1.5.1 Scope of the study

- A brief orientation to the study
- Describing the problem statement
- Defining the objectives of the study
- Describing the research methodology

- Listing the study limitations
- Conducting a literature study to gain a understanding of the various challenges
- Conducting a field study utilising questionnaires
- Reporting on findings
- Conclusions and recommendations

1.6 SUMMARY

Chapter 1 is the building foundation of this study. It gives guided direction parameters for the researcher to gain the full intended outcome namely the effect that diversity has on teams in various manufacturing organisations. This chapter's content is the roadmap of the intended study direction.

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will be a literature study. The intention with this chapter is to gain understanding of the various aspects of diversity that can possibly lead to conflict and alienation of certain groups of employees.

2.1 DIVERSITY

The term diversity has multiple interpretations and one prominent definition states: “Diversity is a mix of people in one social system that has distinctly different, socially relevant group affiliation” (Shani & Lau, 2000:208).

A social system can be defined in many ways: countries, cities, organisations, work teams, and so on. Furthermore, there are many kinds of group affiliations, such as gender, professional groups, and religious groups. A socially relevant group is simply the natural creation and/or construction process of meaning that occurs when a group of people interact. Cultural diversity occurs when these group affiliations are not only socially relevant but also have specific cultural significance and are differentiated from other groups based on behavioural norms, values, language, ways of thinking, and so on (Shani & Lau 2000:208).

There is little doubt that diversity is a key issue in organisations worldwide. South African organisations are not only faced with internal or local diversity, but also with global diversity. On the one hand, organisations strive to rid themselves of ethnic and cultural separation, and on the other they have to deal with a world of diversity opened through technological advancement (Schultz, Bargain, Potgieter, Viedge & Werner, 2003:15).

According to Van der Wal & Ramotsehoa (2001:13), South African managers, especially white managers, strive towards stable, healthy labour relations and a labour market that is directly linked to the goals of the organisation. The managers dream about relationships that are built upon trust and employees who are productive and motivated, and who strive to achieve their full potential. This dream quickly changes into a nightmare when they (the managers) look reality in the face.

The workforce is too diverse to work in harmony and instead the employees are unhappy and unproductive and conflict arises (Moolman, 1996:31).

According to Van der Wal and Ramotsehoa (2001:14), diversity can only be appreciated if:

- Everybody is given the opportunity to develop their skills and reach their full potential.
- People are empowered with knowledge.
- People are given the opportunities to utilise their knowledge and skills.

Diversity becomes a competitive advantage when it contributes to decision-making. Diversity offers new and important insights into problems and challenges, and it counteracts 'group think'. A diverse workforce is essential to improving customer service in a diverse marketplace (Schultz *et al.*, 2003:14).

2.1.1 Cultural diversity

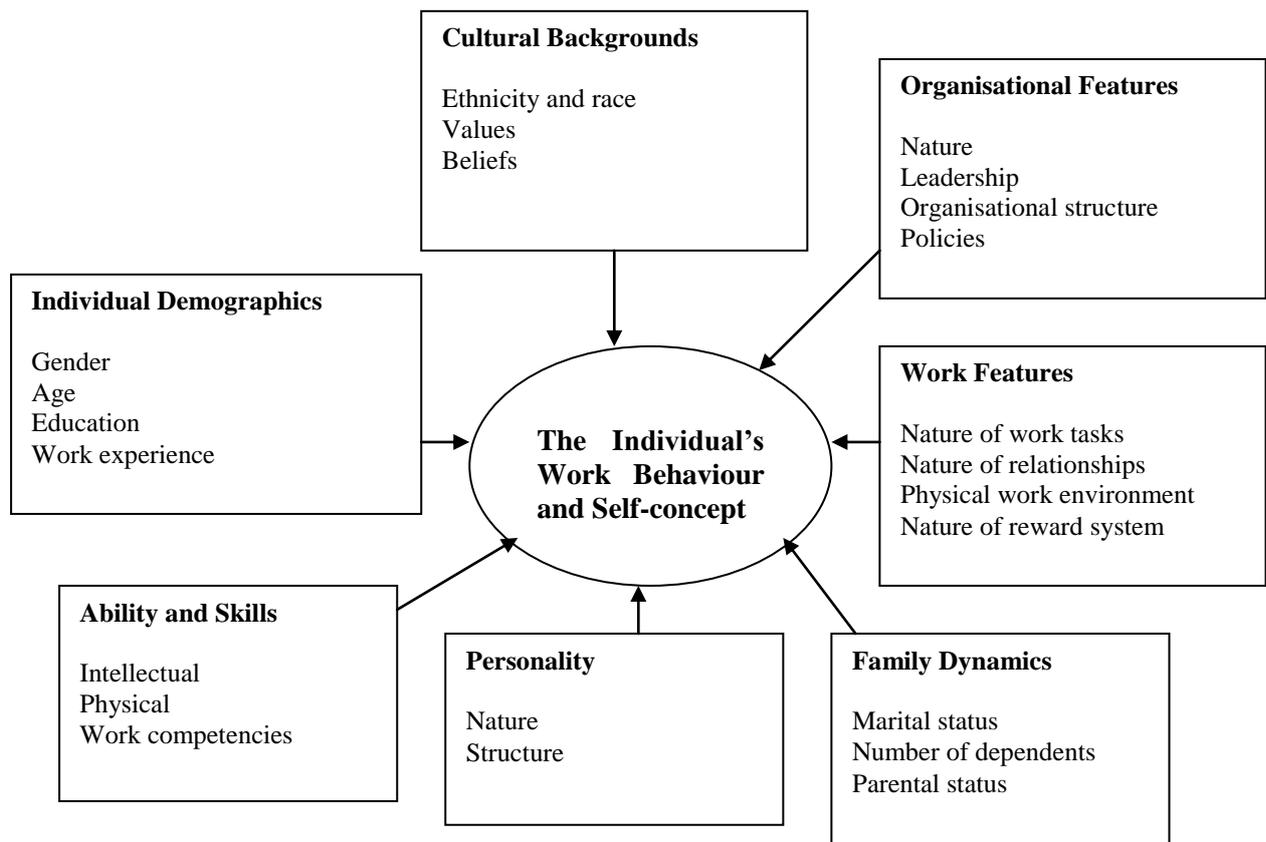
A diverse workforce typically includes individuals with a variety of cultural backgrounds. Cultural diversity is one of the most noted recent changes in the workforce.

As illustrated in Figure 1, individuals seem to have diverse cultural profiles. Cultures have causes that are easily experienced but more difficult to describe. At a surface level the concept of culture invokes images of exotic customs, religions, foods, clothing, and lifestyles. At a deeper level culture includes systems of values, ways of interpreting the world, social structure, and ways of interpersonal relations (Shani & Lau, 2000:208).

The growing diversity of cultural backgrounds that shapes individuals' behaviour is one of the major challenges facing today's managers and organisations. When people with different cultural backgrounds, values, and beliefs come together at the workplace, misunderstandings and conflicts inevitably occur (Shani & Lau, 2000:209).

Some people or organisations have a wrong perception of what cultural diversity really means. They think that it is white cultures and black cultures, but they forget that you can divide white culture into Afrikaans whites, English whites, and German whites and so on. Black cultures can be divided into Zulus, Sothos, Swazis, Tswanas and so on. Diversity of cultures in an organisation is a reality. The figure below depicts the individual's work behaviour and self-concept.

Figure1: Cultural diversity



Source: Shani & Lau, 2000: 210. The individual's work behaviour and self-concept

The employees within an organisation must be aware of the diversity within their organisation. The employees must understand and respect each other's diversity. Diversity within an organisation can no longer be ignored. People must start to bring their cultural background into the open, so that everyone can start to learn something about the other person's cultural background. This is the only way that we can move forward and gain strength from each other's 'strength through diversity'.

People will easily communicate with people from the same cultural background, if they had the choice. If they had to communicate with people from other cultural backgrounds, they would have to take into consideration the perceptions, norms, values, stereotypes, as well as their outlook upon the world.

In the South African context diversity is generally reduced to the involvement of people of different socio-cultural frames of reference within a particular setting. In organisational contexts diversity is broadly defined as 'the increasing heterogeneity of organisations with the inclusion of different groups' (Robbins, 1996:13). This meaning has three basic interpretations; first, in terms of the presence and interaction between people with different socio-cultural frames of reference; second, that the presence of such people implies significant culture distances between them based on their core values acquired during enculturation, which in turn, requires an adaptation of conventional management styles in what is generally referred to as 'multicultural management'. The third interpretation concerns diversity produced by aspects of organisational culture (Giovaninni & Rosansky, 1990:2).

The first and third meanings are relevant in this discussion and are associated with different dimensions of cultural diversity. Primary dimensions are of people's biological traits of gender, race, and age, i.e. traits with which they were born, which profoundly influence their lives, determine their identities and influence their behaviour, attitudes, ideas, etc. Secondary dimensions include trust, education, social responsibility, wealth, place of residence, marital status, language and belief systems which are linked to people's cultural frames of reference. Within the secondary dimension the following also play a role, income, work roles, positions, status, responsibilities, and group membership which, in turn, are determined by the culture of the organisation. These give depth and individuality to people's lives and can be changed. Tertiary dimensions of diversity emerge from primary and secondary dimensions, and include cognitive and affective phenomena such as attitudes, perceptions, beliefs and behaviour relating to the work situation, work motivation, and ways of integrating personal, family, professional and political aims and ambitions with official roles and duties. They cannot be observed per se and are only deduced by observing people's behaviour and listening to their views and ideas (Herselman, 2004:4).

2.1.2 Managing diversity

Unless effectively managed, the presence of diversity among employees may create misunderstandings that have a negative impact on productivity and teamwork. It may also result in overt or subtle discrimination by those who control organisational resources against those who do not fit into the dominant group. In addition to being illegal, excluding certain people from participating in an organisation because of their group membership is counterproductive because it prevents effective people from contributing to or remaining with the organisation. Business leaders who are using a multicultural approach are discovering a surprising wealth of benefits for their organisations (Gomez-Mejia, Balkin & Cardy, 2004:122).

According to Carr-Ruffino (1996:21), benefits accrue at all levels: personal, interpersonal, and organisational. These include:

- Attracting and retaining the best available human talent
- Increasing organisational flexibility
- Reducing costs
- Improving the quality of management
- Increasing productivity
- Contributing to social responsibility

Effective diversity management requires that diversity be linked to the organisation's strategic plan. That is, it is necessary to be clear about measurable ways in which diversity can contribute to the strategic goals, directions, and plans of the organisation. The organisation must develop ways of defining and measuring diversity effectiveness and then integrate these measures of effectiveness with the overall corporate strategy (Hitt *et al.*, 2006:62).

Another aspect of tying diversity to strategy involves making diversity a core value, mission, or expectation statement. Many organisations that truly value diversity say so in their mission statements and make diversity goals a part of performance evaluation (Hitt *et al.*, 2006:62).

It is important for people/managers to know that they are working with unique individuals who cannot merely be classified as some types of some groups, but they must be seen and respected as part of an everchanging culture of an organisation. Each employee of the organisation has some sort of ability and potential and it is the job of the manager to help that person so that he/she can implement that ability effectively into the workplace. If a manager can get people of different races, gender, age, and languages to work together - the employees will be much more productive and they will work in more harmony.

2.1.3 Some components of a multicultural organisation

Diversity can be caused by visible and invisible factors. It can be factors such as: age, gender, race, background, education and a lot more. If these factors are taken into consideration, it will lead to a workforce that is a lot more productive and each of these employees will feel important and will use their talents to achieve the objectives of the organisation. A discussion of some of the factors follows:

2.1.3.1 Age

Age diversity refers to an individual's identification with a particular age category or generational nomenclature. If an age group is a homogenous group, there would be little conflict and diversity in that group. And the group will feel little if any diversity amongst each other (Ingram, 2001:22).

The combination of changes in the age distribution of employees and new flatter organisational structures mean that four generations of workers can find themselves working side by side. This potential age diversity of four generations presents a major set of managerial challenges in terms of managing four generations of sets of value, belief systems, work norms, work attitudes, and physical and mental functioning, not to mention the vast differences of work experience (Shani & Lau, 2000:198).

2.1.3.2 Gender

Gender diversity is limited to male and female. The Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 is helping to reduce the discrimination that there was against women in the past. Owing to the Act, the workforce is getting more diverse with women entering the workplace. Women are starting to work in posts that were previously only for men. Recently more South African communities are allowing women to work; in the past it was the male's responsibility to work and provide for his family and the females were in charge of the children and of the chores in the home.

The organisations must make sure that women in managerial jobs receive the same remuneration as a male in the same position. Women will bring a new sort of managerial style to the organisation and some new techniques. Males and females have different ways of communicating. This is a result of the socialisation process and the different communication styles could pose insurmountable barriers. Research has shown that women ask for information, while men resist the process. Women are often more apologetic, sound more polite and uncertain, while men sound more direct, challenging and authoritative (Schultz *et al.*, 2003:118).

2.1.3.3 Race

Within the large society and organisations, three basic interrelated forms of racism can be identified: (1) *individual racism* – the extent to which a person holds values, feelings, and attitudes and/or engages in behaviour that promotes the person's own racial group as superior; (2) *cultural racism* – the extent to which groups believe that their cultural features and achievements are superior to those of other cultural groups; (3) *institutional racism* – the extent to which institutions and organisations create rules, laws, policies and procedures that serve to maintain the dominant status of and control by one group (Shani & Lau, 2000:211).

