

Afro-descendants' experiences in Portuguese workplaces:
perspectives on subtle discrimination and HRM practices in
managing diversity

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Dissertation submitted as partial requirement for the conferral of
Master in Human Resources Management and Organizational Consultancy

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September 2019

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ABSTRACT

With the European political landscape becoming increasingly intolerant of differences, where neoconservative, racist and xenophobic ideologies are becoming more popular and with the decline of traditional racism marked by its evidence and easy recognition, and the spread of subtle forms of ethnic discrimination in organizations, it is important to trace where graduated Afro-descendants with white-collar jobs stand in the spectrum of discrimination in Portuguese organizations. This qualitative study aims to analyse the workplace experiences of graduated Afro-descendants in the ‘first person’, with a specific focus on the perceptions of unequal treatment and discrimination. Twelve graduate men and women who define themselves as Afro-descendants participated in semi-structured interviews and exposed their perceptions and understandings of potentially discriminatory situations at work, ways of coping with these events, and HRM policies favouring cultural diversity, equality and inclusion in organizations.

The interviews were analysed by using a thematic analysis style – Template Analysis – producing the following main themes: ‘perception of discrimination’, ‘coping strategies’, ‘consequences of ethnic discrimination’, and ‘HRM practices’ developed and explored in 12 sub-themes.

It was found that ethnic identity plays an important role in the perception and attribution to discrimination, that subtle discrimination permeates Portuguese organizations which are fairly homogeneous in terms of cultural diversity, and that HRM policies must be appropriate to adequately manage diversity counteracting the multiculturalist approach of including diversity without considering the existing inequalities between dominant group and ethnic minorities.

Keywords: workplace experiences, Afro-descendants, workplace diversity, discrimination

JEL classifications: Y4 Dissertations, J71 Labor Discrimination

RESUMO

Com o panorama político europeu cada vez mais intolerante às diferenças, onde as ideologias neoconservadoras, racistas e xenófobas estão cada vez mais populares, com a diminuição do racismo tradicional marcado pela sua evidência e fácil reconhecimento, e a propagação de formas subtis de discriminação racial nas organizações, é importante compreender em que situação estão as minorias étnicas com empregos de colarinho branco nas organizações portuguesas, no espectro da discriminação.

Este estudo qualitativo visa analisar as experiências laborais de afrodescendentes graduados na ‘primeira pessoa’, com um foco específico nas perceções de tratamento desigual e discriminação. Doze homens e mulheres graduados que se definem como afrodescendentes participaram em entrevistas semiestruturadas e expuseram as suas perceções e entendimentos sobre situações potencialmente discriminatórias no trabalho, formas de lidar com esses eventos e políticas de gestão de RH de favorecimento à diversidade cultural, igualdade e inclusão nas organizações.

A análise das entrevistas foi feita recorrendo a um estilo de análise temática – *Template Analysis* – produzindo os seguintes temas: ‘perceção de discriminação’, ‘estratégias de coping’, ‘consequências da discriminação étnica’, e ‘práticas de GRH’, desenvolvidos e explorados em 12 subtemas.

Constatou-se que a identidade étnica desempenha um papel importante na perceção e atribuição à discriminação, que a discriminação subtil permeia as organizações portuguesas que se revelaram bastante homogéneas em termos de diversidade cultural e as políticas de GRH devem ser adequadas para ser feita uma gestão da diversidade que contrarie a abordagem multiculturalista de incluir a diversidade sem considerar as desigualdades existentes entre grupo dominante e minorias étnicas.

Palavras-chave: experiências no trabalho, afrodescendentes, diversidade laboral, discriminação.

JEL classifications: Y4 Dissertações, J71 Discriminação Laboral

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A first word of appreciation to my mentors Donatella Di Marco and Sílvia da Silva for their attention, encouragement and unconditional support throughout the process, as well as for their availability and dedication at all times.

Thanks to my interviewees, who provided me with precious information without which this study could not be done.

A special thanks to my grandmother, who always believed in me and in my abilities and is my biggest fan. Without her it would not have been possible to take this master's degree. I also thank my mother for all she has done for me.

To my friends, especially Talia and Tatjana who supported and comforted me in the most difficult times.

Finally, I thank Gonçalo, who despite being more than 4000 km away was always close to me.

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INTRODUCTION

The European political landscape is dangerously more intolerant towards differences. Since 2008, with the economic crisis, far-right movements have gained strength (Löwy, 2015) and its neo-conservative, xenophobic and racist ideologies are widespread throughout Europe and have become increasingly popular. Currently in 2019, countries like Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic are absolutely ruled by far-right parties and only four EU member states do not have these parties represented in their national parliaments, being Portugal among them.¹ Nonetheless, that does not mean that the country is free from prejudice. Portugal has a dark history marked by the exploitation of other peoples through slavery, and its abolition has not changed the bases of the Portuguese society. Racism is structural, that is, it is perpetuated by the convergence of institutions, culture, history, ideology and practices that sustain inequalities between ethnic groups (Hardeman, Medina, & Kozhimannil, 2016), therefore it is not necessary to have an identifiable perpetrator (C. P. Jones, 2002).

This study will focus on the experiences and perceptions of graduate Afro-descendants in Portuguese work environments and, to express the relevance of this matter, there will be made a brief historical contextualization. Black people have a long history of struggle and resistance against racism and exploitation, which continues today. To understand why, we must consider the origin of racism, a very broad and complex subject. A few moments contributed to the differentiation between Europeans and other peoples, such as Africans' slavery, the spread of European colonial rule mainly in Asia and Africa, as well as scientific theories that emerged in the nineteenth century on European superiority (Hirschman, 2004). Slavery was part of an emerging global capitalist economy, an incipient form of capitalism - pre-capitalism - that turned Black people into an object of exchange, either by exploiting their labour or by commercializing them. Slavery allowed for a great accumulation of capital, satisfying the economic, political and social interests of the nobility. The idea was born that Blacks would be a biologically inferior race, to justify the exploitation and oppression of these peoples. *“Although slavery was abolished,*

¹ <https://www.lusa.pt/article/26129112/espanha-elei%C3%A7%C3%B5es-portugal-irlanda-luxemburgo-e-malta-unicos-pa%C3%ADses-da-ue-sem-extrema-direita>

racism continued to exist in ideological, political and economic forms of exclusion, discrimination and exploitation” (Fuchs, 2018, p. 686).

Of course, its abolition allowed their physical liberation, but contemporary capitalism continues to sustain inequalities resulting from the exploitation of Black and White employees, and the exploitation of Blacks is even more pronounced, perpetuating the continuity of racial oppression. Capitalism constantly pushes the Black man and woman into precarious, poorly paid and less valued jobs (Fuchs, 2018). It is therefore important to reflect on how slavery influenced the racism that is felt today and how the capitalist system does not allow its extinction.

Turning to the Portuguese panorama, the immigration waves of the last decades have transformed Portugal into a cultural mosaic, and the country is now home to several communities from Africa, Asia, Europe and America, being one of the biggest communities the immigrants from the PALOP (Portuguese Speaking African Countries). Multiculturalism is evident, but inequalities that permeate various spheres of ethnic minorities' life continue to persist, and the mentality of division between 'us' and 'others' subsists. After about 150 years since the abolition of slavery by the Portuguese Colonial Empire, social inequalities persist between Blacks and Whites, and Portuguese work environments are highly segregated. According to the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance's (ECRI) report on Portugal, published on October 2, 2018, the unemployment rate of Afro-descendants in comparison with White Portuguese is worrisome. It is common for them to have three times more often a job with low qualifications and lower wages. This is because they find it more difficult to find a job at their qualifications' level, therefore, most of them end up working in factories, supermarkets or kitchens, often in precarious conditions without contract, and in situations of exploitation, being more exposed to poverty and social exclusion. Also, very few occupy leadership positions. Afro-descendant women, on the other hand, find themselves in an even more unfavourable situation, often being forced to keep several jobs to survive. Some recommendations from ECRI include strengthening the human rights issue in education, provide information about the available resources in case of discrimination and encouraging people to file a complaint, helping the media prevent and eradicate hate speech, establish a policy of tolerance against racism, investigate allegations of abuse by police forces, and improve integration policies.

The fight against racism and ethnic discrimination is an urgent matter and, in this way, I contextualize the relevance of my study that may lead to reflection on the subject, to

cultivate an interest in understanding the workplace experiences of this ethnic minority - Afro-descendants - and to raise awareness that may benefit not only Afro-descendant employees but also employers, since an inclusive and diverse workplace can be a factor for organizational success.

In Portugal, the case of racism still has much to be explored. There are empirical studies on the image that the Portuguese society builds on Black people in general, on wage inequalities between Blacks and Whites and on the perceptions of the positive and negative socio-professional characteristics of Blacks, nevertheless, in the Portuguese workplace context no study was done on discrimination perceptions of Afro-descendants, the strategies they use to deal with these events and the emotional or psychological consequences. Therefore, this qualitative study aims to analyse the graduate Afro-descendants' experiences in Portuguese work environments as a consequence of their ethnic origin. The focus will be primarily on the potential discrimination events that the participants may have been target of, the coping strategies they use and the consequences of these events for health and well-being. It will also explore the visibility of cultural diversity in the participants' work contexts and their insights about Human Resources Management (HRM) practices to ensure equality and encourage a culturally diverse work environment.

This dissertation is structured in six chapters: literature review, methodology, results, discussion, study limitations and conclusion.

In the first chapter – Literature Review – a contextualization of the problem of this study is made as well as the theoretical framework. The literature review was divided into seven main sections. In part 1 – Human Rights, Discriminatory Behaviours and Ethnic Minorities in Portugal – some statements, directives and laws will be visited. A definition of types of intergroup bias such as prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination will also be made. In part 2 – Modern Racism – the changes that traditional racism has undergone, and its causes will be exposed. It will be explored how ‘diversity’ and ‘multiculturalism’ in predominantly ‘White enterprises’ emphasize the differences between ethnic groups to respond to the needs of the dominant group. In part 3 – How Do People Cope with Discrimination? – there will be made a review of coping strategies individuals use when facing a discriminatory situation, using Lazarus and Folkman’s (1984) theory as a reference to explain how the process is developed. In part 4 – The Role of Ethnic Identity in Recognizing and Coping with Discrimination – there will be highlighted the role of ethnic identity in dealing with discrimination, that is, how perceptions and responses to

discrimination are affected by ethnic identity. In part 5 – Afro-descendant's Discriminatory Experiences at Work – there will be visited some qualitative studies about Afro-descendants' experiences at work, namely topics as racial microaggressions, experiences of racism, coping mechanisms, consequences of discrimination, and assessing whether Blacks and other minorities have more difficulty in reaching leadership positions. In part 6 – Consequences of Perceived Discrimination – there will be listed the main consequences of perceived discrimination to the individual at the psychological, emotional and physical level, as well as the way it reflects and impacts organizations. In part 7 – Diversity Management – a reflexive critique of diversity management initiatives is presented.

In the second chapter – Methodology – will be presented the research question, methodological strategy, participant profile, data collection technique, and data analysis. In the third chapter – Results – will be made the description and analysis of the four main themes identified, as well as the sub-themes and underlying codes, illustrating its meanings with excerpts from the interview transcripts. In this way it is possible to obtain an overview or a more detailed view of the participants' experiences and perceptions on discrimination and diversity in the workplace.

In chapter four – Discussion – will be discussed the meanings of the main themes, making a connection with the research question, bridging the collected data with the relevant literature.

In the fifth chapter – Study Limitations and Future Directions – there will be exposed the research limitations identified in this dissertation, as well as relevant topics that could have been considered, and future research suggestions.