Racism is one of the most common sorts of conflict that can be found in organisations. Employees must start to respect each other and must try to work together in harmony. The managers must understand how diversity of race affects

the employee and must let each employee understand how the person of the other race contributes to the organisation.

2.1.3.4 Communication

Communication plays an important role, because it promotes better cooperation between employers and employees. It plays an important role in management functions and the management of diversity and labour relations. Communication also determines the atmosphere, climate, morale, and the motivation of the employees. The communication channels must be correct so that the right information gets to the right person (Hitt *et al.*, 2006:441).

Sometimes it is not what was said, but the manner in which it was said. Effective communication in the organisation is complicated by the increase of diversity in organisations. If conflict between managers and the employees is based on the wrong assumptions, conflict between the parties can escalate.

Effective communication between managers and their subordinates will increase the productivity of the organisation. Employees can only give their best if they know what to do, how to do it and where to do it. Communication must be systematic, if it is not, the employees being affected by change will not understand and they will resist it. For communication to succeed there must be respect from both sides (Hitt *et al.*, 2006:335).

According to Kreitner & Kinicki (2006:64), there are certain significant barriers that organisations encounter when they try to move forward in managing diversity. Here are a few common barriers:

- *Inaccurate stereotypes and prejudice.* This barrier manifests itself in the belief that differences are viewed as weaknesses. In turn, this promotes the view that diversity hiring will mean sacrificing competence and quality.
- *Ethnocentrism.* The ethnocentrism barrier represents the feeling that one's cultural rules and norms are superior or more appropriate than the rules and norms of another culture.

- *Poor career planning.* This barrier is associated with the lack of opportunities for diverse employees to get the type of work assignments that qualify them for senior management positions.
- *An unsupportive and hostile working environment for diverse employees.* Diverse employees are frequently excluded from social events and the friendly camaraderie that takes place in most offices.
- *Lack of political savvy on the part of diverse employees.* Diverse employees may not get promoted because they do not know how to 'play the game' of getting along and getting ahead in the organisation. Research reveals that women and people of colour are often excluded from organisational networks.
- *Difficulty in balancing career and family issues.* Women still assume the majority of the responsibilities with raising children. This makes it harder for women to work weekends and evenings or to travel frequently once they have children. Even without children in the picture, household chores take more of a women's time than a man's time.
- *Fears of reverse discrimination.* Some employees believe that managing diversity is a smoke screen for reverse discrimination. This belief leads to very strong resistance because people feel that one person's gain is another's loss.
- *Diversity is not seen as an organisational priority.* This leads to subtle resistance that shows up in the form of complaints and negative attitudes. Employees may complain about the time, energy, and resources devoted to diversity instead of being spent doing 'real work'.
- *The need to revamp the organisation's performance appraisal and rewards system.* Performance appraisal and reward systems must reinforce the need to effectively manage diversity. This means that success will be based on a new set of criteria. Employees are likely to resist changes that adversely affect their promotions and financial rewards.
- *Resistance to change.* Effectively managing diversity entails significant organisational and personal change.

In short, this means that managing diversity is a critical component of any organisation. The success of the organisation will be shown through how their diversity is being managed. The management of a diverse workforce centres around two things: The acknowledgement of differences between individuals and the management of people in such a way that the differences between people are taken into consideration. People must take each other's differences into consideration to unlock potential and to reach organisational goals (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2006:64).

2.1.4 Benefits of diversity in organisations

More and more organisations are realising that in order to be successful and recruit and retain the best employees, they must value the diversity of their employees and the clients they serve (Lieberman, 2002:1).

Whether it is a non-profit or a private corporation, learning to recognise and utilise differences can benefit any organisation. If you can get along with a wide variety of people, you will be able to benefit from the following advantages of diversity:

- Knowledge and Perspective - A blended work force brings the knowledge and background of many types of people together. The more diverse the employees are, the more perspectives to blend. The advantage is a variety of sources of information and expertise.
- Learning throughout the company - When new people come onto the team, it is an opportunity for everyone to learn. The more diverse the group, the greater the opportunity for growth. Employees can learn more about their customers and competitors from the people on their team.
- New directions - When teams diversify, new opportunities are often discovered. By bringing a fresh perspective, new members may be able to think of new products, services or ways to serve customers. A static work force often cannot develop in this way.
- Adaptability - The more a work team reflects the world outside, the better prepared it will be to face business changes. Employees from a wide variety of backgrounds can come up with new processes and responses to workplace changes.
- In order to be socially competent in the workplace, the ability to deal with a wide variety of people must be cultivated. By valuing the diversity

encountered, it is possible to build strong partnerships. Respect for others will be an advantage.

According to Lieberman (2002:1), it is important that employees are representative of their client base so they can understand their needs and know how to serve them. It does not mean that people of one culture, gender, age, etc. only work with those respective populations. It means that the organisation as a whole is better able to relate to a larger population. This creates better working relationships, and helps avoid miscommunication based on cultural differences and ignorance about other groups. It saves time and money and having to do things over.

2.1.5 Summary of section

To summarise section 2.1, we looked at how diversity can affect organisations. South Africa is affected by diversity locally and globally and from internal diversity. South Africa is such a diverse country and diversity will always be present in our organisations. We must train managers and employees to handle diversity effectively so that productivity can increase and conflict can decrease. People forming diverse groups must start to communicate more with each other and must start to trust and respect people from other groups.

The managers of the future are those who can implement a plan for diverse employees to work together in harmony and to respect each other. It is the job of the organisation and the manager to ensure that everyone feels at ease with their own culture and their fellow employee's cultural background. Diversity must be taken seriously, because it is a subject that will always be there. People will always differ from each other.

Diversity is one of the main reasons of conflict in the organisations and therefore conflict management will be discussed next.

2.2 CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

People associate conflict with destructiveness - with antagonism, uncomfortable relationships, loss of jobs, broken families, violence, and war. This understandable human reaction leads to the avoidance of confrontation, which paradoxically, is a primary reason conflicts grow to destructive proportions. Conflict is threatening, yet it is inevitable in vital relationships (Mayer, 1990:3).

A comprehensive review of the conflict literature yielded this consensus definition: “conflict is a process in which one party perceives that its interests are being opposed or negatively affected by another party”. The word *perceives* reminds us that sources of conflict can be real or imagined. Conflict can escalate (strengthen) or de-escalate (weaken) over time (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2006:407).

According to Kreitner and Kinicki (2006:406), we must make no mistake about it, conflict is an unavoidable aspect of modern life. These major trends conspire to make organisational conflict inevitable:

- Constant change.
- Greater employee diversity.
- More teams (virtual and self-managed).
- Less face-to-face communication (more electronic interactions).
- A global economy with increased cross-cultural dealings.

Managing conflict so that we may enjoy its benefits and prevent its potential destructiveness requires courage. The courage required diminishes as we develop skills to confront effectively. To manage conflict often requires that we must confront others (Mayer, 1990:3).

2.2.1 Functional versus dysfunctional conflict

The distinction between functional conflict and dysfunctional conflict pivots on whether the organisation’s interest is served. In short: *functional conflict* is the type of conflict that is constructive, supports the goals of the groups, and improves the

performance of the organisation; *dysfunctional conflict* is the destructive type and hinders the group's performance; it also threatens the interests of the organisation (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2006:409).

There will be both functional and dysfunctional conflict within organisations and it is the job of the managers to effectively manage the conflict so that the interest of the organisation will be achieved.

2.2.2 The conflict process

The criterion which differentiates between functional conflict and dysfunctional conflict is group or organisational performance. Conflict will be functional if it furthers the objectives of the group (Robbins, 1996:506).

According to Robbins (1996: 507) the conflict process has five stages, namely *potential opposition, cognition and personalisation, intentions, behaviour, and outcomes*.

2.2.2.1 Stage 1: Potential opposition

The first step in the conflict process is the presence of conditions which create opportunities for conflict to arise. These factors may not lead directly to conflict, but one of these factors is necessary for conflict to arise. There are certain sources or causes of conflict:

- *Communication* - Semantic differences and misunderstandings may create opportunities for conflict. It is a myth that poor communication is the reason for conflict. Semantic difficulties arise because of differences in training, selective perception and insufficient information about others. Surprisingly it seems that the potential for conflict increases when too little or too much communication takes place (Robbins, 1996:507).
- *Structure* - Here we can take a look at things such as (Robbins, 1996:507):

- The larger the group and the more specialised its activities, the greater the likelihood of conflict.
 - The potential for conflict tends to be greater when group members are younger.
 - The greater the ambiguity in precisely defining where the responsibility for action lies, the greater the potential for conflict to emerge.
 - Where individuals and groups have different goals the potential for conflict is greater.
 - A close style leadership or a too participative style increases the potential for conflict.
 - Interdependence of groups increases the potential for conflict.
- *Personal variables* - Differences between individual value systems and personality characteristics may be sources of conflict. Individuals who are highly authoritarian and dogmatic, and who demonstrate a low self-esteem lead to potential conflict (Robbins, 1996:507).

Out of the above we can see that these three factors have to be present for conflict to arise.

2.2.2.2 Stage 2: Cognition and personalisation

If the conditions in Stage 1 negatively affect something that one party cares about, then the potential for opposition becomes actualised in the second stage. The conditions can only lead to conflict when one or more parties are affected by, and are aware of the conflict. A conflict which is perceived is not necessarily personalised. **A** may be aware that **B** and **A** are in serious conflict, but it may not make **A** tense. It is at the felt level, when individuals become emotionally involved, that parties experience anxiety, tension, frustration and hostility (Robbins, 1996:507).

Conflict issues tend to be defined in this stage. At this stage, the parties decide what the conflict is all about. Emotions play a major role in shaping perceptions. Negative emotions tend to produce oversimplification of issues, reduction in trust and negative interpretations of the other party's behaviour (Robbins, 1996:508).

In contrast to the above statement, Pondy (1967:15) said that conflict sometimes can be observed without any situations that may have led to conflict. This brings a new dimension to conflict, namely latent conflict. This is where conflict is present in the relationship without any of the parties realising it (Pondy, 1967:15).

Latent conflict exists whenever individuals or groups have differences that bother one another, but those differences are not great enough to cause one side to act or alter the situation. An inevitable power differential between groups, and between individuals, produces conflict in all social relations. Which leads back to the research question of whether conflict is a result of diversity.

2.2.2.3 Stage 3: Intentions

Intentions intervene between people's perceptions and emotions on the one hand and their overt behaviour on the other hand. These intentions are decisions to act in a given way. This stage is important because you have to infer the other's intent in order to know how to respond to his/her behaviour (Robbins, 1996:508).

Kilman and Thomas (Robbins, 1996:508) distinguish between two basic dimensions that affect a person's intentions:

- **Assertiveness**, the extent to which the individual attempts to satisfy his/her own concerns.
- **Co-operation**, the extent to which the individual attempts to satisfy the other person's concerns.

From these two basic dimensions of behaviour, we can define five specific methods of dealing with conflict (Robbins, 1996:508).

- 1) **Competing**: is assertive and uncooperative. An individual pursues his own concerns at the other person's expense. This is a power-orientated mode, in which one uses whatever power seems appropriate to win one's own position.
- 2) **Accommodating**: is unassertive and co-operative. The opposite of competing. When accommodating, an individual neglects his own concerns so as to satisfy the concerns of other persons; there is an element of self-sacrifice in this mode.

- 3) Avoiding: is unassertive and uncooperative. The individual does not immediately pursue his own concerns or those of the other person. He/she does not address conflict.
- 4) Collaborating: is both assertive and co-operative. The opposite of avoiding. Collaborating involves an attempt to work with the other person to find some solution that fully satisfies the concerns of both persons.
- 5) Compromising: is intermediate in both assertiveness and co-operation. This objective is to find some expedient, mutually acceptable solution which partially satisfies both.

2.2.2.4 Stage 4: Behaviour

Conflict becomes visible during this stage. This stage includes the statements, actions and reactions made by the conflicting parties. These conflict behaviours are usually over attempts to establish each party's intentions. The following techniques can be used to manage the conflict during this stage (Robbins, 1996:508):

- Problem-solving meetings between conflicting parties
- Goal-setting where the co-operation of everyone is needed
- Expanding the resources, the lack of which create the conflict
- Withdrawing or avoiding the conflict
- Playing down the differences whilst emphasising common interests
- Compromising
- Using formal authority to solve the conflict
- Training people to alter their attitudes and behaviour
- Altering structural variables

2.2.2.5 Stage 5: Outcomes

Outcomes of conflict may be functional, in that the conflict results in an improvement in performance. It may, however, also be dysfunctional, in that it hinders performance. **Functional conflict** improves the quality of decisions, stimulates creativity and innovation, encourages interest among group members and provides the medium through which problems can be aired and tension released. Conflict may also have **dysfunctional** and destructive outcomes. Uncontrolled opposition breeds

discontent, which acts to dissolve common ties, and eventually leads to the destruction of the group (Robbins, 1996:508).

2.2.3 Types of conflict

Certain antecedents of conflict deserve a closer look. There are two basic types of conflict: *personality conflict and value conflict*. The different types of conflict will now be discussed in more detail.

2.2.3.1 Personality conflict

Each of us has a unique way of interacting with others. Whether we are seen as charming, irritating, fascinating, nondescript, approachable, or intimidating depends in part on our personality, or what others might describe as our style.

According to Kreitner and Kinicki (2006:411), personality conflict is an interpersonal opposition based on personal dislikes and/or disagreement. Researchers recently noted how increased informality, pressure for results, and employee diversity have fostered an “anything goes” atmosphere in today’s workplace. Vicious cycles of incivility need to be avoided (or broken early) with an organisational culture that places a high value on respect for co-workers.

2.2.3.2 Value conflict

A value is an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence. An individual’s value system is described as an “enduring organisation of beliefs concerning preferable modes of conduct or end-states of existence along a continuum of relative importance. Value conflict can erupt when opposition is based on interpersonal differences in instrumental and terminal values” (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2006:413).

Instrumental and terminal values

Instrumental values are alternative behaviours or means by which we achieve desired ends (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2001:477).

Terminal values such as a sense of accomplishment, happiness, pleasure, salvation, and wisdom, are highly ranked. These are desired end-states or life goals (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2001:477).

Intrapersonal value conflict

Inner conflict and resultant stress are typically experienced when highly ranked instrumental and terminal values pull the individual in different directions. The person has conflict about which direction he or she must make a decision. This type of conflict is within the person and is seldom expressed by the individual (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2001:478).

Interpersonal value conflict

This type of value conflict parallels personality conflict. Just as people have different styles that may or may not mesh, they also embrace unique combinations of instrumental and terminal values that inevitably spark disagreement (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2001:479).

Individual conflict

Conflict can occur when values espoused and enacted by the organisation collide with the employee's personal values. The employees must take on some but not all of the values of the organisation (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2001:479).

Other forms of conflict

Conflict within organisations can be caused by factors, which are frequently interrelated. To manage conflict effectively, managers should understand the causes of conflict and be able to diagnose them. Some of the more common causes are structural factors, communication factors, cognitive factors, and the history of relations between the parties (Hitt *et al.*, 2006:438)

Structural factors

Among the structural factors that can lead to conflict are increased specialisation, interdependence among parties, and physical layout.

Increased specialisation

As organisations become larger and more diverse, they require more specialisation for effective operation. Smaller organisations may have general human resource managers who perform most or all of the human resource functions, for example, but larger organisations frequently have specialists for employment, labour relations, training a development, compensation, and affirmative action. This situation represents specialisation within one function. Effective organisations become more differentiated as they grow larger or as their external environment become more uncertain (Hitt *et al.*, 2006:439).

Interdependence

In most organisations, work must be coordinated between groups (such as departments) or individuals. The more interdependent two groups or individuals are, the more the potential for conflict exists. Interdependence can result from limited resources or from required coordination in the timing and sequencing activities. All organisations have limited resources and attempt to find the most efficient way to divide the resources and accomplish tasks (Hitt *et al.*, 2006:439).

Physical layout

The physical layout of work environments can produce conflict. Conflict can also arise when associates must work too closely together. Associates in such environments experience a stressful type of interdependence. Because everyone is continuously in view and can be easily overheard when talking, even in private conversations, conflict can arise (Hitt *et al.*, 2006:439).

Communication

A common cause of conflict is poor communication, which can lead to misunderstandings and allow barriers to be erected. Probably the easiest way to prevent conflict is to ensure good communication. Both too little and too much communication can lead to conflict. On the one hand, when there is too little communication, associates do not know enough about each other's intentions, goals, or plans. Coordination becomes difficult, and misunderstandings are more likely to occur, which can result in conflict. On the other hand, too much communication can also result in misunderstandings that cause conflict (Hitt *et al.*, 2006:441).

Cognitive factors

Certain beliefs and attitudes can lead to conflict. Two such cognitive factors involve differing expectation and one party's perception of the other.

Differing expectations

People sometimes differ in their expectations about jobs, careers, and managerial actions. A common example of such differences involves professional associates (such as accountants or attorneys) and managers. Professional associates often perceive themselves as being loyal to their profession and define their careers as extending beyond a particular organisation. In so doing, they focus on those activities valued by the profession, which the management of the organisation does not necessarily value. This can lead to lower organisational loyalty and potentially to conflict between these associates and management (Hitt *et al.*, 2006:441).

Perceptions of the other party

The perceptions that one party holds about another can set the stage for conflict. One person may perceive that another has extremely high goals and that these goals will interfere with his own goal attainment. Other perceptions that result in conflict include the perception that the other party's intentions are harmful, violate justice norms, are dishonest, or are counter to one's own intentions (Hitt *et al.*, 2006:439).

History

Previous relationships between parties can influence the likelihood of conflict in the future. Past performance and previous interactions are two such relationship factors.

Past performance

When individuals or groups receive negative feedback because of poor past performance, they often perceive it as a threat. When a threat is perceived, individuals frequently attempt to deal with it by becoming more rigid, exerting more control over deviant group members and ideas, and restricting the flow of communication. When people become more rigid and communicate less, both task conflict and relationship conflict can result (Hitt *et al.*, 2006:443).

Previous interactions

Individuals who have experienced conflict in the past are more likely to experience it in the future. Previous conflict can influence the probability of future conflict in several ways. First, the parties often engage in the same conflict-inducing behaviours. Second, the parties quite likely distrust one another. Third, they may expect conflict, and this expectation may become a self-fulfilling prophecy (Hitt *et al.*, 2006:443).

Identifying the nature of conflict

People are inherently different. Everyone has baggage of personal values, experiences, beliefs and perceptions, therefore a clash of these values is likely to occur between employees or groups.

In an organisation, various conflicts may arise that are caused by differences of opinion among individuals. While some conflict may be negative, others are advantageous to the organisation as they introduce changes that may be adopted. Functional conflicts are constructive disagreements and can help improve the performance of the individual or group. They provide greater insight into problems that lead to the effective solutions that are adopted by the individuals.

Interpersonal conflicts arise between two or more individuals. They occur owing to differing views and misunderstandings. Solving and managing this kind of conflict requires an in-depth knowledge of the conflict and the skill needed to deal with it. On the other hand, intrapersonal conflicts are internal to an individual. This conflict results from the problems of the person with regard to his role in the organisation. Simply put this is the conflict between his expectations of his role and that of others. In such case, the managers must determine whether or not the organisation contributes unnecessarily to intrapersonal conflicts.

Conflict if well managed can lead to beneficial and constructive conversations. Proper management of conflict is essential to avoid the occurrence of dysfunctional conflicts. The conflict-resolution approach can be adopted for managing conflict. The

two factors to be considered in this approach are the degree of assertiveness and of cooperativeness. These two distinguish the degree of extent by which both parties are willing to satisfy the needs of each other.

2.2.4 Summary of section

Conflict could be seen as one of the negative effects of diversity. Diversity, if mismanaged, leads to conflict between diverse workforces. If conflict is managed correctly, it can lead to great dividends for the organisation. Managers should understand the types of conflict evident in the work team and the processes to manage them effectively.

We can make a distinction between the two 'forms' of conflict, i.e. functional and dysfunctional conflict. Functional conflict is supportive and it enhances productivity and dysfunctional conflict can ruin organisations.

Diversity and conflict can lead to feeling of alienation (self-estrangement) among employees. Alienation will be discussed next.

2.3 ALIENATION

The experience of alienation is a sequential-developmental process which develops in the context of an ongoing relationship between an individual and another person or group of people. Alienation often has its roots in diversity, as it involves interactions with diverse individuals or groups (Blauner, 1964:15).

No simple definition of alienation can do justice to the many intellectual traditions which have engaged this concept as a central explanatory idea. One basis of confusion is the fact that the idea of alienation has incorporated philosophical, psychological, sociological, and political orientations. In the literature of the theory of alienation, one finds statements of the desired state of human experience, assertions about the actual quality of personal experience, propositions which link attitudes and experience to social situations and social structures, and programs for the amelioration of the human condition (Blauner, 1964:15).

Societies too are often unperturbed by trends toward alienation, a fact which is illustrated by the history of the word 'alienation'. In its philosophical sense the term was first used by Fichte and Hegel at the beginning of the nineteenth century, though at that time its influence was confined to small groups of their disciples. It was incorporated into sociological theory in the forties of that century, when Marx centred his interpretation of the capitalist era upon the concept of self-alienation (Pappenheim, 1959:12).

Basically capitalism is a structure (or, more accurately, a series of structures) that erects barriers between an individual and the production process, the products of that process, and other people; ultimately, it even divides the individual himself or herself. This is the basic meaning of the concept of *alienation*: it is the breakdown of the natural interconnection between people or between people and what they produce. Alienation occurs because capitalism has evolved into a two-class system in which a few capitalists own the production process, the products, and the labour time of those who work for them. Instead of naturally producing for themselves, people produce unnaturally in capitalist society for a small group of capitalists (Ritzer, 1996:13).

According to Herselman (2004:23), the primary roots of the concept are in Hegelian philosophy and predominantly in Marxist political-economic tradition where 'alienation' was used as a key concept in the analysis of capitalism. Here it acquired the meaning of separation of the individual from the means of production, and of workers' loss of control over work processes and the products of their labour. The Marxist meaning of the term was eventually replaced with 'exploitation', except in so far that alienation per se could be removed by overthrowing capitalism. Alienation has three important dimensions: first, a person must experience a state of alienation from some element, person or object, usually in relation to a well-defined context. Second, alienation concerns an employee's affective experiences and perceptions arising from feelings of detachment of the self from the work situation or others. For instance, alienated employees often feel that their contributions are of no particular significance for the company, that they do not receive adequate recognition, are not integrated into the mainstream organisational culture, or that they are being discriminated against. Third, individual factors such as personality, temperament

and age also impact upon the extent to which an employee is alienated and can deal with its implications.

The antagonistic and unequal class structure characteristics of capitalist societies lead to what Marx termed alienation. Alienation refers to the separation, or estrangement, of individuals from themselves and from others. It is a complicated concept as it involves individuals' feelings. Alienation describes the sense of frustration, pointlessness and lack of involvement felt by many working people (Marsh, Keating, Eyre, Campbell & Mckenzie, 1996:54).

Blauner (1964:88) defines alienation with the help of Seeman's four dimensions of alienation: *powerlessness* - when a person is an object controlled and manipulated by other persons or by an impersonal system; *meaninglessness* - a person experiences alienation of this type when his individual acts seem to have no relation to a broader life-program; *isolation* - a fragmentation of the individual and social components of human behaviour and motivation; *self-estrangement* - when activity becomes a means to an end, rather than an end in itself. Thus the four modes of alienation reflect different 'splits' in the organic relationship between man and his existential experience. Each makes it more possible to use people as means rather than as ends. These variants will be discussed in detail further in the chapter.

2.3.1 Marx and alienation

Marx was a prolific writer and in his work there are different emphases, hence the difficulty of interpreting. However, it is probably fair to say that the essence of Marx's work was to explain the nature and form of modern society (Marsh *et al.*, 1996:52). Alienation in capitalist societies occurs because the worker can only express this fundamentally social aspect of individuality through a production system that is not collectively, but privately owned, a privatized asset for which each individual functions not as a social being, but as an instrument.

Marx is seen globally as the father of the concept of alienation. Through the years researchers, including the non-Marxists and the anti-Marxists, followed his alienation

theory. The alienation of the worker in his or her work situation was for a long time the central theme of Marx's outlook on modern living (Blauner, 1964:90).

According to Marsh *et al.* (1996:56), Marx defined alienation as:

Work is external to the worker, that is it is not part of his nature...consequently he does not fulfil himself in this work but denies himself, has a feeling of misery, not well-being, does not develop freely a physical and mental energy, but is physically exhausted and mentally debased... Work is not the satisfaction of a need but only a means for satisfying other needs. Its alien character is clearly shown by the fact as soon as there is no physical or other compulsion it is avoided like the plague”.

Marx offered a theory of capitalist's society based on his image of the basic nature of human beings. Marx believed that people are basically productive; that is, in order to survive, people need to work in, and with, nature. In so doing, they produce the food, clothing, tools, shelter, and other necessities that permit them to live. Their productivity is a perfectly natural way by which they express basic creative impulses. Furthermore, these impulses are expressed in concert with other people; in other words, people are inherently social. They need to work together to produce what they need to survive (Ritzer, 1996:14).

2.3.2 Layers of alienation

Cox (1998:79) argues that we can detect four aspects, or dimensions, of alienation in Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*. These are: alienation

- 1) From the product of labour,
- 2) Within the labour process,
- 3) Caused by our fellow human beings
- 4) Embedded within the human nature.

The first dimension refers to the worker being alienated from the product he produces. Here, we can extend the argument and suggest that as labour becomes separated from the product, and in lieu of that receives payment, labourers need not concern themselves with improving the product, but rather with their skills. In this process, labourers improve their skills in order to sell themselves in the job market.

This is a double alienation, since the labourers do not own their labour and are also separated from what they produce (Cox, 1998:79).

The second form of alienation relates to the absence of control over the labour processes. Since work is separated from the ownership of the products, managers are driven to make labourers work harder. Efficiency and the use of technology become instrumental to higher levels of production, and, in turn, capital. As a result, labour becomes fragmented over time. The development process in most countries directly contributes to this form of alienation and its associated “othering” process, as well (Cox, 1998:79).