Finally, in the last chapter – Conclusion – will be exposed the culmination of the findings and underlying meanings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Human Rights, Discriminatory Behaviours and Ethnic Minorities in Portugal

All individuals can suffer from several types of discrimination in their personal lives and at work, especially those who are members of ethnic minority groups, who are a target

because they belong to different social groups. Although it is important to recognize the progress already made in respect of human rights, immigrants' rights and workers' rights – which today protect many people from discrimination - there are still several injustices against ethnic minorities, as is the case of Afro-descendants in Portugal, a group in which this study will focus on.

After the end of World War II, the United Nations (UN) established in 1945, allowed the extension of human rights with the elaboration and adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. The Declaration enabled conventions, treaties, directives, laws, regulations, among others, that for 71 years have been preventing and combating various forms of discrimination. This was undoubtedly a turning point for the human rights. However, despite the prohibition of discrimination based on ethnicity, colour, gender, or nationality, several minority social groups continue to report incidents (Cheung et al., 2016). In Portugal, the Commission for Equality and against Racial Discrimination (CICDR) received in 2018 about 24.6% more complaints of racism and xenophobia than in the previous year, a percentage that should decrease year after year. We cannot, however, deny the importance and relevance, for example, of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), which in 1994 was founded with the aim of recognizing, monitoring and combating anti-Semitic, racist, discriminatory and xenophobic practices in the 47 member-states of the Council of Europe (CoE), to which it is linked. Also, in 2000, the Council of the European Union adopted two important directives on anti-discrimination (Bouget & Prouteau, 2002) being them Directive 2000/43/EC - which promotes racial and ethnic equality - and Directive 2000/78/EC - which establishes equality of workers and prohibition of discrimination at work. Although there are several anti-discrimination measures in the European Union, it is important to bear in mind - though generally speaking - the current and realistic situation. The Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA, 2017), is one of the most comprehensive research on this subject in the EU that uses a random sample of different groups of ethnic minorities and immigrants and a standardized questionnaire on experiences of perceived discrimination (Pries & Bekassow, 2015). According to the report that resulted from the EU-MIDIS II of 2017, in a press release in December 2017, the FRA stated that:

“The fight against discrimination and hate towards minorities still fails to deliver nearly 10 years on. Persisting widespread discrimination, intolerance and hatred

across the EU threatens to marginalize and alienate many minority group members who otherwise feel largely attached to the country they live in and trust its institutions.”

In the EU-MIDIS II, it can be read that about 25.515 immigrants and children of immigrants from several ethnic groups from North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa and Asia answered to the questionnaire. The results show that 24% of respondents felt discriminated against because of their ethnicity or immigrant status in the last 12 months and that 38% felt discrimination because of their ethnicity, immigrant status, skin colour and religion in the last five years. This discrimination was felt by the respondents most strongly in employment and public and private services. Another important research on discrimination and racism in Europe is done by the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) (Pries & Bekassow, 2015), formed in 1997 – the European Year Against Racism – to combat racism in all of the member states (Bouget & Prouteau, 2002). In the 2013-2017 Shadow Report on Racism & Discrimination in Employment in Europe the results show that, in general, ethnic and immigrant minorities find it more difficult to go through recruitment processes, tend to have lower jobs in the hierarchy, lower wages, and a higher unemployment rate.

In the Portuguese case, it is referred that Afro-descendants are overrepresented in the secondary sector of the labour market in less skilled and more precarious professional groups, are more exposed to job insecurity and instability, and have fewer opportunities for promotion (ENAR, 2013-2017). Statistics from the High Commission for Migration revealed in the Annual Statistical Report of 2017 that people from the Portuguese-speaking African countries (PALOP) have lower base salaries than the Portuguese. By 2015, PALOP nationalities such as Guineans, São Toméans and Cabo Verdeans earned on average 35.2% less than the Portuguese and were also the largest beneficiaries of unemployment benefits - around 4,647 individuals in 2016. ENAR's Shadow Report (2013-2017) further stresses that bias and ethnic discrimination in the workplace lead to difficult experiences for these groups, especially for women, who are more vulnerable to discrimination, harassment and exploitation. While these facts are not enough to understand the extent of discrimination and racism in Europe, they are important to contextualize and demonstrate the urgency and relevance of this issue. Although the concept of 'human races' has been rejected by the biological and social sciences (Nei & Roychoudhury, 1993), it is frighteningly quite common to judge the intellectual

capacities, attitudes and behaviours of individuals due to their affiliation to a group. This phenomenon of intergroup bias, or the tendency to favour individuals of the same group over individuals of another group, creates and sustains social hierarchies and inequalities, which has long been studied by anthropology and sociology (Dovidio, Hewstone, Glick, & Esses, 2010). There has been a growing interest in this subject by these and other disciplines such as psychology, political science and business, and in the phenomena associated with intergroup bias, prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination (Dovidio et al., 2010). Thereby, Dovidio et al. (2010) bring us a distinction between these three forms of social bias toward a group and its members. **Prejudice** is an intergroup phenomenon based on thoughts and perceptions “*that favours one group over another, based on or related to cognitions, and both leading to and influenced by behaviours (including communication), texts (e.g., media, rhetoric), and policies (following the notion of structuration, in which social structures guide social behaviour, but social behaviour in turn creates and changes social structures)*” (Baldwin, 2017, p. 8). This is a rather broad concept that incorporates ethnocentric principles of superiority, fear or aversion to individuals of a group of different class, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, religion, culture, among others; it is a social construction. These negative attributions may result from personal experiences or education, can be prompted and / or perpetuated by the media and by social norms - a social construction that dictates rules which affect human behaviour, but that is changeable, as all cultural or social products.

Stereotypes are “*categorical associations - including traits, behaviours, and roles - perceivers make to group members based on their membership*” (Fiske & Lee, 2008, p. 14). They are also, like prejudice, an intergroup phenomenon that, in turn, favours the group itself to the detriment of others and which establishes classifications of people and groups based on two dimensions: warmth / morality and competence / ability (Fiske & Lee, 2008). From those categorizations result several variations of stereotypes, projected by Fiske, Cuddy, Glick & Xu (2002) in their study on qualitative differences on stereotypes (see Table 1). It is argued that ambivalent stereotypes that mix warmth and competence can generate feelings of admiration, repulse, envy or pity. Some minority groups are target of envious stereotypes, that is, they are characterized by aspects that people are jealous of (e.g. Asians are very competent and hardworking). In the case of Afro-descendants, this group is not usually target of this kind of prejudice, but rather of

the paternalistic type (associated with feelings of pity directed at them) or the contemptuous type (associated with hostility and exclusion).

Table 1

Four Types of Out-Groups, Combinations of Status and Competition, and Corresponding Forms of Prejudice as a Function of Perceived Warmth and Competence. Source: Fiske et al. (2002)

		Competence	
		Low	High
Warmth	High	<p>Paternalistic prejudice Low status, not competitive; Pity, sympathy (e.g. elderly people, disabled people, housewives)</p>	<p>Admiration High status, not competitive; Pride, admiration (e.g. in-group, close allies)</p>
	Low	<p>Contemptuous prejudice Low status, competitive; Contempt, disgust, anger, resentment (e.g. welfare recipients, poor people)</p>	<p>Envious prejudice High status, competitive; Envy, jealousy (e.g. asians, jews, rich people, feminists)</p>

Finally, **discrimination** can be defined as any type of behaviour “*that creates, maintains, or reinforces advantage for some groups and their members over other groups and their members*” (Dovidio et al., 2010, p. 10) which involve different or inferior treatment of others, based on ethnicity, skin colour, gender, sexual orientation, among others (Al-Waqfi & Forstenlechner, 2010). In what concerns the workplace context, which is the focus of this study, discrimination follows the logic of the behavioural manifestation of stereotypes and prejudices (Cheung et al., 2016), but in the workplace context, being directly related to work or not, subject that will be explored later on.

The increasing interest of the scientific community and human rights movements in the face of intergroup bias and workplace discrimination promotes public debate and vice versa, which could lead to an increase of the social and political intolerance of discrimination. Nevertheless, statistics do not appear to be the most favourable for ethnic minorities working in Portugal, especially for Afro-descendants who are overrepresented in the secondary sector of the labour market, with more precarious jobs, more exposed to

instability and insecurity, and with fewer opportunities, which shows that there is still a long way to go towards equality (ENAR, 2013-2017).

Modern Racism

Social and political norms have undergone a transformation, it is no longer socially acceptable to express any kind of racist or discriminatory attitudes (Neville, Lilly, & Duran, 2000) and *“to the extent that racial attitudes account for discriminatory acts, changes in racial attitudes would precipitate a change in the nature of discrimination”* (Deitch et al., 2003, p. 1301). The traditional racism marked by its evidence and intensity has been adapting to these new conditions, being replaced by more subtle and ambiguous manifestations (Cortina, 2008; Noon, 2018; Van Laer & Janssens, 2011). This is a subject in which several authors have focused on, alerting us to the underlying danger of modern racism. The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, in force since 1969, allowed the prevention, prohibition and condemnation of hate speech and discrimination from a legal as well as a social point of view. Laws, policies, codes of conduct have emerged that prohibit and condemn discriminatory attitudes against specific social groups, both in organizations and in society at large (Cortina, 2008). Today in Portugal it is illegal to perpetuate forms of direct and indirect ethnic discrimination in the workplace and in everyday life. Let us note the article 1st of the Legal Regime of Prevention, Prohibition and Combating Discrimination. Law No. 93/2017: *“This law establishes the legal regime for the prevention, prohibition and combating of all forms of discrimination based on racial and ethnic origin, colour, nationality, descent and territory of origin”*.

Although these measures have represented a great advance in the protection of Human Rights, racism is not in the process of extinction, persisting *“in ideological, political and economic forms of exclusion, discrimination and exploitation”* (Fuchs, 2018, p. 686), permeating the social structures resulting from the development of the capitalist system (Melamed, 2015) and workplaces continue to be highly racially segregated (Embrick, 2011). Several studies about discrimination in the workplace use an approach that explains this phenomenon as a result of individualistic psychological processes, neglecting the historical, political and social context of society (Van Laer & Janssens, 2011). In a society marked by exploitation and inequality, it would be naive to speak of discrimination and racism without contextualizing them in our political and economic

system, and not to speak of “*the process of deriving social and economic value from the racial identity of another person*”, or racial capitalism (Leong, 2012, p. 2152). The capitalist system is based on the accumulation of capital, which only happens through the production of relations of inequality between human groups “*and racism enshrines the inequalities that capitalism requires [...] by displacing the uneven life chances that are inescapably part of social capitalist relations onto fictions of differing human capacities, historically race*” (Melamed, 2015, p. 77).

It is common the association between racial capitalism and slavery, colonialism, and White supremacy, but less often is the debate about contemporary racial capitalism that regularly uses terms such as ‘diversity’ or ‘multiculturalism’ which help to emphasize the differences of social groups, to serve the needs of the dominant group (Melamed, 2015) and for the acquisition of value (social and economic) by predominantly White companies through people of other ethnicities and contexts (Leong, 2012). As Leong discloses, “*in a society preoccupied with diversity, nonwhiteness is a valued commodity. And where that society is founded on capitalism, it is unsurprising that the commodity of nonwhiteness is exploited for its market value*” (Leong, 2012, p. 2154).

Public policies may have changed over the years, with the aim of favouring minorities and ending inequalities in the workplace, but the processes and structures of organizations operating in the capitalist system do not allow it. “*Institutional racism is argued to be a part of the structure or culture of an organization, making it very difficult for minority employees to receive fair treatment and fully progress their careers*” (Kenny & Briner, 2010, p. 349).