The third alienation emanates from the emerging class structure within each society, where people alienate each other. We are typically alienated by those who exploit us. In fact, given the roles assigned to us by the capitalist process, we do not know each other as individuals, but as extensions of capitalism (Cox, 1998:79).

The fourth alienation, which refers to what Marx called species being, reveals that, in fact, our labour is coerced and many of us do things that we do not want to do. What makes us human is to consciously shape the world around us, but as factory and farm labourers, we engage in activities that do not translate into what is keen to our senses, but provides us with money to buy various commodities. This process translates to yet another form of alienation, experienced more readily by the disempowered (Cox, 1998:79).

2.3.3 The variants of alienation

Alienation exists, when workers are unable to control their immediate work process, to develop a sense of purpose and function which connects their jobs to the overall of production, to belong to integrated industrial communities, and when they fail to become involved in the activity of work as a mode of personal self-expression (Blauner, 1964:2).

The sorts of variants that exist in alienation will be discussed with the help of Seeman and Blauner. Seeman’s studies on alienation can be seen as the basis of all

of the alienation theories. In his work, titled *On the meaning of alienation*, he took all the work of theorists such as Marx, Weber, Durkheim, and Merton, and combined the work to form variants of alienation. The five variants that will be discussed are: *powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation, and self-estrangement*.

Powerlessness

The first of these uses refers to alienation in the sense of *powerlessness*. This is the notion of alienation as it originated in the Marxian view of the worker's condition in capitalist society: the worker is alienated to the extent that the prerogative and means of decision are expropriated by the ruling entrepreneurs (Seeman, 1959:783).

A person is powerless when he is an object controlled and manipulated by other persons or by an impersonal system (such as technology), and when he cannot assert himself as a subject to change or modify this domination. Like an object, the powerless person reacts rather than responds. He is directed or dominated, rather than self-directing. The non-alienated pole of the powerlessness dimension is freedom and control (Blauner, 1964:16).

Freedom is the state which allows a person to remove himself from those dominating situations that make him simply a reacting object. Freedom may therefore involve the possibility of movement in a physical or social sense, the ability to walk away from a coercive machine process, or the opportunity of quitting a job because of the existence of alternative employment. Control is more positive than freedom, suggesting the assertion of the self-directing subject over such potentially dominating forces as employers or machine systems (Blauner, 1964:16).

In this version of alienation, then, the individual's expectancy for control of events is clearly distinguished from (a) the *objective* situation of powerlessness as an observer sees it, (b) the observer's *judgement* of that situation against some ethical standard, and (c) the individual's sense of a *discrepancy* between his expectations for control and his desire for control (Seeman, 1959:784).

According to Blauner (1964:16), there are at least four modes of industrial powerlessness which have preoccupied writers on the 'social question'. These are:

1. The separation from ownership of the means of production and the finished products.
2. The inability to influence general managerial policies.
3. The lack of control over the conditions of employment.
4. The lack of control over the immediate work process.

Meaninglessness

A second major usage of the alienation concept may be summarized under the idea of meaninglessness. We may speak of high alienation, in the meaninglessness usage, when the individual is unclear as to what he ought to believe - when the individual's minimal standards for clarity in decision-making are not met (Seeman, 1959:784).

As division of labour increases in complexity in large-scale organisations, individual roles may seem to lack organic connection with the whole structure of roles, and the result is that the employee may lack understanding of the co-ordinated activity and a sense of purpose in his work. The meaning in work depends largely on three aspects of the worker's relationship to the product, process, and organisation of work (Blauner, 1964:22).

The first factor is the character of the product itself. Working on an unique and individuated product is almost inherently meaningful. The second point is the scope of the product worked on. It is more meaningful to work on the whole, or a large part, of even a standardised product than to perform one's tasks on only a small part of the final product. Thirdly, purpose and function increase when the employee's job makes him responsible for a large span of the production process, rather than a small restricted sphere (Blauner, 1964:22).

Normlessness

The third variant of the alienation theme is derived from Durkheim's description of 'anomie', and refers to a condition of normlessness. In the traditional usage, anomie denotes a situation in which the social norms regulating individual conduct have broken down or are no longer effective as rules for behaviour. Merton describes the 'adaptations' (the kinds of conformity and deviance) that may occur where the disciplining effect of collective standards has been weakened (Seeman, 1959:785).

Blauner (1964:24) said that Emile Durkheim saw anomie and the break-up of integrated communities as the distinguishing feature of the modern society.

Some sociologists seem to have a different opinion about what anomie means to them; Durkheim sees it as the normlessness of the whole society, and according to Merton, for the individual who has no entry into culture.

Isolation

The fourth type of alienation refers to isolation. In the present context, in which we seek to maintain a consistent focus on the individual's expectations or values, this brand of alienation may be usefully defined in terms of reward values: the alienated in the isolation sense are those who, like the intellectual, assign low reward value to goals or beliefs that are typically highly valued in the given society (Seeman, 1959:786).

Isolation results from a fragmentation of the individual and social components of human behaviour and motivation. Isolation suggests the idea of general societal alienation, the feeling of being in, but not of, society, a sense of remoteness from the larger social order, an absence of loyalties to intermediate collectiveness. The non-alienated opposite of isolation is a sense of belonging and membership in society or in specific communities which are integrated through the sharing of a normative system (Blauner, 1964:26).

The individual is a member of the community, but the isolated individual does not feel part of the community. This is because the individual does not attach the same high values on certain things. The normal individual assigns high values on things that are important to him.

Self-estrangement

The final variant distinguishable in the literature is alienation in the sense of self-estrangement. There are two interesting features of this popular doctrine of alienation as self-estrangement. The first of these is the fact that where the usage does not overlap with the other four meanings (and it often does), it is difficult to specify what the alienation is from. The second, to speak of 'alienation from the self' is after all simply a metaphor, in the same way as 'alienation from popular culture' (Seeman, 1959:786).

Self-estrangement refers to the fact that the worker may become alienated from his inner self in the activity of work. Particularly when an individual lacks control over the work process and a sense of purposeful connection to the work enterprise, he may experience a kind of depersonalised detachment rather than an immediate involvement or engrossment in the job tasks (Blauner, 1964:26).

When work encourages self-estrangement, it does not express the unique abilities, potentialities, or personality of the worker. Further consequences of self-estranged work may be boredom and monotony, the absence of personal growth, and a threat to a self-approved occupational identity. Self-estrangement is absent in two main situations: when the work activity, satisfying such felt needs as those for control, meaning, and social connection, is inherently fulfilling in itself; or when the work activity is highly integrated into the totality of an individual's social commitments.

2.3.4 Summary of section

Seeman and Blauner defined alienation in five variants:

- *Powerlessness*

- *Meaninglessness*
- *Isolation*
- *Normlessness*
- *Self-estrangement*

Ollman (1976:25) said that there are certain layers of alienation. The layers start with the *production process*; this happens because the employee is uncertain about how long he or she will be employed due to ever-changing technology. The second layer is the *product*, the person feels alienated because the product will never be his or hers. The third layer is *alienation towards the family, fellow workers and the community*; if the person starts to experience alienation at the workplace it is only a matter of time before the person will start to feel alienated towards his family, community and towards his fellow employees. The final layer is *self-estrangement*; this layer can change or ruin a person's life.

Chapter 2 explained all the theory that has to do with the empirical research. The term diversity was investigated with the focus on the primary goal setting, conflict and the types and forms of conflict were investigated. The meaning of alienation and the theory of alienation were investigated. In Chapter 3 the intention is to gain understanding of the various responses of the research group with regard to diversity, conflict and alienation.

CHAPTER 3 - ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

The main purpose of the empirical research is to test the research question within the specified target group and to shed some light onto the secondary objectives. In Chapter 1 it was stated that the main objective was to determine if diversity has an impact on teams in organisations. Two further objectives were then formulated. The first additional objective is to determine whether diversity is perceived by the target group to lead to conflict in some instances. The second additional objective is to determine if diversity is associated with alienation.

To achieve these objectives, a questionnaire (Appendix A) was developed. The questionnaire was formulated by the researcher and was based on the literature study. The purpose of the questionnaire was to determine what the respondents' view of the impact of diversity is, and if they experienced any negative consequences of diversity in their teams, and whether diversity is perceived to contribute to feelings of alienation among employees in the workplace.

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design selected for this study is quantitative, descriptive, contextual and exploratory. A descriptive study has, as its objective, the collection of data which can be used to describe something. It is a conclusive type of research measuring the characteristics of a sample at one point in time.

The use of raw data provided by the questionnaire was chosen to ensure reliability, and variability of the questionnaire for attaining the research objectives. Use of raw data allowed the researcher to identify any possible statistical errors or failure to reach a satisfactory conclusion.

A descriptive analysis composed of pie charts, column charts and multiple bar charts was conducted on the data collected. Descriptive statistics merely describe the behaviour of the sample, condensing large volumes of data into a few summary measures (Creswell, 1994:9).

Further analysis was conducted to conclude consistency of results and consensus of respondents surveyed.

3.2 RESEARCH METHOD

The theoretical part of this study is followed up and supported by an empirical research, where questionnaires were used. The respondents only used the Likert sliding scale for responses. The results of the questionnaires are being presented with the help of the theoretical part to see if the respondents experienced some form of diversity, conflict and alienation.

3.2.1 RESEARCH GROUP

“Sample techniques provide a range of methods that enable you to reduce the amount of data you need to collect by considering only data from a sub-group rather than all possible cases or elements.” (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2003:150)

A sample is a subset of a population, representing the whole of the population under study. The need for selecting a sample develops from the importance of saving time and money in the collection of useable and informative data. A sample must be viewed as an approximation of the whole, rather than as a whole itself.

Organisations in the Vaal Triangle and Johannesburg were used owing to the proximity of the organisations and their team-based. All the organisations that were used are well represented by a diverse workforce. The demographic composition of the target group was as follows:

- 53% male respondents, 47% female respondents
- 44% respondents were aged between 20 and 30
- 47% respondents were white, 32% black, 13% Indian and 8% were ‘other’

The questionnaire was in English which could easily be understood by the research group.

3.3 THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Questions 1 – 4 are biographical information

Questions 1 – 10 deal with Diversity

Questions 11 – 17 deal with Conflict

Questions 18 – 26 deal with Alienation

Out of one hundred and seventy questionnaires which were sent out, seventy-eight questionnaires were sent back. This shows a response percentage of 46%, which the researcher regarded as an acceptable response rate.

An example of the questionnaire is attached as Appendix A.

3.4 RELIABILITY

Cronbach's alpha is a measure of internal consistency, that is, how closely related a set of items are as a group. A 'high' value of alpha is often used (along with substantive arguments and possibly other statistical measures) as evidence that the items measure an underlying (or latent) construct. Alpha can take on any value less than or equal to 1, including negative values, although only positive values make sense. Higher values of alpha are more desirable. As a rule of thumb, a requirement of reliability is a value of 0.70 or higher before they will use an instrument. However, a high alpha does not imply that the measure is unidimensional. Cronbach's alpha is not a statistical test - it is a coefficient of reliability (or consistency).

The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for questions 1- 26 is 0.850, suggesting that the items have relatively high internal consistency. The breakdown of Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the three sections of the questionnaire are:

- Cronbach's alpha coefficient for questions 1- 10 dealing with diversity is 0.881
- Cronbach's alpha coefficient for questions 11- 17 dealing with conflict is 0.863
- Cronbach's alpha coefficient for questions 18- 26 dealing with alienation is 0.806

3.5 VALIDITY

A probability sampling method was used, specifically by applying a simple random sampling method (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008:51). This method has the advantage that it is easy to implement for basic research purposes, such as in the case with this study. Thus a sample list was easy to select from and apply practically. Each member from the population had an equal opportunity of being selected, as all members were invited to participate.

The population for the study comprised a total of 170 employees from three manufacturing companies. According to Sekaran (2006:34), the corresponding minimum sample size for a population size of 170 is approximately 41, thereby confirming the adequacy of the sample size of 78. Results can however only be generalised to populations of proximal similarity (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008:35).

3.6 INTERPRETATION OF QUESTIONNAIRES

The interpretation of questionnaires will start off by looking at the biographical information of the research group and their views of diversity, conflict and alienation.