Subtle discrimination.

As traditional racism tends to disappear, paying attention to blatant forms of discrimination in the workplace is no longer enough to confirm or deny the presence of discrimination. Even because forms of discrimination perpetuated in several phases such as pre-employment (recruitment and selection), or after the hiring process (for example, denial of opportunities for promotion, training, remuneration, dismissal, etc.) are condemned by society and prohibited by law (Al-Waqfi & Forstenlechner, 2010). It is necessary to pay attention and examine more the subtle ways of expressing bias that permeate everyday interactions and keep affecting ethnic minority groups (Deitch et al., 2003; Neville et al., 2000). This contemporary form of discrimination is defined as “*negative or ambivalent demeanour or treatment enacted toward social minorities on the*

basis of their minority status membership that is not necessarily conscious and likely conveys ambiguous intent” (K. P. Jones, Peddie, Gilrane, King, & Gray, 2016, p. 1591). A recent qualitative study explored the processes involved in subtle discrimination in the workplace and brought us three characteristics of subtle discrimination (Van Laer & Janssens, 2011). The first one is the ambiguity of subtle discrimination, which is hardly perceived by those who experience it, and involves a greater reflection on the understanding of events as discriminatory. Through their study, the authors found that what makes these experiences ambiguous is that they often involve behaviours that may be perceived as motivating and positive when in fact their nature is not well-intentioned. Also, most modern racists do not consider themselves racist, boasting equal values, condemning racism and identifying themselves as non-prejudiced, when in fact they have subtle discriminatory behaviours against specific groups (Cortina, Kabat-Farr, Leskinen, Huerta, & Magley, 2013). These acts may arise when modern racists can justify it with plausible explanatory reasons for these behaviours unlinked to gender or race (Cortina, 2008; Gaertner, F. Dovidio, Nier, Hodson, & A. Houlette, 2005).

Another feature of subtle discrimination in the workplace is the fact that it can be activated with interactions whose purpose is to subtly derive power from someone. It is shaped by the structures and discourses of society and gradually weakens individuals belonging to minority groups by instilling in them the idea of inferiority relative to the dominant group, which reflects and sustains the inequalities of power between groups (Van Laer & Janssens, 2011). An example of this is the uncivil behaviours at work, nonviolent acts with ambiguous intentions, that express subtle discrimination. These acts are most often directed at workers from protected classes such as ethnic minorities and women; this reveals incivility's selective character, which sometimes may be unconscious (Di Marco, Hoel, Arenas, & Munduate, 2018). These small events may jeopardize the motivation and performance of those who experience them, as these power processes aim to establish a hierarchy in which the dominant group pushes the minorities to the bottom.

Jones and colleagues (2017) defend that to fully understand the construct of subtle discrimination in the workplace - namely its antecedents, mechanisms and consequences - a dynamic and developed approach must be considered, implying the incorporation of two other dimensions where discrimination varies: formality and intentionality. In the 'subtlety' dimension, at one end is subtle discrimination and at the opposite end, blatant discrimination, which is less common in our society, and it is marked by its intentionality, ease of interpretation and recognition, evidence and is punishable by law (Van Laer &

Janssens, 2011). One way to differentiate these two types of discrimination is to analyse their frequency in society, visibility, recognition and ambiguity for those who experience it (Van Laer & Janssens, 2011), even though these are not two totally distinct and opposing categories (K. P. Jones et al., 2017). The second dimension to be considered is ‘formality’, which concerns the relationship between a discriminatory event and the job-related implications or social dynamics in general. Consequently, at one end is formal discrimination and at the other end is interpersonal discrimination. Formal discrimination refers to all actions such as refusing a job or refusing a promotion based on the individual’s social group, for which there are “*organizational laws, company policies, or social norms*” (Hebl, Foster, Mannix, & Dovidio, 2002, p. 816) that prevent, prohibit and formulate adequate answers. On the other hand, interpersonal discrimination “*involve[s] the nonverbal, paraverbal, and even some of the verbal behaviours that occur in social interactions*” (Hebl et al., 2002, p. 816) can occur in the workplace, without necessarily having job-related implications. Both dimensions – subtlety and formality – are correlated, as a subtle discriminatory attitude can be both formal and interpersonal, and an overt discriminatory attitude can be both formal and interpersonal as well. Finally, the third continuum – intentionality – reflects the perpetrator’s intentions, and there may be ambiguity or clear intentions to harm. This theoretical approach will allow a greater precision in the analysis of this exploratory study’s participants’ experiences of discrimination.

It is known that subtle discrimination permeates modern workplaces (K. P. Jones et al., 2017) and just because they are subtle they are not as significant and impactful to minorities as the blatant and direct forms of discrimination (Gaertner et al., 2005). Nevertheless, these contemporary manifestations of discrimination depend on how they are perceived by those who experience them. Perceived discrimination is “*an individual’s perception that he or she is treated differently or unfairly because of his or her group membership*” (Ensher, Grant-Vallone, & Donaldson, 2001a, p. 55), it is the subjective interpretation that can be drawn from a situation (Kong, 2016). For example, a man who identifies himself as a homosexual may feel discriminated against by a supermarket employee who has expressed rude behaviour. His attitude may not be related to the client’s sexual orientation; instead, the employee might be having a bad day and acting the same way with several clients. With this example we understand that the perception of discrimination is subjective to one’s point of view. Receiving negative differential

treatment can cause disturbances in psychological well-being, especially if this treatment is perceived as a discriminatory practice.

In a social approach, Goldman and colleagues (2006) tell us that perceived discrimination depends on the individual perception of two social elements: group membership in a social group (e.g. gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation) and treatment of their group relative to other groups. In other words, the perception of discrimination of individuals is dependent on the perception of how the other groups are treated (Goldman et al., 2006). Perceived discrimination may be even more dangerous than discrimination itself since discriminatory acts that are not perceived will hardly have any impact. Several studies have shown that perceived discrimination is very likely to cause psychological and behavioural impacts that may trigger psychological problems (Kong, 2016; Schmitt, Branscombe, Postmes, & Garcia, 2014). The consequences can be even more serious when it comes to pervasive discrimination, that is, when the discriminatory events occur frequently and at several contexts (e.g. at school, at work, at the supermarket, among others). In that case, because discrimination permeates various contexts of everyday life, it becomes more difficult to avoid, and its perception takes the power of the individual to control the situation. Therefore, he or she feels powerless in a recurrent and systematic situation (Schmitt et al., 2014). If we compare pervasive discrimination to isolated discriminatory acts, the former is more likely to be experienced as rejection and exclusion by the dominant society. For this reason, perceived discrimination may have a greater negative impact on psychological well-being than discrimination at isolated moments (Schmitt et al., 2014). Some studies have proved that, for relatively disadvantaged status groups, discrimination is more pervasive (occurs frequently and in several contexts) than for favoured status groups and that their perceptions of discrimination may have a greater negative impact than for privileged groups. However, there are also studies that found no relationship between group status and the effects of perceived discrimination (Schmitt et al., 2014).

Colour blindness – a modern racial attitude.

Following the modern racism that is felt in our society, there was an adaptation of the forms of expression of racial attitudes to the new conditions, as is the case of colour blindness (Neville et al., 2000), a modern racial attitude. This is a controversial concept, easily confused with a non-discriminatory, egalitarian and non-biased attitude, since its definition is based on the assumption that all individuals are equal regardless of their

differences; there is a “*desire to deny race in order to treat everyone fairly*” (Thompson & Neville, 1999, p. 214). It is a good thing for those who want to maintain an equal and impartial image and protect themselves from recrimination. There are those who appeal to colour blindness in an attempt to hide their ‘true colours’, however, it is important to say that perpetrators can also do so unconsciously, especially if the individual is not aware that racial privilege exists and that ethnic discrimination is a problem in society (Offermann et al., 2014).

The definition of colour blindness is clear, and although it may be well-intentioned, we cannot deny the ethnocentric character of suggesting that we are all equal; to have that discourse is to withdraw importance and relevance from racial issues, to equate the experiences of minorities with those of the majority, and to deny racial privilege. It is, therefore, to have a distorted view of reality and of race relations themselves (Neville et al., 2000). Well, if racial prejudice, racism and ethnic discrimination exist in our society, having colour blind beliefs involves revealing a lack of sensitivity towards racism and obscurantism to the realities and experiences of ethnic minorities (Offermann et al., 2014). A recent empirical study has shown that having colour blind attitudes can actually mask perceptions of discrimination in that the more people sustain institutional discrimination, the less they are aware of the potential subtle manifestations of racism (Offermann et al., 2014).

If on the one hand we have the colour blindness, which “*minimizes the use and significance of racial group membership and suggests that race should not and does not matter*” (Plaut, Thomas, Hurd, & Romano, 2018, p. 200), in opposition we have multiculturalism, which focuses on the importance of group membership that “*should be acknowledged, respected, and even valued*” (Plaut et al., 2018, p. 200). Multiculturalism can have a positive impact on interracial interactions and the detection of discriminatory acts. However, some studies suggest that multiculturalism can lead to greater stereotyping by highlighting differences (Wolsko, Park, Judd, & Wittenbrink, 2000), and hence leading to discrimination, and to hostility in interracial interaction when the dominant group is exposed to multiculturalism and feels threatened by colleagues who are members of a minority group (Vorauer & Sasaki, 2011). On the contrary, other studies suggest that positive consequences overlap, being multiculturalism a benefit to minorities as it reduces stereotyping (Hachfeld, Hahn, Schroeder, Anders, & Kunter, 2015; Velasco González, Verkuyten, Weesie, & Poppe, 2008) and prejudice (Ryan, Hunt, Weible, Peterson, & Casas, 2007). In general, while both perspectives (multiculturalism and colour blindness)

may benefit or hinder discriminatory practices and create inequalities, multiculturalism has more positive implications for ethnic minorities (Plaut et al., 2018), although it is nonetheless a form of social differentiation, valuing and devaluing forms of humanity according to the needs of the dominant group (Melamed, 2015).

How Do People Cope with Discrimination?

“Coping is a person-situation transaction process, which begins with individuals’ cognitive appraisals of their encounter with a situation” (Kong, 2016, p. 335). For ethnic minorities (and for disadvantaged groups in general) discrimination is a stressful experience that is a part of everyday life and requires the development of coping strategies to manage stress, that is, *“individual attempts to manage, through cognitive and behavioural efforts, external or internal demands that are assessed as exceeding one’s resources”* (Utsey, Ponterotto, Reynolds, & Cancelli, 2000, p. 73).

The literature on coping and stress is extensive and one of the most used studies as a theoretical framework is the phenomenological approach of Lazarus and Folkman (1984) that resulted in the transactional model of stress and coping. To design this model, the authors focused on the interaction between variables person - environment. The stressor arises when it is determined that there is an imbalance between the demands and the coping resources of an individual to mediate stress. When a potentially stressful situation occurs, the assessment of the significance of the event is made, and the situation can be considered irrelevant, benign positive or stressful – this is the first phase of the process, or primary appraisal. If it turns out as a stressful situation, it is ascertained if harm / loss has already occurred, if it is a threat, or if it is a challenge, and the secondary appraisal begins, in which the individual assesses whether he or she has the necessary resources to deal within the situation and make it less stressful. These resources may be internal, such as the strength and determination of the individual, or external, such as social support. After the second evaluation begins the process of coping, which involves the individual’s cognitive and behavioural effort to respond to the demands that overwhelm his / her resources. Coping can be problem-focused (directly regulating the stressor), emotion-focused (regulating the emotional response to the stressor) or focused on both. Problem-focused coping occurs when the individual feels that he or she has control over the situation, defining the problem, looking for alternatives to solve it or going back to assessing the situation. On the other hand, when the individual feels he or she has little

control over the situation, he or she looks for ways to regulate emotional distress, such as avoidance, distancing, and other strategies (emotion-focused coping). Mellor (2004) argues that problem-focused coping (or active coping) is linked to better psychological outcomes than emotion-focused coping strategies, which can increase suffering.