Biographical information

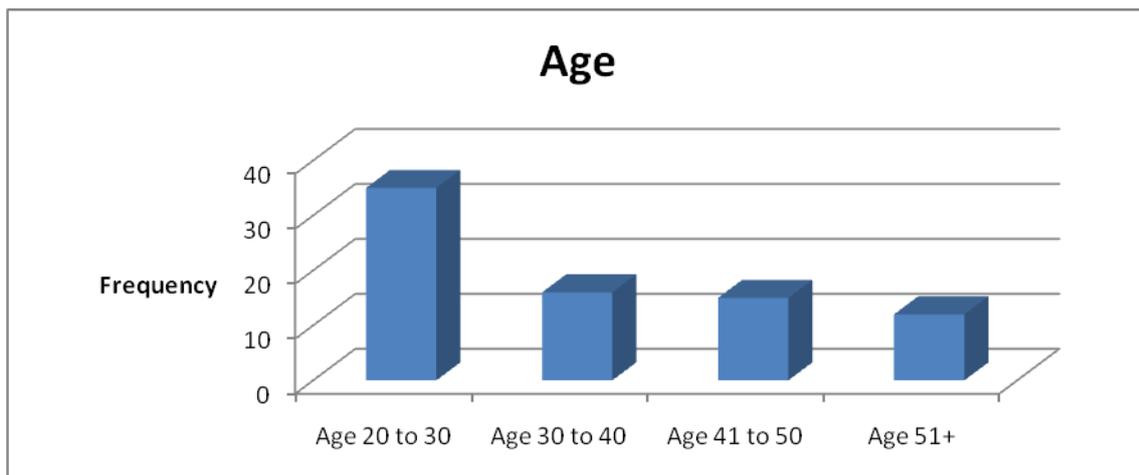


Figure 2: Age

44% of the population tested were aged between 20 and 30, and 20% were aged between 31 and 40. This indicates that 64% of workforce in the organisations tested

are aged below 40 years old, indicating a young workforce. According to the Business Report the percentage of persons in the South African working age population with jobs was 44.5 in the first quarter of 2010 and 44.7 in the second quarter of 2010 (Lehohla, 2010:3).

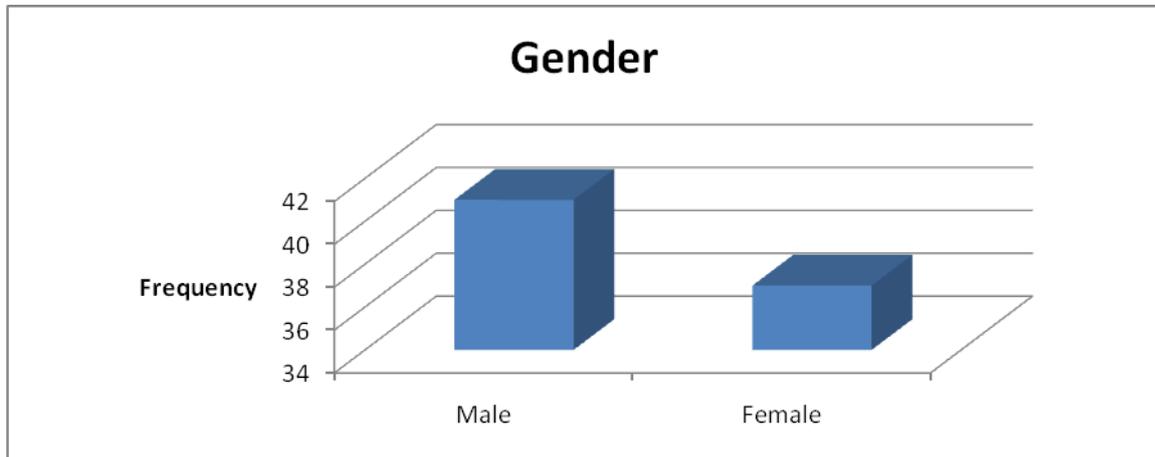


Figure 3: Gender

53% of the population were male and 47% were female. Owing to this, the researcher could get a perception from both genders about how they feel about diversity and alienation. Not only do women experience a higher rate of unemployment compared to men, but women also make up about two of every three discouraged work seekers. The recent economic crisis has also disproportionately affected women, with the number of females who are no longer economically active rising sharply between 2008 and 2009. South Africa's long running problem of structural unemployment affects African women in particular. While there are no current composite statistics showing unemployment by race and gender, official data published two years ago indicated that by September 2007, the rate of unemployment among black African women was 31 percent, while for those classified as coloureds, Indians and whites, it was respectively 21 percent, 11 percent, and 4.5 percent. This means that for every one white woman without a job in South Africa, there were at least seven unemployed black African women (Ndungu, 2010:1). Gender is a diversity factor and the researcher was glad to see that females are starting to be better represented in the workplace in the organisations selected.

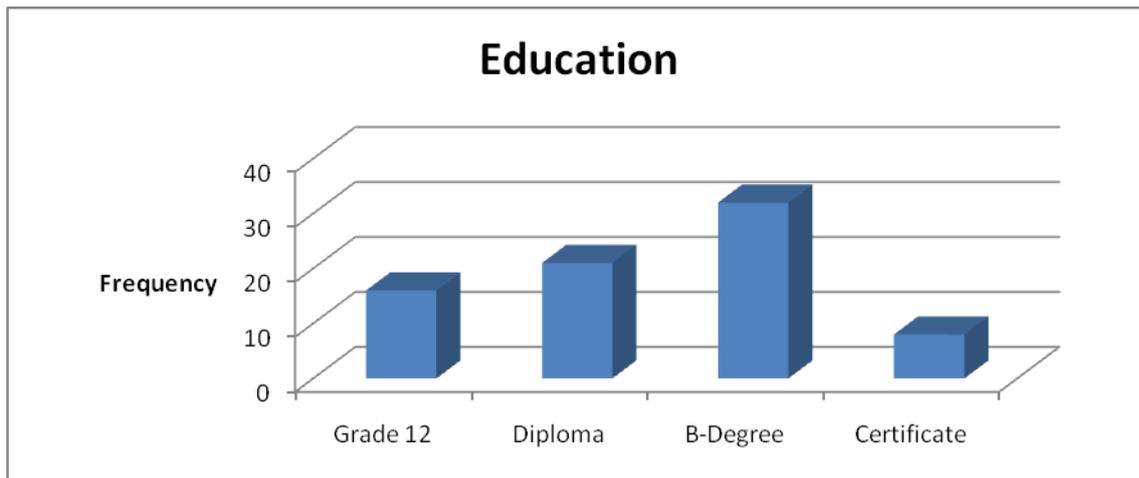


Figure 4: Education

41% of the population had a B-degree, 27% had a diploma, and 10% had a form of certificate. This is excellent news, because the education level in South Africa is of concern and this was a good sign that everybody had a fair opportunity to education. The 2009 results of the Quarterly Labour Force Survey showed that of those who were employed an estimated 59% had less than a matriculation certificate as educational attainment (Lehohla, 2010:1) This shows us that the education level of the research group is high owing to the fact that 79% of the respondents had a better qualification than a Grade 12.

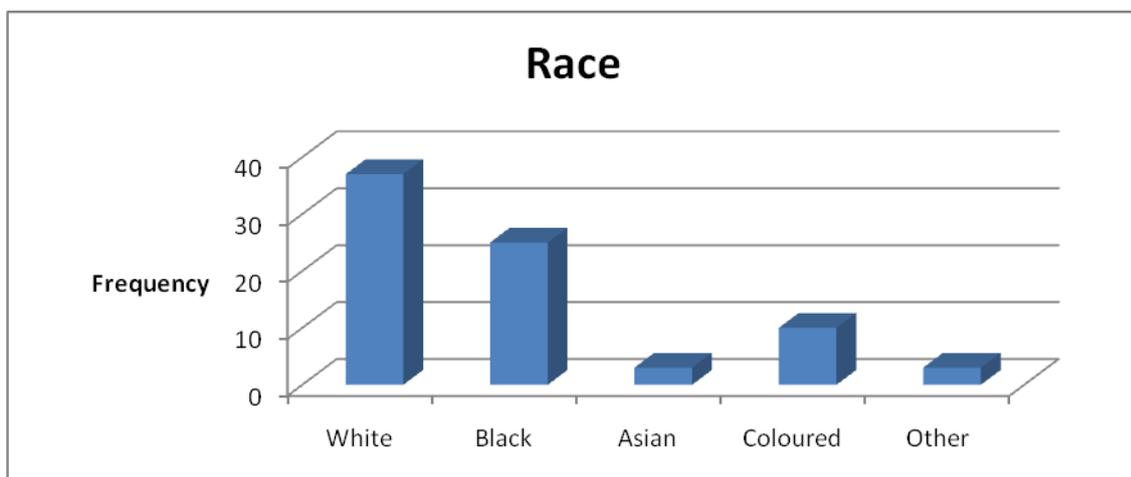


Figure 5: Race

The workforce was diverse in terms of race. The population and the organisations were represented by most of the race groups in South Africa. 47% of the population were White, 32% were Black, 4% were Asian, and 13% were Coloured. This shows

that there is an increase from the previous status in the companies in terms of the diversity of the workforce, as the workforce is becoming increasingly better representative of the present demographics of South Africa. This also suggests that these companies are working hard to restore previous imbalances with regard to apartheid and are working on BEE status.

Diversity

Table 1: Questions 1-10 deals with diversity
Communalities Q1-10

	Factor Analysis
race	0.443
sex	0.623
religion	0.661
language	0.682
age/ability	0.758
values	0.218
training & education	0.605
traditions	0.347
appearance	0.332
workplace	0.453

In essence questions 1-10 give us an indication of what the respondents' perception of diversity is. All the respondents had an idea of what diversity is.

The majority of the respondents suggested that diversity refers to a difference in traditions 90%, followed by a difference in values 85%, difference in race 82%, and difference in language 68%. However the respondents disagreed with the statements that diversity refers to a difference in age/ability 41%, and difference in levels of training and education 37%.

Strong positive feelings were evident when respondents had to indicate whether they experience working with people from different cultural backgrounds as positive. 83% of the respondents agreed that working with people from different cultural

backgrounds is a positive experience. This could be indicative of the fact that members of the teams have already come to an acceptance that there are many positives from working in diverse teams. The length of time that the teams have been together can also play a crucial role because settled teams have already worked through all the teething problems that new teams face.

Conflict

Questions 11-18 deal with two types of conflict namely interpersonal conflict and organisational conflict.

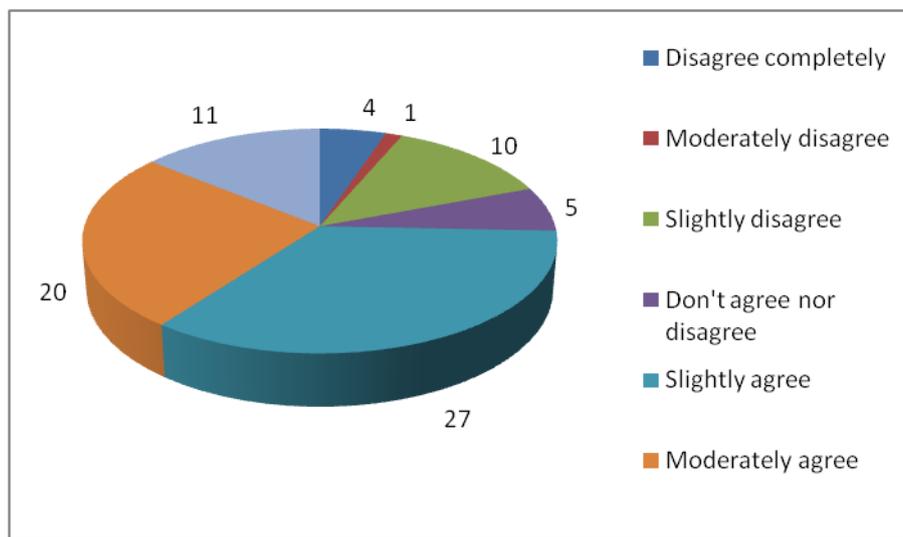


Figure 6: Cultural diversity influenced human relations in your working environment positively (Question 11)

75% of the population said that cultural diversity had a positive influence on the working environment, 6% said they had neutral viewpoints and 19% said that it was negative. Out of this the researcher can say that each individual brings some form of his or her cultural diversity to the workplace, and that has a positive effect on the rest of the workforce. People are moving towards a South Africa where there is respect for one another.

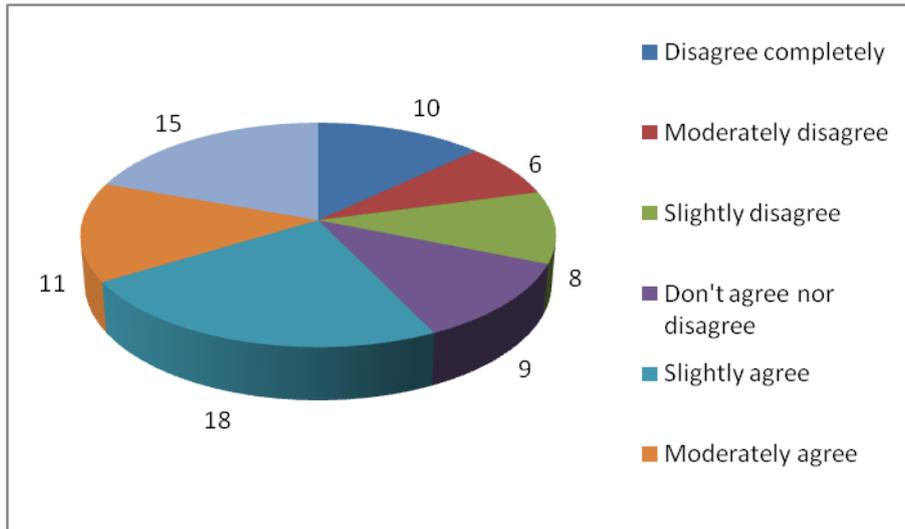


Figure 7: Communication between diverse employees in the organisation is a large obstacle (Question 12)

56% of the respondents indicated that communication between diverse employees is a large obstacle. This is a worrying statistic because according to Hitt *et al.*, (2006:441) communication determines the atmosphere, climate, morale, and the motivation of employees.