In his study on African Americans' responses to cognitive appraisal, stress, and coping, Outlaw (1993) relied on the transactional model of stress and coping, adapting it. The 'irrelevant' and 'benign positive' assessments were eliminated since all situations have racial implications for African Americans, which may affect their well-being and because African-Americans are aware of their lack of control in racist situations as well as their harmful potential.

In the literature we can find several conceptualizations of coping; while some theorists use an approach that separates problem-focused from emotion-focused coping (such as the Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), others differentiate between approach-oriented and avoidance-oriented strategies. Approach-oriented strategies (e.g. seeking social support) "involve cognitive attempts to change the manner in which a stressor is understood or perceived and behavioural attempts to directly resolve a stressor or its consequences" (Walsh & Tuval-Mashiach, 2012, p. 54), while avoidance-oriented strategies (e.g. distancing) "*involve cognitive attempts to minimize or deny the stressor and behavioural attempts to avoid or withdraw from it*" (Walsh & Tuval-Mashiach, 2012, p. 54). Associated with coping strategies is social support. There are inconsistencies in the literature regarding this strategy, being social support considered a problem-focused strategy, an emotion-focused strategy, an approach-oriented strategy, or an avoidance-oriented strategy (Brondolo, Brady ver Halen, Pencille, Beatty, & Contrada, 2009).

Ruggiero, Taylor and Lydon (1997) conducted a study to see how members of a disadvantaged group, more specifically women, cope with discrimination when they perceive that social support is available or unavailable. The authors emphasize that, in general, it is more common for members of various disadvantaged groups to resort to cognitive avoidant strategies (or avoidance-oriented strategies) as a way of dealing with discrimination. Thus, the attribution to discrimination is only done when the probability of discrimination is quite high, being that when there is ambiguity, the tendency is to minimize discrimination. This way of coping with discrimination allows individuals to divert attention from the stressful situation, rather than using the cognitive attention strategy (or approach-oriented strategy) which leads the individual to concentrate his or her attention on the stressor, facing it and trying to solve it.

Returning to the initial question regarding the application of coping strategies according to the availability of social support, the authors point out that the latter is beneficial to the individual insofar as it provides emotional support (helping to increase self-esteem), informative support (providing information and advice), and instrumental support (providing tools or assistance in certain situations). The authors state that depressed individuals who do not resort to social support are more likely to engage in cognitive avoidant coping and are forced to use minimization of discrimination to reduce stress. This minimization of discrimination can negatively affect the individual's self-esteem, insofar as the individual assumes responsibility for negative feedback. Discarding the hypothesis of discrimination, the individual attributes the negative feedback to his or her performance, maintaining his or her self-esteem in the social domain - more specifically, the disadvantaged social group to which he or she belongs - intact. Another interesting aspect is the fact that the individual feels that he or she has control over the received feedback, which is very beneficial for mental health. Ruggiero, Taylor and Lydon (1997) add that the consequences of this minimization are more psychologically favourable than the consequences of perceiving discrimination.

In conclusion, individuals who perceive that social support is available are more likely to engage in cognitive attention coping, that is, when emotional and informative support is available the members of a disadvantaged group are more vigilant in perceiving discrimination and social support can help manage the stress from that experience. Therefore, social support is beneficial to individuals as it provides emotional support (help in increasing self-esteem), information support (providing information and advice), and instrumental support (tools or assistance).

The Role of Ethnic Identity in Recognizing and Coping with Discrimination

Perception of discrimination and attribution to discrimination are proven to be linked to group membership, which can be a major moderator of the impact of discrimination. In the same way, group membership can influence the coping process (Major, Quinton, & McCoy, 2002). "*Most adults have multiple roles and group memberships with which they identify and find meaning*" (Settles, 2004, p. 487). Thus, the basis of an individual's personality is not only his personal identity, but a set of several identities. Having multiple identities can bring benefits to individuals, for example, to their social interactions, or like the accumulation of skills; however, it can be a difficult process to counterbalance,

because there is identity interference of the various identities, which can result in negative effects on physical and psychological health. Identity centrality is an important concept for understanding the relationship between negative events - such as ethnic discrimination - and well-being, insofar as it relates to the level of importance an individual attributes to their individual identities (Settles, 2004). One's central identities - or those that an individual considers most important - can bring benefits. For example, social identities bring social validation and a basis for interpreting the world (Settles, 2004) and the feeling of belonging to a specific group is proven positive for individual self-esteem (Corning, 2002). Perceived ethnic discrimination is more collective-related than individual-related (Corning, 2002), and collective self-esteem is more likely to modify emotional and behavioural responses to perceived ethnic discrimination than personal self-esteem (Kong, 2016).

The definition of ethnic identity is quite complex, there is no general agreement about it, there is instead a shared general understanding, but the specific aspects that researchers emphasize vary widely (Phinney, 1990). Phinney (1990) argues that ethnic identity is a dynamic multidimensional construction that changes according to time and context and is acquired through complex processes of self-assessment and decision-making about the role of ethnicity in personal life. The great majority of studies on ethnic identity are based on the perspective of social psychology, considering ethnic identity an aspect of social identity (Phinney, 1990). Phinney and Anthony Ong (2007) identify as components of ethnic identity the self-categorization, commitment and attachment, exploration, behavioural involvement, ingroup attitudes, ethnic values and beliefs, importance or salience of group membership, and ethnic identity in relation to national identity. Therefore, the perception and attribution to discrimination depends on two factors: ethnic identity and the unfair treatment of its group compared to other groups. If some of these factors are not present, then it is possible that the individual does not perceive the situation as discriminatory (Major et al., 2002). Ethnic identity then functions as a compass that guides the perceptions of minorities in the face of discrimination (Kong & Jolly, 2016), depending also on the centrality that this identity represents for the self (Settles, 2004). Likewise, the responses to these unfavourable situations are affected by ethnic identity, insofar as "*people who identify strongly with their group are likely to perceive and react differently from group members who identify less strongly*" (Operario & Fiske, 2001, p. 551). Branscombe, Schmitt and Harvey (1999) found that "*the generally negative consequences of perceiving oneself as a victim of racial prejudice can be somewhat*

alleviated by identification with the minority group” (Branscombe et al., 1999, p. 135). Ethnic affirmation (or ethnic identity) may then be advantageous for the mental health of individuals belonging to ethnic minorities, mitigating the effects of ethnic discrimination (Cobb et al., 2019), since a strong ethnic affirmation was associated with less anxiety and less depressive symptoms among African American young adults (Brittian et al., 2013) while a weak ethnic affirmation was associated with a worsening of the effects of ethnic discrimination (Cobb et al., 2019). However, the literature is contradictory; according to Settles (2004), other studies have suggested that identity centrality makes individuals more vulnerable to negative identity-related events.

In a study that correlates ethnic identity and perceptions of prejudice, Operario and Fiske (2001) present two perspectives on minorities’ response to prejudice. One tells us that members of a stigmatized group admit that their group is a victim of prejudice, but do not believe that prejudice affects them personally - this is called a personal / group discrimination (PGD) discrepancy. Evidence shows that minority members who identify poorly with their group show greater PGD, minimizing personal prejudice, thus protecting their self-efficacy and self-esteem and preserving a sense of control and security of the situation they are facing. On the other hand, members with a strong ethnic identity embody society’s bias towards their group and are personally more vulnerable to prejudice and discrimination. An alternative perspective postulates that members of minority groups generally express a greater suspicion about prejudice. Thus, minorities tend to attribute ambiguous negative feedback to prejudice whenever such feedback may have race-based explanations. By attributing ambiguous negative feedback to prejudice, minorities can avoid the debilitating effects of internalizing rejection and failure.

Faced with this divergence of theories, studies by Ruggiero, Taylor and colleagues (Ruggiero & Taylor, 1995; Ruggiero et al., 1997) added that several situational variables also influence the perception of prejudice or discrimination, such as the characteristics of the situation, the group's status and the ambiguity of the perpetrator’s motivations. Prejudice is a complex phenomenon and these variables affect the perception and attribution of situations to prejudice, and ethnic identity influences perceptions of subtle vs. obvious manifestations of prejudice as individuals with a strong group identity are more aware of social status are therefore more alert and responsive to subtle and ambiguous manifestations of prejudice than individuals with a low group identity who are more unconscious in ambiguous subtle situations, revealing more awareness of prejudice when ambiguity is reduced (Operario & Fiske, 2001).

Afro-descendants' Discriminatory Experiences at Work

As work environments have become increasingly heterogeneous and diverse, studies (e.g. Acker, 2006; Cortina, 2008; Deitch et al., 2003; Fiske & Lee, 2008) have emerged on discrimination at work, focusing on the experiences of the individuals who were targeted and the consequent impact. However, there are still few qualitative studies on the experiences of Afro-descendants at work, especially in Portugal. In this section there will be visited some international studies that are close with the issue of Afro-descendants' experiences at work.

Deitch and colleagues (2003) conducted a qualitative study focusing on 'everyday' discrimination - a pervasive and subtle form of discrimination - against Black people at work. The authors analysed the impact of these acts on the well-being of individuals who experience it, empirically demonstrating that it has negative consequences on work-related well-being but also personal consequences. The findings showed that Black people reported more situations of mistreatment at work than White people.

Sue, Capodilupo and Holder (2008) also carried out a qualitative study to analyse racial microaggressions directed to African Americans, more specifically the incidents, perceptions, reactions, interpretations and adjacent consequences. Two focus groups were used with a total of 13 male and female individuals, who identified themselves as Black, Black / African American, or African American. The study showed that the ambiguity of microaggressions makes it very difficult to attribute meaning to communications or interactions, which makes it difficult to decide on an appropriate response. The authors argue that this form of subtle racism produces a clash of realities between Whites and Blacks that result in experiences of racism by Blacks who do not have the power to define the situation in non-racial terms. The meanings that the participants attributed to the many microaggressions were defined in 5 main themes that show African Americans' perspectives on the motivations or intentions of the aggressors. The main themes regarding Black people are: (1) they do not belong to a specific situation or society, (2) they are not normal, (3) they are intellectually inferior, (4) they are not reliable and trustworthy, (5) they are all the same. As a result, participants experienced feelings of helplessness, invisibility, loss of integrity due to forced compliance, pressure to represent

their ethnicity decently, and stress when facing the dilemma of how to resist versus how to adapt. However, Blacks who understand the psychological impact of microaggressions and their dynamics have appeared to be better prepared to deal with these events and their underlying dilemmas.

Plummer and Slane (1996) analysed Blacks' and Whites' coping strategies when facing situations prompted by racist motivations. After the analysis of the questionnaires, the results suggested that there are differences in the coping strategies used by these two ethnicities. Compared with White individuals, Blacks used more problem-focused coping because they sought social support, used problem solving, and confronted the situation. Also, Black individuals also used more emotion-focused coping than Whites, as they used self-controlling strategies, escape avoidance, distancing, and positive reappraisal. In general, Blacks used more coping strategies than Whites when facing a situation of racial stress, with Blacks reporting more incidents of racial stress; "*117 out of 156 Black respondents reported 169 incidents; 165 out of 376 Whites reported 165 incidents*" (Plummer & Slane, 1996, p. 311). Both ethnicities reduced their planful solving and seeking social support when in situations of racial stress, but this tendency was more evident in Whites, which the authors argue it may be because Whites have less problem-solving skills as they experience less often stressful racial situations. Also, Whites are less likely to seek support in these situations perhaps out of shame or lack of cultural understanding.

Utsey, Ponterotto, Reynolds and Cancelli (2000) also studied coping strategies used by African Americans regarding stress from events of racism. The results of this quantitative study have suggested that there are gender differences in the types of coping strategies used by African Americans when in a situation of ethnic discrimination. For example, African American women were more likely to seek social support than men. However, it was concluded that women generally used more avoidance coping strategies than problem-solving coping or seeking social support coping when they experienced racism individually.

Hasford (2016) examined how dominant cultural narratives influenced the experiences of racism and resistance among Black youth in the Canadian context, by interviewing 24 individuals. The results suggested that most of the experiences of racism at work were

directly or indirectly a consequence of mass media representations of Blacks that encouraged stereotyped racial characterizations. On the other hand, several interviewees mentioned that being the only Black individual at work influenced their experiences of racism. These experiences were of exclusion, discipline for minor errors through excessive punishment, condescension that demonstrated the low expectations about Black employees, racial jokes and name calling. The impact these experiences have had on informants resulted in feelings of performance anxiety, sadness, frustration, and anger. Regarding coping strategies, at the relational level, there were identified 4 main strategies of resistance to dominant cultural narratives: exposing situations with the aim of changing the status quo; transcend these narratives by overcoming stereotyped racial characterizations; resort to behaviours that exaggerated or minimized stereotyped racial characterizations (e.g. change the appearance or way of speaking) to strategically exploit the fears of dominant workers; and withdrawal of the work in question. At the personal level, there were identified two main strategies of resistance to dominant cultural narratives: conscious acceptance of racist narratives as being inevitable characteristics of Canadian society and the labour market; and reframing, that is, a process of contesting dominant cultural narratives about race and racism and refusing to internalize them.

More recently, in the UK, Wyatt and Silvester (2015) interviewed 20 Black and minority ethnic group members (BME) and 20 White senior managers to understand whether or not BME employees have more difficulty in reaching leadership positions than white employees. The authors resort to the elaborate labyrinth metaphor to illustrate the complexity and variety of barriers BME face throughout their journeys to achieve leadership positions. The results show that senior BME managers have identified finding more relevant professional experiences than White managers of the same hierarchical level. One possible explanation for this would be because BME have an elaborate labyrinth to go through which requires more cognitive effort and resilience to know how to progress through the maze.

Another conclusion of the study is that BME find it more difficult to access informal organizational processes (e.g. networks and informal relationships with senior managers) and therefore rely on formal processes (e.g. working more / for longer and more and participate in orientation programs). Informal processes are sources of knowledge - through shared experiences with those who have the knowledge and understanding of the skills needed in certain contexts - that can bring benefits and since BME employees do

not use such processes as much as Whites, they will not progress as easily or as rapidly as those using informal processes.

The following section will address possible consequences of perceived discrimination at the individual level, including emotional, psychological and physical consequences, and the consequences to the organization, that is, what is the impact that discriminatory events perpetuated in companies has at the job, legal and economic, and reputation levels.

Consequences of Perceived Discrimination

Research shows that the perception of disruptive behaviours like selective workplace incivility, intimidation, discrimination and behaviours like abusive language and racial jokes can have a negative impact at the individual level (Mayer, Viviers, & Tonelli, 2017) and at the organizational level.

Individual level.

Several empirical studies have proved the negative impact of perceived discrimination for psychological / mental health (e.g. Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009; Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002; Schmitt et al., 2014; Williams, Neighbors, & Jackson, 2003) and physical health, of those who experience it, even though mental health is found to be more related to discrimination than physical health (Gee, 2002). In his critical review of empirical research on perceived discrimination and health, Williams and Mohammed (2009) show us that several studies found a positive relation between these two variables for psychological disorders like anxiety, depression or depressive symptoms, burnout, low self-esteem, job dissatisfaction, stress, and psychological distress. These psychological disturbances may lead to sleep disorders, as Slopen and Williams (2014) found in their study that correlates sleep duration and difficulties with discrimination, getting to the conclusion that experiencing discrimination linked to racial / ethnic issues may result in a shorter sleep duration. In what concerns to sleep difficulties, subtle or 'everyday' discrimination has been associated with more problems in this area, rather than blatant discrimination experiences. A possible way to explain this may be due to the regularity of these small, but powerful, discriminatory actions that permeate the daily life and the routine of the affected individuals. In fact, there is an extensive literature that proves by empirical methodology that the systematic exposure to experiences of

discrimination can have negative consequences for health in general, something that occurs not only to Afro-descendants but to all socially disadvantaged groups of different societies (Williams et al., 2003), even when previously controlling the physical and emotional health, the characteristics of work and the discrimination in the workplace (Goldman et al., 2006). However, as mentioned in the section ‘How Do People Cope with Discrimination?’, social support, active coping strategies and group identification play an important role in helping to protect the integrity of individuals’ health (Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009).

Even though it is less studied, discrimination may also have negative consequences for physical health to the extent that stress can lead to harmful behaviours such as the use of alcohol, tobacco and other substances, as well as may lead to increased physiological response and lead to problems resulting from cardiovascular reactivity such as hypertension and other cardiovascular diseases (Cheung et al., 2016).

In addition to the health consequences, in which the literature focuses more, there are also consequences at the emotional / behavioural level. Ethnic minorities are often discriminated against, and individuals who are part of a specific group (or identify themselves as part of a specific group) are generally more alert to situations and are more likely to scrutinize and jump to conclusions. Kong (2016) refers this phenomenon as a non-clinic paranoia, “*associated with one’s awareness of oneself as the target of others’ attention and perceived ethnic discrimination*” (Kong, 2016, p. 335).

Organizational level.

Organizations are also adversely affected by discriminatory practices (Kenny & Briner, 2010) and these consequences can be defined in 3 main levels, job, legal & economic, and reputation. At the job level, workplace discrimination can negatively influence performance, satisfaction (toward work, supervisors, and opportunities), commitment, job stress, withdrawal behaviours (including lateness and absenteeism), lower morale, increased turnover (Cheung et al., 2016; Goldman et al., 2006), limit job opportunities, reduce career aspirations and career success (Al-Waqfi & Forstenlechner, 2010). At the economic level, the legal costs of discrimination in organizations can also reach large proportions if we consider that workers can file complaints that could result in very expensive lawsuits. Also, higher turnover rates caused by these reasons may lead to higher recruitment, selection and training costs, as well as substitute workers (Gelfand, Nishii, Raver, & Schneider, 2007). Costs of health insurance, compensation, and disability leave

related to the health and well-being consequences of employees may also arise (Gelfand et al., 2007; Goldman et al., 2006). On the other hand, it can undermine the reputation of the organization and consequently undermine the attractiveness and retention of talent, and the trust of customers who may not be willing to buy products or services (Cheung et al., 2016; Goldman et al., 2006).

Diversity Management

The concept of diversity management emerged in the United States in the late 1980s as a reaction to the changing demographic situation in the US labour market and consumer market that would result in the heterogeneity of the workforce (Lorbiecki & Jack, 2000). To safeguard their survival, ensure competitive advantage and increase productivity, organizations realized that they would have to recruit more women and minorities, and to attract and retain them, they created and managed diversity initiatives that allegedly guaranteed the recognition, appreciation and inclusion of these groups in the companies. There was an alienation from the temporary measures (affirmative action and equal employment opportunities policies) that had been present since the height of the civil rights movement (Kelly & Dobbin, 1998), gradually being replaced by diversity management (McDougall, 1996; Noon, 2007; Wrench, 2005). Diversity management is an organizational strategy that promotes the inclusion of individuals with different backgrounds, contexts and cultures and celebrates differences to obtain a diverse workforce, a kind of a cultural mosaic that is being filled according to the business interests. In reality, *“people in the form of human resources are merely one of the factors of production to be optimized and rationalized in the interests of achieving excess profits”* (Humphries & Grice, 1995, p. 22) and it is in the principle of exploitation and attainment of inequalities that the capitalist economy is based on and thrives. It is an illusion to believe that there can be justice in diversity management initiatives whose foundation is a greedy discourse that the differences will contribute to the growth and efficiency of organizations. Although in the first instance diversity management could seem a benevolent development, the reality is that it has several flaws and is the object of many criticisms. Noon (2007) emphasizes the opportunistic nature of this initiative that is selectively designed to meet the interests of organizations and not to fulfil a duty of social justice. The equal employment opportunities defended egalitarian values and intended to correct *“past wrongs”* (McDougall, 1996, p. 64) seeking to create conditions that would

allow all individuals to be treated in the same way regardless of their personal characteristics such as gender or social group (McDougall, 1996). Diversity management enhances and values people's differences by encouraging a diverse work environment, differing from equal opportunities by its "*primary emphasis on business benefits, organizational efficiency and market performance*" (Wrench, 2005, p. 73). Although organizations recognize the potential of employing minorities, if business benefits are not evident and achievable in the short term, the idea becomes irrelevant and is rejected as it does not meet the needs and demands of financiers, shareholders and (indirectly) the market. The truth is that in the right context, diversity and inclusion initiatives can benefit some minorities or disadvantaged groups, but as soon as there are changes in the organization's strategy and in the market economy, or unexpected costs arise, these groups are easily discarded (Noon, 2007). Some of the most common criticisms directed at diversity management are listed by Wrench (2005): (1) diversity management is a mild and restrained choice that avoids antidiscrimination policies and programs that could change the organization and its employees; (2) it does not focus enough on racial issues, showing lack of sensibility and repressing the experiences and struggles of minorities and disadvantaged groups; (3) it diminishes ethnicity to a simple construct, easy to understand and to be explained in mere training programs; (4) there is an exaggerated and self-centred concern with the business strategy, as the arguments used are of favouring the business instead of being the ethical and moral issues; (5) overshadows social inequalities and ignores their historical and structural bases as well as the facilitating influence of the social and organizational context.

'Diversity' has allowed many organizations to protect their corporate image by covering up the inequalities and injustices that continue to persist in these workplaces and the fact that the White man remains the privileged one (Embrick, 2011). There is a great commitment of organizations to convey the idea of an organizational culture that supports equality of opportunity and inclusion, presenting diversity as an institutional value. However, the superficiality of these initiatives ensures the disadvantage of minorities compared to the dominant group, maintaining an unfair and unequal working environment (Embrick, 2011). Policies and training programs are implemented, with the goal of reinforce the importance of a diverse workforce (or, at least, of showing that concern), there being a negligence in relation to how discrimination is perceived by employees, the consequences that may affect the well-being of the victims (Ensher et al., 2001) and to the racial issues in general. Although advocates of diversity management

argue that exposure to a long-term theoretically based diversity training program may lead to “*positive attitudes toward interracial situations at work and awareness of psychological privilege, increased ethnic identity development, and a decrease in modern racism attitudes*” (Chrobot-Mason, 2012, p. 206), the organizational standard remains the White man and “*non-White people come to be defined in terms of the social and economic value they provide to White people and institutions*” (Liu, 2017, p. 458).

Concluding, it is important to mention that withdrawing value from attempts to reduce discrimination is not the purpose here, but rather to understand how these can be improved to be truly effective and make a difference. Equality measures and anti-discrimination strategies should be the core elements of diversity management, and anti-discrimination trainings should be introduced to change the behaviour of White employees and managers (Wrench, 2005).

This chapter provided an overview of the literature on the complexities behind perceived discrimination and how HRM can improve the experiences of ethnic minorities at work which will help to answer the research question behind this study.