Communication could be an obstacle owing to the fact that some employees are not used to communicating with people from other cultures. Poor communication is one of the biggest contributors to unhappiness, grievances, and poor discipline in most organisations. There is no clear indication that a specific group of the respondents felt that communication is large obstacle.

The researcher can thus conclude that there is a general feeling that communication between diverse employees is an obstacle, and that management has to resolve this issue by communicating in a clear and precise means in a manner that is understood by all employees. This is all the more important, since there are many different language groups working together that create ample room for misunderstandings.

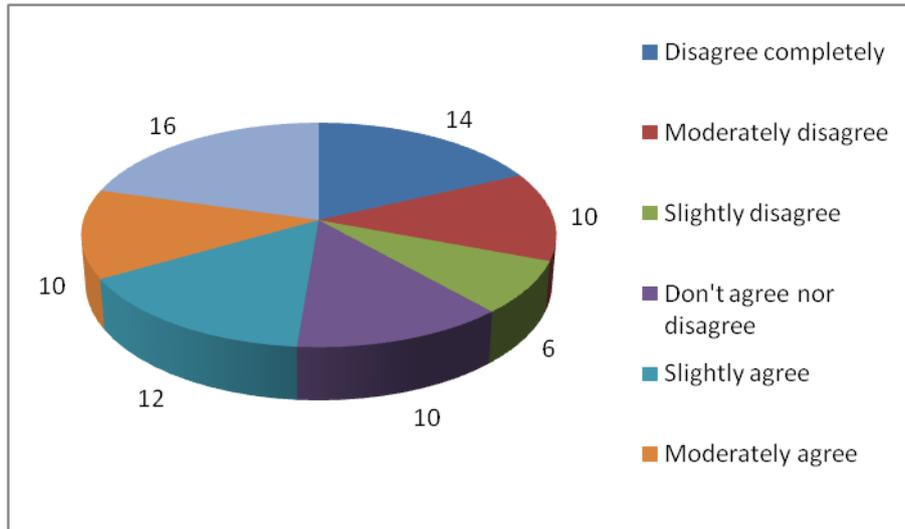


Figure 8: There is trust in a system that advocates merits (Question 13)

Trust in the system that advocates merit was seen to be positive as half of the respondents agreed with the statement, because constant change within organisations can result in conflict being unavoidable. These positive responses can be due to the fact that the new procedures and systems within the organisations are being followed and the employees understand these procedures. This also indicates that the strategies of larger organisations are working in implementing their BEE strategies to restore previous imbalances.

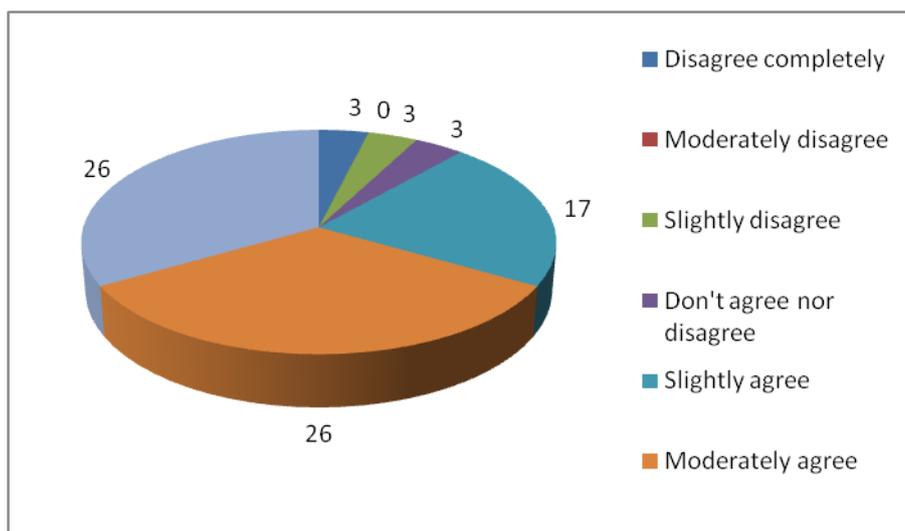


Figure 9: I feel comfortable working with people from diverse backgrounds (Question 16)

88% of the sample agreed that they feel comfortable working with people from diverse backgrounds. Owing to the fact that the majority of the respondents perceived race as a primary criterion for diversity, it could be deducted that the differences in the employees' diverse backgrounds, present much less of a problem than had been anticipated by the researcher.

The literature study indicated that diversity could possibly lead to conflict between diverse employees, but in this study employees are positive about working with employees from diverse backgrounds. This is an extremely positive feedback from the questionnaires, as this implies that conflict and diversity are well managed within these organisations that were targeted for the research.

Alienation

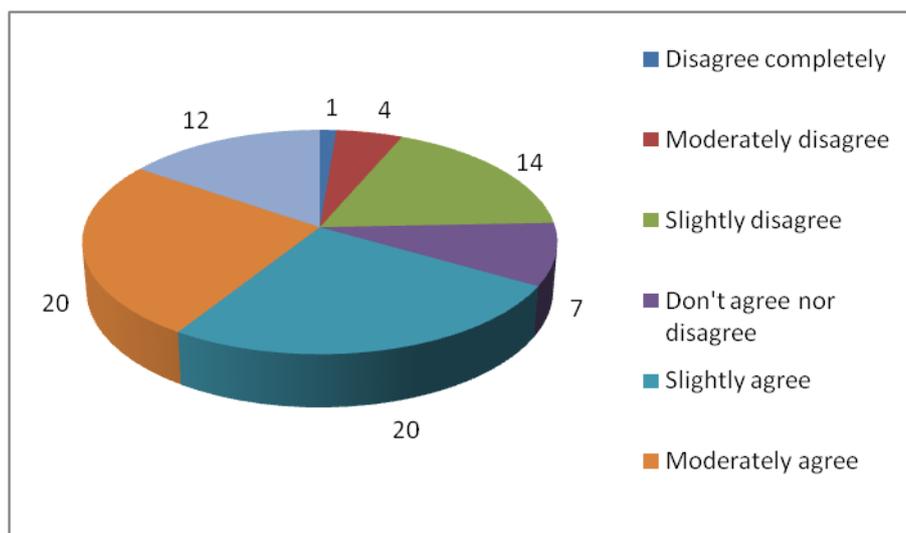


Figure 10: Diversity is usually accepted with mixed feelings (Question 18)

Most respondents agreed with the statement that diversity is usually accepted with mixed feelings. 66% agreed that diversity is accepted with mixed feelings and 24% disagreed with the statement. I think this is due to the reason that we were raised differently and that we are not used to, or we have certain perceptions about certain cultures, so we do not know what to expect.

Alienation often has its roots in diversity, as it involves interactions with diverse individuals or groups. Effective diversity management requires that diversity be

linked to the organisation's strategic plan, and if well managed can result in the respondents embracing diversity and avoiding alienation.

The question asked is also very broad because it does not differentiate between the different forms of diversity enough to see which aspects of diversity are accepted with mixed feelings. Therefore it is management's responsibility to monitor any diversity issues very closely to ascertain why diversity is accepted with mixed feelings.

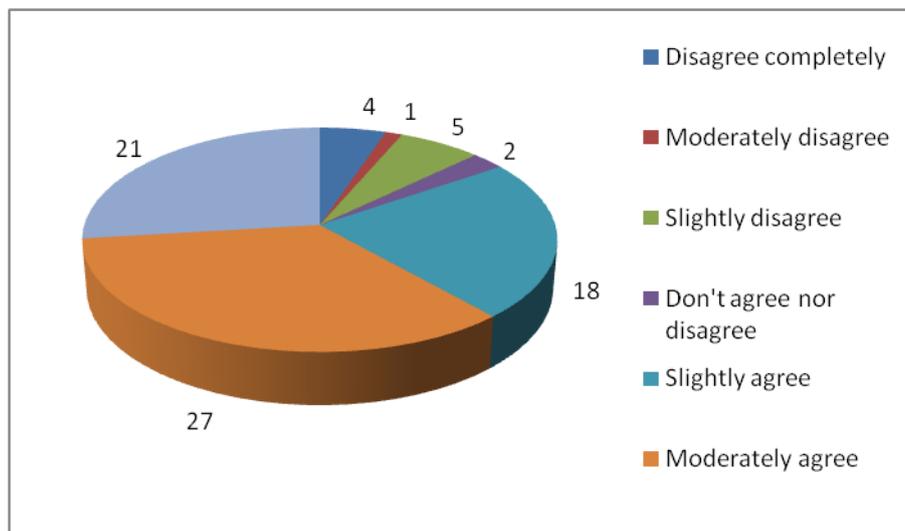


Figure 11: I feel a sense of belonging in my working environment (Question 19)

85% of the people said that they feel a sense of belonging in their working environment and only 13% said that they do not feel a sense of belonging. This shows that the people do not feel alienated in their working environment. Alienation is usually caused by diversity, and in this case the population had accepted diversity and is willing to express their uniqueness at work. 66 respondents felt a sense of belonging in their working environment suggesting that there is a supportive and welcoming environment in their organisations. This sense of belonging between the diverse employees increases the knowledge and expertise throughout the organisation.

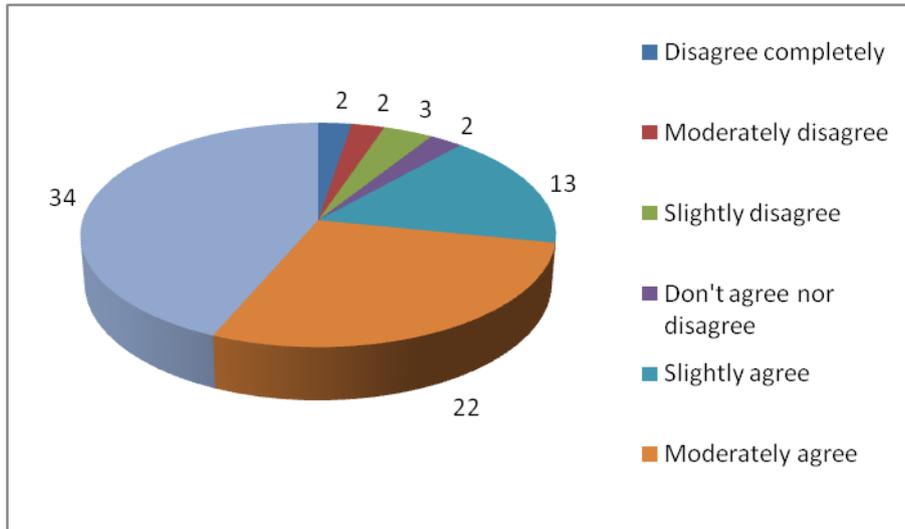


Figure 12: I feel part of the team (Question 20)

88% of the people said that they feel part of the team that they are working in, and less than 10% of the respondents did not feel part of their team. Today's organisations are a collection of diverse groups and people. Teamwork is a great way to learn to work across diversity in a healthy way. Working together in a team that has a focused and a clearly designated output gives people a chance to apply their diverse perspectives and backgrounds to achieve a common goal. In the close-knit manner in which teams must work, there are many opportunities to put diversity to work constructively. Once this becomes the norm, team members become less aware of differences, and more aware of unity as in this case.

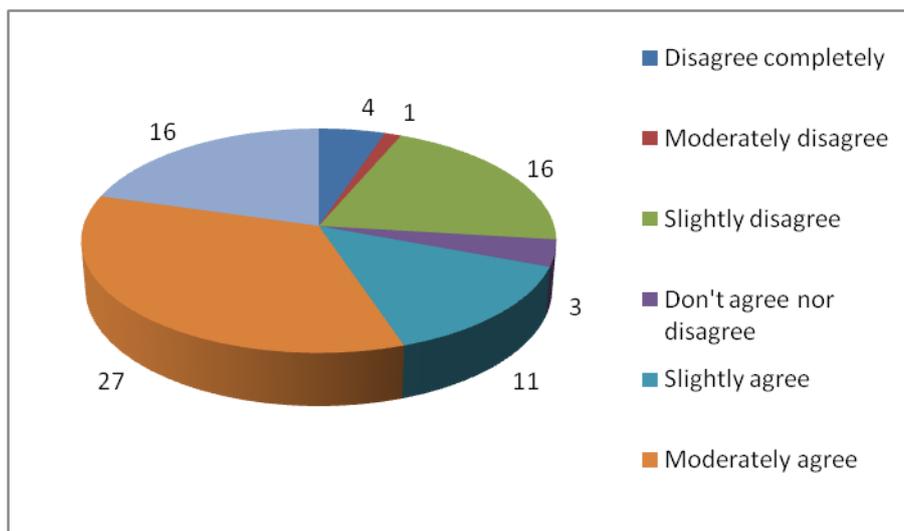


Figure 13: My social norms/values receive enough respect (Question 21)

According to Question 6 the respondents indicated that difference in values rated as the second highest factor in diversity, but 27% of the respondents felt that their social values/norms did not receive enough respect within the organisation. This could be an early indicator of possible conflict situations which could lead to alienation of smaller groups, who might feel that their social values and norms are not respected to the extent they would like it to be. Greater acknowledgement of differences between individuals and the management of these respondents must be taken into consideration. These differences in social norms and values will result in unlocking greater potential and reaching organisational goals.