It is illegal to perpetuate forms of direct and indirect ethnic discrimination in the workplace and in everyday life. At a time when traditional forms of discrimination are being replaced by subtler, harder to recognize biased behaviours that permeate organizations, it is the purpose of this study to trace where graduated Afro-descendants with white-collar jobs stand in the spectrum of discrimination in the workplace context. This qualitative study intends to analyse the positive and negative workplace experiences of graduate Afro-descendants that they perceive as a consequence of their ethnic origin - with a specific focus on the perceptions of unequal treatment and discrimination -, the visibility of cultural diversity in these contexts, and their insights about HRM practices to ensure equality and encourage a culturally diverse workplace. Using a conceptual framework based on relevant literature on the experiences of ethnic minorities at work, in the next chapters there will be analysed the reality and points of view of this ethnic group in Portugal about past and / or current work experiences, whether they are positive or negative. This work has the intent to give voice to the informants about their work experiences in Portugal, capturing and analysing their perceptions of discrimination at work - taking into account dimensions such as intentionality, formality and subtlety -, the coping strategies they use to deal with discriminatory events, and the consequences of discrimination on a personal level - how their emotions, feelings, self-esteem and well-being are affected - participants’ perceptions on diversity practices where they work,

taking into account the analysis of human resource management practices in the companies where the participants work. In the next chapter it will be presented the methodological design and the rationale for the research approach of this study.

METHODOLOGY

Methodological Strategy, Participant Profile and Data Collection

Exploring experiences of discrimination is a sensitive subject insofar as Black people have a long history of oppression and alluding to it today may be something emotionally difficult for them to talk about. Because of that reason, the quantitative method - more specifically the use of questionnaires - was excluded as participants could decide not to answer to certain questions, not to answer openly and honestly, for the possibility of getting incomplete or invalid data (Jehn & Jonsen, 2010), and also for the impossibility to add new relevant questions in the course of the narratives. The qualitative method, in turn, has an interpretative character that may work in favour, but also against since misinterpretations can be deduced, there is an added difficulty in coding and organizing a large amount of data and there is no accepted general model for communicating interpretive research (Jehn & Jonsen, 2010). Nevertheless, this method was considered the best for this study, as the semi-structured interview allows the creation of interpersonal relationships that help to build trust with the participants and capture their perceptions in more depth. The semi-structured interviews were conducted until data saturation was reached, to define the right moment to end the collection phase. For such, there were considered aspects such as o scope of the study, the nature of the topic, the quality of data, the study design, and the use of shadowed data (Morse, 2000). Data saturation was achieved in interview I9, and three additional interviews were conducted to corroborate that result. Also, interviews were conducted until the data collected were rich enough to answer the research question, therefore additional interviews would not provide new and relevant information to this study (Brod, Tesler, & Christensen, 2009). The same questions were asked to all participants, and even though if a semi-structured script was used, only the order of the questions varied, or small other questions were

added according to the information that the participants were providing, which allows to reach data saturation faster (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

The target population selected were men and women who identified themselves as Afro-descendants, who had an academic degree, and who had already worked in Portugal. These criteria for selecting participants resulted in a sample that included male and female individuals from an ethnic minority in Portugal, who attended higher education and held different positions and functions in small, large or medium-sized organizations. Therefore, it is important to mention that the sample does not reflect the Afro-descendant population in Portugal, since it was limited to a fraction of it.

In April and May were conducted semi-structured and face-to-face interviews with twelve individuals ($n = 12$), five female participants and seven male participants. The average age of participants was approximately 28 years old, being the youngest 23 and the oldest 38. In terms of academic background, nine are graduates and three are masters. The participants belonged to several business areas (see Table 2).

The recruitment of the participants was done through a combination of personal contacts, snowball sampling and LinkedIn search. Initially, a small introductory text was sent to the possible informants, explaining the objectives of the study and ensuring the confidentiality of their personal data. There were some difficulties in recruiting participants, and it is possible that the personal characteristics of the researcher may have discouraged some individuals from taking part in this study. The fact that the researcher is young, and a White Portuguese may have had an influence, as individuals may have considered that a fair analysis of their group's experiences would not be made, as well as because it is a controversial subject of a sensitive nature. There were some negative responses regarding participation in the study, and some individuals who chose to participate were constantly postponing the date until they stopped responding. For this reason, and because this study required looking for such a specific layer of Portugal's population, the number of participants is restricted, which should not be considered problematic, as it is estimated that from 12 interviews on, most themes and codes have already been identified (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Nevertheless, it is necessary to consider the possible limitation of this result because it might not be generalized to other fields of research (Guest et al., 2006).

Table 2

Participants' Sociodemographic Data

Interview	Date (dd/mm/yy)	Duration (min)	Age (years)	Gender	Place of birth	Education	Job	Sector	Seniority
I1	14/04/2019	82	26	F	Angola	Bachelor's degree	Office Manager & Personal Assistant	HR Consultancy	3 months
I2	15/04/2019	24	23	M	Angola	Bachelor's degree	HR Consulor	HR Consultancy	4 months
I3	22/04/2019	36	30	M	Nigeria	Master's degree	Data Analyst	Energy	2 years
I4	27/04/2019	49	31	F	Guinea-Bissau	Bachelor's degree	Head of HR and Marketing	Health	1 year
I5	08/05/2019	31	38	M	Angola	Bachelor's degree	Account Manager	Internet	5 years
I6	08/05/2019	85	28	M	S. Tomé e Príncipe	Bachelor's + post graduate degree	Sales support	Insurance	2 and a half years
I7	09/05/2019	30	29	M	S. Tomé e Príncipe	Bachelor's degree	Business Intelligence / Software Engineer	IT	2 years
I8	20/05/2019	33	25	F	Angola	Master's degree	Administrative assistant	Health	2 and a half years
I9	07/06/2019	32	24	F	Cabo Verde	Bachelor's degree	Software developer	Consultancy	3 months
I10	01/08/2019	43	25	M	Guinea-Bissau	Bachelor's + post graduate degree	Data Analyst	Electronics	1 and a half years
I11	02/08/2019	20	23	F	Portugal	Master's degree	Risk Management Analyst	Banking	1 year
I12	07/08/2019	29	35	M	Angola	Bachelor's degree	Operations Technician	Banking	1 and a half years

The script entails multiple open questions to allow informants to speak freely and unconstrained about their experiences (see Appendix 3). Although it was a semi-structured script - which allowed to skip questions as well as add new questions as the conversation required – it was structured it in several parts to ensure that all topics relevant to the research question would be covered. Thus, the script was divided into the following sections: Introduction - some introductory questions about the interviewee's professional life; Part 1 - to understand if the organizational culture of the company where the participant worked or works values and fosters diversity and whether employees are treated equally regardless of their personal characteristics; Part 2 - to understand if the participant has ever felt that he / she has been subjected to racist / biased practices, how he / she coped, and how he / she affected him / her emotionally and psychologically (consequences); Part 3 - to understand the participant's perspectives on organizational

practices, focusing on recruitment and selection, development and promotion, diversity and inclusion, and retention practices.

Data Analysis

To analyse the data, it was used a thematic analysis style known as Template Analysis, widely used in organizational and management research, as well as in other disciplines (Brooks, McCluskey, Turley, & King, 2015). This methodology allows the organization of codes in a hierarchical way, following a flexible structure to facilitate the analysis of textual data, while being adaptable to the needs of any qualitative study, unlike other approaches to data coding. This was one of the reasons that led to the choice of this method, its flexibility which, by having fewer specific procedures, would allow me to make adaptations and modifications according to my objectives. It was also an advantage that the principles behind the technique were easily understood by people who are unfamiliar with qualitative methods, as is my case. The third reason why this technique was chosen was the rigor that the process of producing the template requires the researcher. There must be a well-structured approach to data processing, which helps to produce a clear and organized study (King, Cassell, & Symon, 2004).

In addition, compared to IPA (Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis) - with which it is quite similar - the template analysis allows to define a priori codes and to relate 'within and across' interviews, while the IPA presupposes a deep and individual analysis of each case (or in this situation, of each interview) and only later, relate to others.

Brooks and colleagues (2015) article was used as a practical framework to understand the method of Template Analysis, which central idea is the development of a coding template, based on a subset of data, that after being revised, can be applied to the remaining data. The themes are then developed from the richest data, that is, more relevant to the research question. Thus, in the first instance, all recordings of the interviews were transcribed and after its reading and re-reading, there were created some a priori codes, which were attributed to the several excerpts of the transcriptions. After there was more confidence and familiarity with the data, new codes were created and grouped into relevant topics to answer the research question, establishing hierarchical relationships, with more specific codes within broader topics. After, the initial version of the coding template was defined and applied to all interviews, with some modifications, such as changing the scope and entering and removing codes. This process resulted in several updates of the template

until the final template (see Appendix 4) was rich enough to interpret the data and respond to the research question. This was a time-consuming and laborious process because new changes or redefinitions were always to be made and all the interviews were analysed in detail and read several times. It is hard to know when to stop the process of template development, as there are always new modifications and redefinitions to be made – it is almost an infinite process. The process is completed when the researcher finds that all relevant text excerpts correspond to a code (King et al., 2004). After the creation of the codes, four major thematic families that covered them were created: (1) Perception of discrimination, (2) Coping Strategies, (3) Consequences of Ethnic Discrimination, and (4) HRM practices. Each of these four themes resulted from grouping codes that were related to each other by their similarity and the labels were created to best mirror the meanings of the codes. The process of examining the codes and grouping in themes was challenging since several codes appeared that, in a first instance, could be attributed to several themes. The final template resulted in four themes and 12 subthemes, as shown in Table 3, below.

Table 3

Final List of Themes and Sub-themes

Perception of discrimination	Intentionality
	Formality
	Subtlety
	Believing discrimination does not exist at the workplace
Coping	Emotion-focused coping
	Problem-focused coping
Consequences of ethnic discrimination	Psychological distress
	Impact of workplace climate
HR practices	Recruitment and selection
	Development and promotion
	Diversity and inclusion
	Retention

Concluding, in order to achieve scientific rigor, to do a transparent reporting, and to guarantee the quality of this study, there was followed a 32-item formal reporting checklist that covers important aspects to report like the method, the context of the study, findings, analysis and interpretations (Tong, Sainsbury, & Craig, 2007). There was also used a qualitative data analysis software (MAXQDA) to help organize the created codes, with the correspondent quotations of the participants (thus guaranteeing transparency and trustworthiness of the data and of the interpretations that were made).

RESULTS

During this chapter the description and analysis of the four main themes identified will be made, as well as the sub-themes and underlying codes, illustrating the meanings with excerpts from the interview transcripts. This way we will be able to obtain an overview or a more detailed view of the participants' experiences and perceptions on discrimination and diversity in the workplace. It is important to mention that participants' names were concealed, and to each interview was assigned the letter 'I' and a number that corresponds to the order in which the interviews were conducted, to be possible to distinguish them. The themes identified in the results addressed perceptions of discrimination, coping strategies, related consequences and HRM practices in organizations for managing diversity and inclusion. The results showed that ethnic identity at work plays a role in guiding perceptions and attributions to discrimination, and 17 manifestations of differential treatment and injustice towards participants were identified, reflecting subtle, pervasive and recurrent discrimination in the form of microaggressions (interpersonal discrimination) and work-related injustices (formal discrimination). As for coping strategies, participants relied more on emotion-focused strategies such as avoidance / distancing, minimization of discrimination, and positive acceptance and reassessment. The problem-focused coping strategies that participants used was to recognize that racism exists and show determination to address the situation. Regarding the consequences of subtle discrimination, the results showed that seven participants experienced feelings of sadness and frustration, yet most reported feeling completely comfortable in the workplace except for one participant. Results about the ethnic and cultural diversity of the organizations employing the participants in this study showed that most are

homogeneous as they recruit more White employees. Nor were there any programs or initiatives to promote and foster diversity, except in one organization. In what concerns career development and promotion, it was found that the highest positions are held by the dominant group in Portugal.