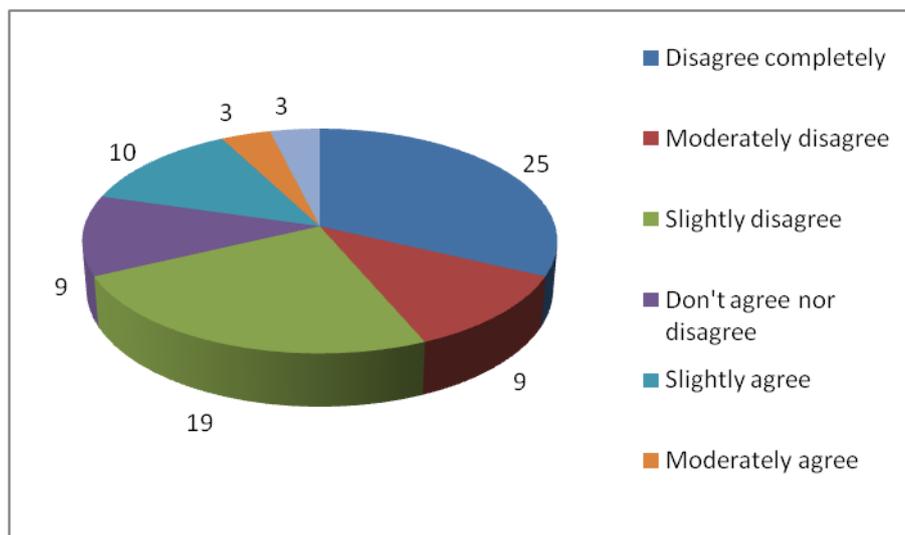


Figure 14: I feel that my position is inferior in the team (Question 22)

69% of the population said that they feel that their position is not inferior in the team. 20% of the respondents felt that they had an inferior position in the team. The latter 20% might be a perception on whether they perceive that their position supplies things that they value which can include pay satisfaction, promotion satisfaction, supervision satisfaction, co-worker satisfaction and satisfaction with the work itself.

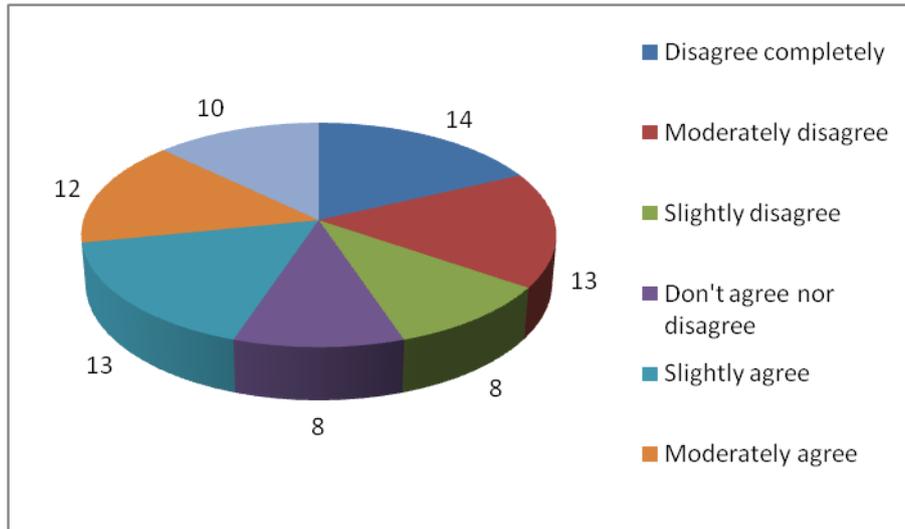


Figure 15: Hard work is recognised and rewarded in your team (Question 23)

The respondents are nearly split in half about, whether they receive enough recognition for the work that they do, and rewarded accordingly. This might be due to financial rewards or the level of worker participation within projects.

There are various ways to address the problems with regard to a compensation system for hard work. These include merit pay, lump sum bonuses, recognition awards (tangible awards and intangible awards), gain sharing and even profit sharing.

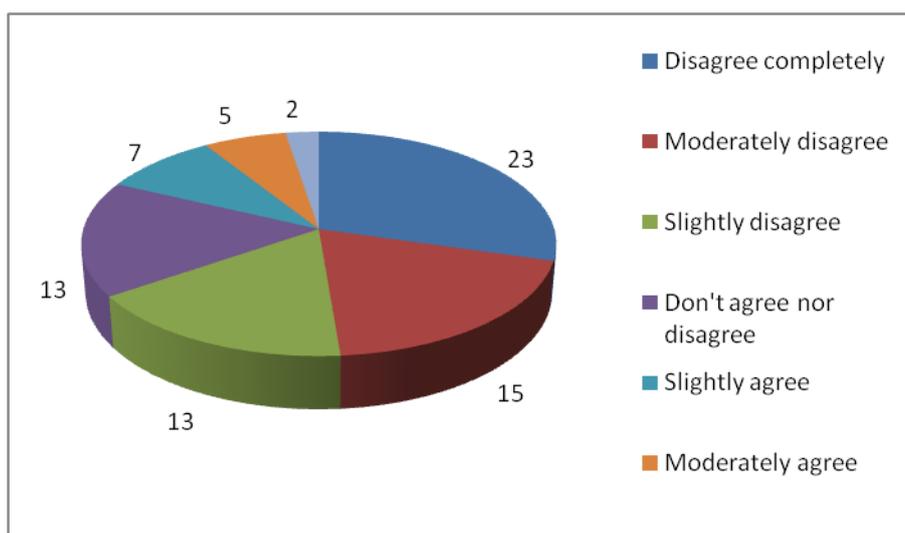


Figure 16: A sense of alienation exists in my working environment due to diversity and cultural differences (Question 24)

18% said that they feel some form of alienation due to diversity and cultural differences, 65% said that they do not feel alienated due to diversity and cultural differences. These respondents could be starting to accept diversity and cultural differences.

Owing to the nature and the formulation of the question a clear indication of the results indicates a void. This was due to the fact that the questions were not detailed enough and measured diversity in general and cultural differences, therefore the researcher cannot ascribe the result to one aspect specifically.

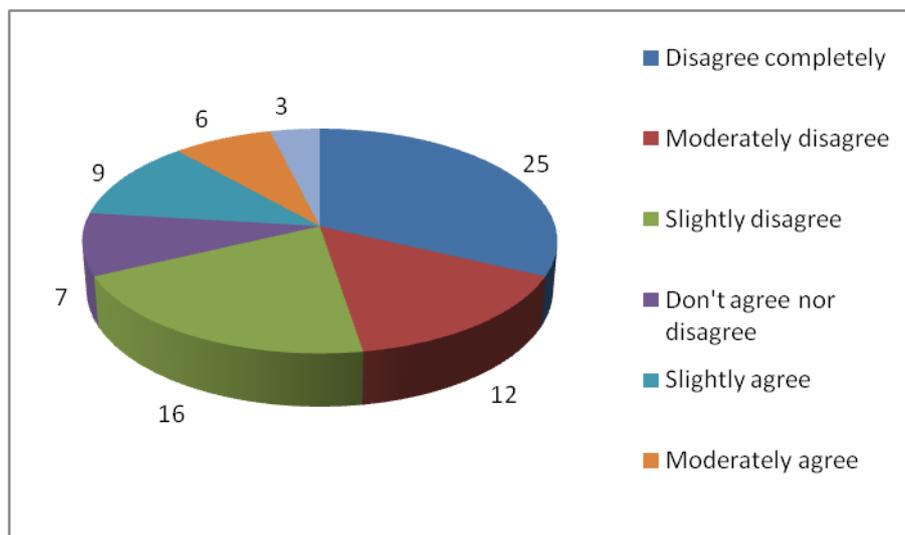


Figure 17: Work is meaningless due to diversity and cultural differences in my organisation (Question 25)

67% said their work does not feel meaningless owing to diversity and cultural differences. These people enjoy their work and enjoy working with their colleagues. 23% said that their work feels meaningless, and they ascribe it to diversity and cultural differences. This is a form of alienation and these people have to be supported by management to accept diversity and cultural differences.

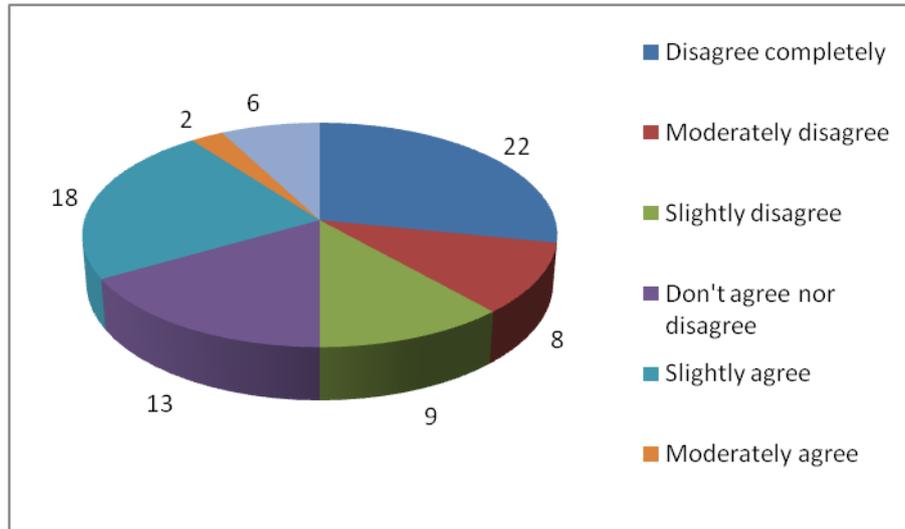


Figure 18: Feelings of powerlessness occur due to diversity and cultural differences in my organisation (Question 26).

This is also a form of alienation. 50% said that - they feel powerless due to diversity and cultural differences. This a conflicting result based on the answers supplied in question 16 where the respondents had to indicate whether they feel comfortable working with people from diverse backgrounds. This is probably owing to the nature and the formulation of the question, as contradictory results indicates a void. It is possible that the questions were not detailed enough and measured diversity in general and cultural differences together, therefore the researcher cannot ascribe the result to one aspect specifically.

This concludes the discussion of the research findings. Final conclusions will be highlighted next.

3.7 Summary of section

The purpose of the empirical research was to determine whether the respondents experienced some form of diversity, conflict and alienation. The questions that the respondents answered had been interpreted and conclusions were made. The most important findings in the empirical research were:

- There are nearly an equal number of male and female employees who responded on the questionnaires. The data that was gathered and analysed suggests that previous imbalances are being rectified.
- That the selected education level was high due to the fact that 79% had a higher qualification than a grade 12.
- All of the respondents had an idea of what diversity is, with the majority indicating that diversity refers to a difference in traditions.
- Most of the respondents enjoyed working with diverse people and that diversity improved the human relations at the working environment.
- Communication could be seen as the biggest obstacle in the working environment. This could be due to diversity and the many languages spoken in South Africa and other factors.
- 85% said that they feel part of their working environment.
- 67% said that their position in the team is just as important to the other positions in the team.
- 67% said that their work does not feel meaningless to them and that they enjoy their work. 50% said that they do not feel powerless owing to diversity.

The prominent issues will be addressed in the following chapter when recommendations are made.

CHAPTER 4 - CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

All the organisations in South Africa consist of people who differ from each other in various ways; there is a difference in race, gender, language, cultures, education levels, age, and values. People with different values and backgrounds are starting to interact more with each other in the workplace. The abovementioned fact has the potential for conflict to arise between individuals in the workplace, and if it is not handled correctly can have a negative influence on the labour market. Management and the employees must realise that each individual is unique. This requires that each one must respect and accept each other so that they can work in harmony together.

In today's marketplace, where companies seek a competitive edge, motivation is key for talent retention and performance. No matter the economic environment, the goal is to create a workplace that is engaging and motivating, where employees want to stay, grow and contribute their knowledge, experience and expertise.

The responsibility for motivation is threefold: it falls on the senior leadership, the direct manager and the employee. Numerous factors are involved, from trust, engagement and values (individual and organisational) to job satisfaction, achievement, acknowledgement and rewards. Motivation is essential for working autonomously, as well as for collaboration and effective teamwork. The ultimate focus of the organisation is to successfully retain talent, meet goals and go beyond expectations. Diversity management plays an important role in this.

One of the negative effects of diversity is alienation. Diversity can have a positive as well as a negative effect on the organisation and alienation is one of the negative effects. Alienation makes the individual feel that he or she does not belong there. Management must reduce alienation in the organisation and must make the employees feel important to the organisation. According to empirical study (Figure 9 Question 16), 88% of the sample group felt comfortable working with people from diverse backgrounds. Organisations employing a diverse workforce can supply a greater variety of solutions to problems in service, sourcing, and allocation of resources. Employees from diverse backgrounds bring individual talents and

experiences in suggesting ideas that are flexible in adapting to fluctuating markets and customer demands.

Diversity will always be present in organisations. As mentioned previously, an individual is unique. We differ internally and externally. Management must try to handle each individual in a manner that suits his personality. We must start to show respect for each other.