The results presented above represent a summary of the most relevant data. In the following section we will visit findings in a more detailed way, resorting to interview excerpts to illustrate several topics.

Perception of Discrimination

Table 4

Main Theme 'Perception of Discrimination' and Associated Sub-themes

Perception of discrimination	Intentionality
	Formality
	Subtlety
	Believing discrimination does not exist at the workplace

The first main theme, 'perception of discrimination' reflects the way participants perceive certain ethnic discrimination events in the workplace, or if they consider that there is no discrimination in their workplaces. Findings showed that in most situations considered as discriminatory in this study, not all participants made an attribution to discrimination. Three participants assumed that they had been subjected to ethnic discrimination at work in certain situations, and three other participants were suspicious of racial motivations in work situations that somehow harmed them, however, due to the ambiguity involved, they did not attribute it to discrimination. Moreover, six (I2, I3, I5, I7, I8, I10) participants believe that there are no discriminatory attitudes perpetuated in their current workplace, at least in their personal experience.

The conceptualization of Jones, Arena, Nittrouer, Alonso, & Lindsey (2017) was used as a framework to define discrimination in the context of three continuums that vary throughout subtlety, formality and intentionality. A fourth sub-theme was added concerning the opinion that there is no discrimination in the workplace.

Intentionality.

This sub-theme concerns the way participants perceive the intentions of perpetrators. Throughout the interviews it was clear that some participants considered that in certain events they were treated unfairly or discriminated against due to their ethnicity, or the situation was so subjective that they could not interpret its nature.

In what concerns to racist motivations, five participants (I1, I2, I4, I7, I12) acknowledged and assumed that they had been subjected to ethnic discrimination at work and one mentioned assisting to a discriminatory situation. In interview I7, the participant mentioned there was a clear racist motivation behind the situation in which he was accused of sexual harassment by a co-worker. From the beginning he had felt that his colleagues would treat him differently and had assumed it was because of his membership of an ethnic group. Therefore, the participant feels that the accusation of harassment arose following this racial separation:

“I think, particularly, that it had something to do with my ethnicity. Because I saw the way she approached me, there was a racial separation, and because my work performance made them feel threatened.” (I7 – male, 29 years old)

Another respondent believes she has not been selected to certain jobs because she is Black. Although we cannot conclude that this participant was discriminated based on her skin colour or her membership of an ethnic group, there are some aspects to consider. The woman said she went to several interviews and she did not go through the recruitment process, something she considers unfair since she has a rich curriculum in terms of professional experience, academic background, and language skills. Certainly, the fact that it was not selected for the jobs in question could be explained by multiple reasons. Nevertheless, because no explanatory reason was given to her for not being selected, because it was not perceptible whether there was prejudice, and because the participant considered the situation unfair, we can qualify it as an example of subtle and formal discrimination, as it was directly related to work:

“I can tell you that I consider that considering my valences, I am sure that I could be working in other places I wanted if I had a different skin colour. I really believe that.” (I4 – female, 31 years old)

Other participants (I5, I6, I11) suspected of racial motivations in certain attitudes or situations but did not assume it as definitive, due to the ambiguity involved. In interview I5, the participant referred that the goals the company set for him might have been placed on too high, so that he would not be able to attain them. He was not sure about the reasons behind, thinking it could be due to his ethnicity or some other explanation. The quotation below illustrates that situation, in which this man was harmed, being at disadvantage compared to his colleagues. Thereby, and because the cause is not clear, this can be qualified as subtle discrimination:

“Considering race, or colour... maybe. I will not be categorical, but it has crossed my mind, yes.” (I5 – male, 38 years old)

Another case of uncertainty about the perpetrator’s motivations reflects in the following narrative, in which a participant’s colleague thought she was being oppressed and penalized compared to her colleagues, due to her ethnicity:

“I know, or I heard about, a few situations in which certain people would be more repressed and said, ‘maybe it is because I am Black...’, I believe it was a Black girl and maybe she thought she was being repressed as a consequence of that, but I don’t know.” (I6 – male, 28 years old)

Formality.

The conception of this sub-theme aims to support the analysis of the relationship between a discriminatory event and the implications related to work or to social dynamics in general (Jones et al., 2017). Thus, all the narratives of events considered discriminatory were grouped in the spectrum of formality, where at one end is interpersonal discrimination and at the other end is formal discrimination.

Interpersonal discrimination manifests itself in a variety of ways, and there have been reports of microaggressions, such as being excluded by colleagues, being taken into poor consideration, receiving negative comments about their ethnicity, culture or origin, or even hearing racial jokes. These incidents occurred in the workplace and seven participants (I1, I2, I3, I4, I7, I9, I11) reported this type of events. Let us note the following examples:

“[...] there was a project where I was alone and had a team leader who should support me, but I always felt left out. He was in the same room, but was always busy, he couldn't help me, and I believe that's not right.” (I9 – female, 24 years old)

“I have felt that people think less of me at work, expected less of me...” (I9 – female, 24 years old)

“There was even a direct confrontation with a colleague who accused me of touching her and we had to go see the surveillance camera footage to see what really happened and it was proved that I didn't touch her, and she was fired. (...) I think, particularly, that it had something to do with my ethnicity.” (I7 – male, 29 years old)

The above quotations were considered examples of interpersonal discrimination, as the participants reported that the treatment they received was different when comparing to the treatment their non-Afro-descendant colleagues received. In the first example, a woman was ignored by the team leader, when her colleagues received his attention and guidance; the second quotation illustrates a situation when the same woman felt the company had little expectations of her when they did not regarding her colleagues; in the third example, a man was accused of sexual harassment by his co-worker, having said that he had always felt that his colleagues treated him differently and that there was a racial separation between them (who were part of the dominant group) and himself (a member of an ethnic minority in Portugal).

Other microaggressions identified were the use of racial jokes. Appealing to the sense of humour in the workplace can have multiple advantages for employees as a group. It can be used as a socialization strategy to demonstrate the new colleagues they are well accepted (which will favour the cohesion of the group or team) (Mak, Liu, & Deneen, 2012), it helps to create a more pleasant work environment, helps to reduce employee status differentials, and has an overall impact on productivity and employee satisfaction levels (Vinton, 1989). Although it seems harmless, racial jokes are something quite personal, and may have several interpretations, depending on the centrality of ethnic identity to the individual that can mediate the interpretations that individuals make of situations (Settles, 2004) but also because of the ambiguity behind the motives of those who made the jokes. The matter of ambiguity was very much addressed when the participants were questioned about whether racial jokes are offensive. The majority said

they did not know for certain if there was malice or racist thoughts behind racial jokes because “*many times it is difficult to understand if there is a negative connection*” (I7 – male, 29 years old), yet other participants considered certain racial jokes to be offensive to themselves and to their ethnic group. In this sense, racial jokes were considered a type of microaggression.

All the participants stated they have heard humorous comments related to their ethnicity in everyday life, but in the working environment it appears to be rarer. Only four participants referred hearing jokes related to their ethnicity at work, however, just two participants (I1, I6) considered certain situations an offense. One of the most striking situations is the following example:

“(...) my colleague had bought two breads with chorizo and it was completely burned, neither did he eat because it was Black, and the supervisor said, ‘but you came from Africa and you’re being nit-picking about food?’ and I said, ‘what is that supposed to mean?’ and he said, ‘no, no, I’m not talking about nothing in specific, it’s just because in Africa there isn’t much food...’.” (I1 – female, 26 years old)

The above quotation reveals how this woman was not pleased to hear a joke about her country of origin. In fact, during the interview this participant revealed to give much importance to her African ethnicity and culture. This is a good example of how centrality of ethnic identity affects the perspectives of individuals. Perhaps another person who did not value his / her ethnicity so much would not pay attention to this event.

The second code, ‘formal discrimination’, included all references to discriminatory events that are directly related to work, for which there are laws, rules and organizational regulations that censure, condemn and conceive appropriate responses to such incidents (Jones et al., 2017). Formal discrimination was often experienced by the participants, and about nine participants (I1, I2, I3, I4, I5, I6, I8, I11, I12) reported events of this nature in the workplace. Some of the examples mentioned include having difficulties in obtaining the job they want and for which they have enough skills and qualifications, as well as several work-related injustices.

In interview I8, the participant claimed that the company where she works selects candidates regardless of their origin, culture, nationality or ethnicity, if they present a

'flawless' Portuguese pronunciation. Thus, she did not feel discriminated against during the recruitment process as she fulfilled this requirement. Although the participant had no difficulty in being placed in that position, it perhaps would not have been that the case if she presented an accent. Non-native speakers are often target of language-focused discrimination, as they are considered less intelligent, less competent, and often face stereotypes and prejudice. This specific example was considered a manifestation of formal discrimination, since the participant states that she probably would not have been hired if she had an African accent. This attitude on the part of the company shows strong indications of formal discrimination, since *"when people reject an accent, they are simultaneously rejecting speakers' identity realized through his or her race, ethnic heritage, national origin, regional affiliation, or economic class"* (Chakraborty, 2017, p. 59).

"(...) they have a pattern of people they want in the company, a certain type of people (...). They want graduates who speak a 'flawless' Portuguese, for example, I don't have an accent... Maybe if I did..." (I8 – female, 25 years old)

The participant also pointed out that she has several Brazilian colleagues whose accent is practically imperceptible, explaining that it is not necessarily a negative aspect, since it is a way for the company to ensure that communication with clients is done without constraints.

Another participant (I2) expressed his frustration for not being able to progress in his career, and to feel that his ethnicity had an influence on it. This circumstance was interpreted by himself as a form of formal discrimination, since his non-Afro-descendant peers were easily and quickly promoted, when he was not:

"I wanted to reach another level and become a supervisor but as I couldn't progress professionally, that took me to explore alternatives... (...) If a coordinator liked an assistant, he would have more possibilities of becoming a supervisor and I have been in the company for 3 and a half years. So long and I wasn't getting any chances of being promoted..." (I2 – male, 23 years old)

Some injustices have also been mentioned, although most participants are reluctant to attribute it to racial issues. Only one participant considered that possibility, as he could be making an unsupported judgment. This apprehension to make an attribution to

discrimination may mirror a coping strategy of minimizing discrimination, used for regulating her emotions, a topic that will be discussed later in the discussion of results.

“Considering race, or colour... maybe. I will not be categorical, but it has crossed my mind, yes. It could have been unconscious, but it seems to me that because of a greater affinity with another person or something like that, my goals were inflated so that I either had more difficulty to get there or not achieve it at all.”
(I5 – male, 38 years old)

Other participant who had been working in the company for one year reported not having a desk or computer to work for weeks when other trainees and employees had, and a performance appraisal system, having received no formal feedback during the time she worked there. Even after reporting the situations there was no urgency from the company to solve it. Another participant mentioned that a colleague and team leader always implicated with his work, regardless of its quality and efficiency which made him feel underappreciated and victim of personal harassment as he has the only one dealing with such a situation.

Subtlety.

This sub-theme reflects the respondents’ perceptions of the subtlety or evidence of potentially discriminatory events. Subtlety arises here related to formality; formal discrimination can be subtle or overt and interpersonal discrimination can be subtle or overt as well, although formal discrimination tends to be evident and interpersonal discrimination tends to be subtle (Jones et al., 2017). Despite their clear correlation, subtlety and formality are not redundant and *“there is value in considering these interrelated dimensions as a set given they more fully capture the construct space of discrimination”* (Jones et al., 2017, p. 9).