4.1 FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1.1 Diversity

The empirical findings suggest employees in organisations are becoming increasingly diverse which can be seen by the following findings:

- A large number of women are joining the labour-force.
- The workforce has a high education level.
- The workforce is becoming younger
- Increase in previously disadvantaged ethnic groups entering the workforce.

According to the literature study diversity creates a competitive advantage, as it contributes to their decision-making, and offers insights into problems and challenges. The increase in diversity in the organisations tested also contributes to attracting and retaining the best human talent and contributes to social responsibility.

Diversity management is ensuring that the correct policies and procedures are in place to provide and encourage the continuous development of a diverse workforce by bringing together individual differences among workers to achieve maximum profitability. Diversity management involves creating a supportive culture where all employees can work together in harmony. In creating this organisational culture it is important that top management actively supports workplace diversity as a company goal and include diversity initiatives in their company's business plans. Diversity is more than being politically correct; it is creating a culture that values individuals and their wide variety of needs and contributions (Hitt *et al.*, 2006:51).

Recommendations for future questionnaires

- Have compassion with regard to female employee needs, such as childcare and job sharing, to prevent worker turnover.
- To arrange a mentoring programme by senior managers to identify promising women and minority employees and play an important role in their future career progression.
- To arrange diversity training programmes to bring diversity awareness and educate employees on cultural and sex differences and how to respond to these in the workplace.
- There should be an apprenticeship programme to train promising prospective employees properly before they are actually hired on a permanent basis.
- The employer should set up a support group to provide a caring climate for employees who would otherwise feel isolated or alienated.
- There should be a proper communication channel which includes speeches by senior executives, inclusion of diversity in corporate vision statements, the publication of diversity brochures and inclusion of diversity as a topic in new employee orientation.
- Managers need to be sensitive to the needs of working parents.

4.1.2 Conflict

The empirical findings suggest employees in organisations did not experience high levels of negative conflict. Conflicts are however inevitable and are a natural part of the organisational culture. Therefore, teams must be able to resolve conflicts on their own and in such a way that their advantages are maximised and the disadvantages are minimised. Similarly, leaders have the role of controlling conflicts by promoting a culture that encourages constructive conflict. The effective control of conflict by management leads to better performing organisations. Conflicts are not inherently bad and can be beneficial if used appropriately. With this, both the team and the management must work together to utilise the potential benefits of conflict by improving the quality of their performances as well as of their relationships.

The literature study suggested that conflict occurs when employee diversity increases, with more self-managing teams in organisations, increased electronic communication and cross-cultural dealings. This is contrary to the findings of the empirical research as low levels of conflict were found, this could be due to the fact that managers are using collaborative approaches are being used. Collaborative approaches are deemed most effective in creating positive outcomes because they meet the needs of both the parties involved. This is specifically applicable to merge the insights of the two parties and to acquire commitments through a consensus arrived at incorporating concerns of the parties.

According to Ingram (2001:22) if an age group is a homogeneous group, there would be little conflict and diversity in that group, and the group will experience little if any conflict.

Recommendations

Owing to the fact that respondents did not experience high levels of negative conflict, the conflict development stages could not be identified and were in fact not relevant. Management of the organisations must nevertheless monitor this situation by focusing on the following:

- Organisations must be able to manage diversity in such a way that the advantages are maximised and the disadvantages are minimised. If the potential advantages of the diversity are to be recognised, then the members must have the willingness to express and debate competing ideas vigorously. Conversely, they must be ready to implement decisions that may be different from their preferred options. According to the empirical findings on conflict (Figure 6, Question 11 on page 47) the respondents felt that cultural diversity influenced human relations in their working environment positively. Therefore these organisations are maximising the abilities of the employees.
- Critical debates and open discussions about the performance objectives must be encouraged. This will improve the performance because members are likely to offer and assess different solutions.

- Teams must focus on the individual differences with regard to work experience, education and functional expertise to be able to debate constructively in an acceptable setting. This fosters effective interaction, innovation and high level of productivity.

4.1.3 Alienation

Alienated employees are typified by powerlessness, purposelessness, loneliness and self-estrangement. But what causes these symptoms of alienation? Has Human Resource Management (HRM) contributed to the increase in alienated/less-committed employees? Commitment to an organisation declines when a company downsizes or implements a hiring freeze. Sometimes implementing cost-reducing technology can generate lower levels of employee commitment. Casual (or part-time) workers may feel inferior compared to full-time workers with regard to both benefits and value. A deficit in employee training and the escalated use of outsourcing increases feelings of alienation as well. Each of these decreases employee trust as workers fear for their jobs, cope with monotony, or sense unfair treatment.

How can HRM remedy the problem of employee alienation by satisfying both its obligations to the organisation and to the employees? Equal benefit should be derived for both the organisation and employees. Selection and training are two areas proposed for reform in order to ensure allegiance and transform organisational culture. Selecting individuals who claim to be compatible with organisational goals, promoting the organisation's beliefs in orientation, and restructuring individual commitment are strategies to combat alienation and lack of commitment. It is also important for HRM to recognise that there is not a solitary remedy for combating employee alienation; a diverse workforce requires individual solutions for such a problem. Such solutions must be sought to retain committed workers who produce results.

According to the empirical finding these organisations' employees all feel part of the team that they are in, their positions are not inferior in the team and their work is not meaningless. They, however, felt that they did not receive enough recognition for the

work that they do. Management can address this problem by motivating employees in the following ways:

- Provide employees with the information and resources they need to do a good job.
- Ask employees for their input by involving them in decisions that affect their jobs.
- Find out directly from employees what motivates them.
- Personally congratulate employees for their excellent work.
- Recognise the needs of employees.
- Establish good channels of communication - be (physically) accessible and available.
- Use performance as the basis for promotion.
- Have a promote-from-within policy.
- Publicly recognise employees for good work (if culturally appropriate to do so publicly).
- Include recognition as part of morale-building activities to celebrate group success.
- Have clear goals.
- Foster a sense of community.

Despite the fact that the majority of the respondents indicated that cultural diversity had a positive influence on their working environment, employees also said that they feel powerless owing to diversity and cultural differences in their organisations. Management can address these issues by avoiding subtle exclusions of team members by means of the following:

- Some team members will ignore or gloss over a person in the group who has a different view.
- Sometimes team members do not want to take the time to review what might be a creative alternative.
- People often pre-judge or stereotype a person's ideas because that person does not appear to be part of the mainstream of the organisation.
- The goal of healthy teamwork is to consider everyone's ideas and to depersonalise the inputs so that ideas stand on their own merit.

- Another goal of healthy teamwork is to build cohesiveness as a group to become a working unit.
- A good team does not exclude certain members for any reason. If there are members who are simply unwilling to be a part of the team and refuse to be included, that is another matter.
- Subtle forms of exclusion, however, are inappropriate in teamwork. Subtle forms of exclusion may include:
 - Not responding to a team member's comments
 - Not seeking input from that team member
 - Not inviting that team member to join you for a break or lunch
 - Not seeking out a team member between team meetings (for short discussions, hallway chats, to work on something together, and so on)
 - Not referring to that team member by name
 - Not building on that team member's ideas

The research answered the questions concerning differences in perceptions of the influence of diversity in the workforce. It was found that perceptions based on age, race, gender and education level did not really differ significantly. The majority of the employees perceived diversity factors in a positive light.

This pilot study was undertaken in order to ascertain and be able to describe the characteristics of the variables of interest in organisations. The study was undertaken in these organisations to learn about and describe the characteristics of a group of employees with regard to diversity, conflict and alienation.

4.2 Recommendations for future research

This study identified a number of variables important to diversity and raises a number of questions which would benefit from more research. A similar study with longitudinal design and semi-structured questions would allow a more detailed analysis. This would allow more detailed information about the diversity, conflict and alienation to be collected. A larger sample, which includes more organisations and participants could deliver different results.

The use of standardised questionnaires which also contain semi-structured questions that could elicit respondents' comments would add to the data richness. The questionnaires could be personalised where employees complete a section that identifies at which level they are within the company; since the data was anonymous this will help management identify the appropriate target groups that need to be addressed without compromising ethical considerations.

4.3 Postscript

An anonymous person once said:

Diversity is a gift from life. Without it we would all be the same and life would be boring. I've heard it explained like this through the contrast we choose our preferences and after choosing, we see even more variety and choose further.

Just because a particular choice isn't a preference at the moment, doesn't mean it isn't serving someone else in a positive way. It may also be something you will enjoy later in life. As a rule, tastes tend to change as we grow.

Diversity has brought us great pieces of art, music, food, and clothing. Amazing films have impacted our culture, thanks to the differing points of view the directors, writers, and actors have brought to the table.

We all live together, yet we all experience life so differently. It's a great opportunity to see life from a new perspective and experience a whole new world that we didn't see before.

Appreciate the diversity in your life.

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APPENDIX A

CULTURAL DIVERSITY QUESTIONNAIRE

INSTRUCTIONS/INSTRUKSIES

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gain insight into your thoughts and feelings regarding cultural diversity. Think about your experiences in your company and continue to complete the questionnaire.

Die doel van hierdie vraelys is om insig in u gedagtes en gevoelens rondom kulturele diversiteit te verkry. Dink na oor u ervaringe binne u maatskappy en voltooi die res van die vraelys.

1. Kindly indicate your response on each question by checking off with a cross (X) one of the alternatives provided. Do not leave any questions out.

Dui asseblief u antwoord op elke stelling aan deur een van die alternatiewe wat voorsien is met 'n kruisie (X) te merk. Moet geen vrae onbeantwoord laat nie.

2. There is no time limit, but you are requested to complete the questionnaire in one uninterrupted session.

Daar is geen tydsbeperking nie, maar u word versoek om die vraelys in een ononderbroke periode te voltooi.

3. Take note that your participation in this survey remains **anonymous**. No form of identification (name, industry number etc.) needs to be provided.

*Neem kennis dat u deelname **anoniem** bly. Geen vorm van identifikasie (naam, industrienommer, ens.) hoef verstrek te word nie.*

4. There are no wrong or right answers. Only your honest opinions are required.

Daar is geen regte of verkeerde antwoorde nie. Slegs u eerlike mening is van belang.

5. Do not reveal your answers to another person or discuss it with them.

Moenie u antwoorde aan 'n ander persoon wys of dit met iemand anders bespreek nie.

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

KINDLY COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING SECTION BY TICKING OFF THE APPROPRIATE BOXES:

1. Age:

20 to 30 years	31 to 40 years	41 to 50 years	51+
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2. Gender:

Male

Female

3. Highest education level:

Grade 12

Diploma

B-Degree

Certificate

4. Race:

White

Black

Asian

Coloured

Other

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I disagree completely. Ek verskil geheel en al.	I moderately disagree. Ek verskil in 'n meerdere mate.	I slightly disagree. Ek verskil in 'n mindere mate.	I do not agree nor disagree. Ek stem nie saam nie, maar verskil ook nie.	I slightly agree. Ek stem in 'n mindere mate saam.	I moderately agree. Ek stem in 'n meerdere mate saam.	I agree completely. Ek stem geheel en al saam.

	Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Diversity refers to a difference in race.							
2	Diversity refers to a difference in sex.							
3	Diversity refers to a difference in religion.							
4	Diversity refers to difference in language.							
5	Diversity refers to difference in age ability.							
6	Diversity refers to difference in values.							
7	Diversity refers to difference in levels of training & education.							
8	Diversity refers to difference in traditions.							
9	Diversity refers to a difference in appearance.							
10	It is a positive experience working with people from different cultural backgrounds (cultural diversity) in your workplace.							

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I disagree completely	I moderately disagree	I slightly disagree	I do not agree nor disagree	I slightly agree	I moderately agree	I agree completely
Ek verskil geheel en al.	Ek verskil in 'n meerdere mate.	Ek verskil in 'n mindere mate.	Ek stem nie saam nie, maar verskil ook nie.	Ek stem in 'n mindere mate saam.	Ek stem in 'n meerdere mate saam.	Ek stem geheel en al saam.

	Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11	Cultural diversity influenced human relations in your working environment positively.							
12	Communication between diverse employees in the organisation is a large obstacle.							
13	There is trust in a system that advocates merits. (The best person for the position).							
14	Great leaps/advances have been made to restore previous imbalances (Apartheid).							
15	Diversity is seen as a top priority in your organisation.							
16	I feel comfortable working with people from diverse backgrounds.							
17	Diversity usually causes irritation and annoyance among employees.							
18	Diversity is usually accepted with mixed feelings.							

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I disagree completely Ek verskil geheel en al.	I moderately disagree Ek verskil in 'n meerdere mate.	I slightly disagree Ek verskil in 'n mindere mate.	I do not agree nor disagree Ek stem nie saam nie, maar verskil ook nie.	I slightly agree Ek stem in 'n mindere mate saam.	I moderately agree Ek stem in 'n meerdere mate saam.	I agree completely Ek stem geheel en al saam.

	Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19	I feel a sense of belonging in my working environment.							
20	I feel part of the team.							
21	My social values/norms receive enough respect.							
22	I feel that my position is inferior in the team.							
23	Hard work is recognised and rewarded in your team.							
24	A sense of alienation exists in my working environment due to diversity and cultural differences.							
25	Work is meaningless due to diversity and cultural differences in my organisation.							
26	Feelings of powerlessness occur due to diversity and cultural differences in my organisation.							