After analysing each of the interviews, it was clear that cases of subtle discrimination rather than blatant discrimination are more prevalent. There were reported 17 different situations of subtle discrimination at work, being that three occurrences were not experienced in the first person, but happened to afro descendant colleagues, friends or relatives. Let us note the following examples:

“(...) and I have been in the company for 3 and a half years. So long and I wasn’t getting any chances of being promoted (...)” (I2 – male, 23 years old)

“I sent my curriculum and had no answers, or went to interviews and did not pass, and I am a highly competent person in what I do, in addition, I have a lot of experience in team management and project management, and I speak English and French and I know I have several valences.” (I4 – female, 31 years old)

“(...) basically, I was punished for being too productive.” (I6 – male, 28 years old)

“Every time I talked to a colleague or asked for help there was always some kind of conflict. I had a lot of problems in this regard.” (I11 – female, 23 years old)

These four examples that participants considered to be differential treatment situations demonstrate the lack of clarity regarding intentionality and we cannot confirm whether it was a manifestation of prejudice, even when people sometimes perpetuate unconscious biases. The ambiguity of these three situations led the participants to reflect on the causes for which they received differential treatment. For this reason, these situations illustrate subtly discriminatory behaviour.

In turn, only one participant reported events of blatant discrimination, while working at a restaurant, before getting his bachelor’s degree. He was aware that members of his ethnic group received negative differential treatment:

“(...) when I was working part-time in a restaurant, I felt a huge difference. People are treated despicably just because they are of a different nationality (...)” (I7 – male, 29 years old)

The same participant claims to have been a target of ethnic discrimination when he was accused of having committed sexual harassment against a colleague. He attributed this situation to ethnic discrimination as he noticed that he was treated differently than his White colleagues:

“Because I saw the way she approached me, there was a racial separation” (I7 – male, 29 years old)

Coping Strategies

Table 5

Main Theme 'Coping' and Associated Sub-themes

Coping	Emotion-focused coping
	Problem-focused coping

In general, participants were more likely to turn to emotion-focused coping strategies than to problem-focused coping strategies, that is, when facing a challenging or threatening and potentially stressful racial situation, participants more easily regulated the response to the stressor, than directly regulated the stressor itself. It was also found that all participants used emotion-focused coping strategies at some point, while not all of them used problem-focused coping strategies.

Emotion-focused coping.

Emotion-focused coping is used when there is a lack of control (or poor control) when facing a stressful situation, to regulate emotional stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). For this reason, the participants used mainly strategies such as humour, acceptance, avoidance and withdrawal. Four participants (I5, I7, I8, I10) referred they have turned to humour several times, as illustrated in the following example:

“Many times I even made fun of the situation, many times I knew I would get to a place where I already knew that I would be criticized, and I said in jest ‘I’m sorry, I forgot that I cannot go up to another level, I’m going to stay down here in my level because here is my place’ and whit that I’m on the top.” (I7 – male, 29 years old)

Regarding avoidance and distancing strategies, four participants (I1, I3, I6, I8) reported situations in which they did not use any kind of efforts to confront an unfavourable event, choosing instead to conform - acceptance. Let us note the following examples:

“And I thought, damn, so I’m increasing my productivity, doing others’ work and I’m even earning less? I got less, I couldn’t do anything.” (I6 – male, 28 years old)

“(...) that’s life, life goes on, I won’t get mad about it, it’s not worth the time and energy to get angry because it won’t lead to anything.” (I8 – female, 25 years old)

Others (I1, I2, I4, I6, I9, I11, I12), in different situations, opted to withdraw or avoid them. For example, the excerpt below shows how a participant is quite selective about the companies she applies for, referring that she would not apply for a job at a consulting firm, where she assumes that her African hairstyle would not be accepted. Rather, the participant chooses to apply to international associations or organizations that are more concerned with social responsibility than with their economic and financial performance, which she associates with being less prejudiced.

“[...] if I know that I like to wear my [Afro] hair like this I will not look for a job in a consultancy company, for example [...] I mean, I also think that the fact that I don’t have great reasons to complain about the places where I work, is precisely because I work with people who share the same values and ideals with me” (I4 – female, 31 years old)

The following quotation also presupposes the use of an emotion-focused coping strategy insofar as the participant chose to leave the company where he worked for three and a half years, rather than to trying to overcome the problem he was facing: all his colleagues were promoted while he did not have that opportunity.

“(...) as I was not able to progress professionally, that led me to explore alternatives ... to study a little more, to leave the company and make an agreement to get an internship in this area I graduated, to have other opportunities that I was not having in the company where was.” (I2 – male, 23 years old)

Two other participants (I11, I12) also opted to resign their jobs when feeling they were facing unfair treatment, distancing themselves from the problem, which proved to be emotionally beneficial as they were happier once they remove themselves from the situation.

Only one participant mentioned having resorted to emotional support of friends who are in the same ‘feeling left out’ situation:

And this is something I discuss with my friends from other countries, they also feel like that...but we can all understand. (I3 – male, 30 years old)

It was also common for them to use the strategy of minimizing discrimination, in which participants assume that discrimination is not the explanation for certain events or that perpetrators do not have bad intentions, doing it unconsciously. Some respondents (I1, I7, I8) do not attribute the justification of certain negative events to racial issues:

“The company was exploiting her, treating her below what she deserved, and she really felt she deserved it. [...] I will not say that the company did this to her because she was African, but because she didn’t have good negotiation skills to convince the company that they could pay her that value. The same has not happened to me, for example, because the company also tried, but this is normal, I think it has nothing to do with ethnicity or race, it has simply to do with each person’s negotiation skills.” (I7 – male, 29 years old)

This example shows how a situation in which a Black colleague was exploited and devalued is not associated with racism by the informant, who thus transfers all the responsibility from the company that reproduced this injustice to the woman in question, stating that she has a lack of negotiation power.

The informant I8 also disregards the company that, by incurring in formal discrimination, only contracts Brazilian or Afro-descendant individuals who present a ‘perfect’ Portuguese pronunciation in which the accent of the origin country is imperceptible. Thus, with this example we understand how a minimization of discrimination is made by assuming that perpetrators do not have bad intentions:

“(...) none of us have an accent. I’m not saying it’s bad, but maybe it’s easier for us to understand why, for example, when I have to deal with Angolan clients, I have a hard time to understand what they are saying, even sometimes with my family that lives in Angola. When dealing with the audience, I understand why diction is one of the demands they have.” (I8 – female, 25 years old)

On the other hand, in a situation in which it was difficult for him to achieve the goals defined by the company, the participant stated the following:

“But I want to believe that it was not malicious, it might have been unconscious, yes.” (I5 – male, 38 years old)

Another coping mechanism detected that could be used to protect or mediate one's emotions was to consider that racial jokes are not offensive. As there has been previously stated, resort to humour is a common strategy of socialization (Mak et al., 2012) and a way to make the work environment more relaxed and healthy. Still, jokes directed at an individual alluding to their ethnicity or other personal characteristics may make him /her feel that he / she does not belong or that he /she is not normal. These two feelings were referred to by Sue, Capodilupo and Holder (2008) in an analysis of the dynamics of racial microaggressions and it can be applied in this context. Thus, as previously explained the insertion of racial jokes in the group of microaggressions, we can associate not considering jokes an offense to a coping mechanism focused on the emotions, as a way of minimizing discrimination to protect the self. Four participants (I5, I7, I8, I9, I10) reported not looking at racial jokes as something pejorative because they do not feel that there is an intention to harm, saying that they are simply jokes, as we can understand from the following speeches:

“I don't care much about it, because I think it's a part of my personal characteristics. Maybe if they had done it in the way of offending, maybe I would take it in an evil way. But jokes about my hair, or something else, I have different characteristics and I think it doesn't hurt.” (I9 – female, 24 years old)

“(...) and I realize there are jokes that can offend people, but I don't feel that way... it's not that I don't feel... I don't feel it so much to be upset or outraged, I continue with my normal life.” (I8 – female, 25 years old)

For all participants, racial jokes in everyday life are quite common. From being addressed as 'Blacks', to hearing comments about their skin colour or their country of origin, is something that has happened several times throughout their lives. Even though some do not consider racial jokes offensive or humiliating and devaluate such comments, one participant made a distinction between 'no-evil' jokes and 'racist' jokes, claiming there is a gap between them, plotting a line between the acceptable and the intolerable, which may also be another way of protecting his emotions and prevent worse consequences as emotional suffering:

“I grew up in a Portuguese family, my foster parents are Portuguese, and at that time I lived with jokes about my skin, so for me it is not offensive, but I can understand whether the person is being racist or not.” (I5 – male, 38 years old)

Three other participants (I6, I7, I10), facing an unfavourable situation which was potentially discriminatory, regulated their emotions by focusing on the positive side of the situation, or finding themselves fortunate in relation to other members of their ethnic group, or recognizing that discrimination is a way of testing their limits and to improve to combat this differential treatment:

“Because if I didn’t have these difficulties I probably wouldn’t get where I am because we often need negative inputs to show ourselves that we can do better. And I’ve always seen that as a positive aspect, very honestly. [...] I only took good things from those situations and didn’t see anything bad for me in particular. Obviously, there were colleagues who had weaker minds and did not see things the same way I do and let themselves down, but not me, never.” (I7 – male, 29 years old)

“And I think, at least I’m lucky, even being Black, I’m lucky, other people are not.” (I6 – male, 28 years old)

“The way I see it is, if you’re Black, you try to be the best and there’s no excuse, if you’re the best, people will not stop you, they’ll swallow, and they’ll accept that you’re the best and you will get to the top.” (I6 – male, 28 years old)

“I didn’t have a hard time [getting a job / getting promoted] but I realize it’s a lot harder, but that motivates me because if someone says no... the place I want to go, I’ll get there anyway” (I10 – male, 25 years old)

Problem-focused coping.

Regarding problem-focused coping, seven informants (I1, I2, I4, I8, I9, I11, I12) are aware that racism exists, which can be illustrated by the following examples:

“(...) I have to work hard to get to the same level as my colleagues, and regarding tasks we do the same things, things that are not that difficult, but in fact there is an inequality in this regard. And I feel sorry that ethnicity still counts.” (I2 – male, 23 years old)

“I can tell you that I consider that, given my valences, I’m sure I could be working in other places I wanted, if I had a different skin colour. I really believe that.” (I4 – female, 31 years old)

“Of course, there are racist people and there will always be, but we have to deal with it, if we can increase it, great, fantastic, but there will always be, I do not create that illusion of ‘we are all brothers’ because it will not happen, not soon.” (I8 – female, 25 years old)

“We have all selective humanism, Whites, Blacks, no matter the ethnicity, but we know that historically the scale has always leaned towards Black’s other oppressed ethnic groups’ side ... I thought this would decrease, but people in closed circles continue to be quite racist and you can see, for example, in the Portuguese society, Afro-descendants or African immigrants have been here since a little before April 25, how is it possible that there has been almost 40 years and they remain in the lowest positions of the chain?” (I1 – female, 26 years old)

Although in the last citation noted above the participant does not mention racism in the workplace, it can be deduced that recognizing that it exists in the Portuguese society may be an indication that she is able to recognize it in the workplace. All the other quotations reveal that participants are aware that racism prevails these days and that it continues to affect their ethnic group in everyday life and workplace. Recognition of the problem is a starting point for confronting it when discriminatory events arise, and that is why it was considered a problem-focused coping mechanism. Some participants (I1, I2, I7, I8) have shown an intentional effort to solve the problem, although only one has actually faced the perpetrator, responding to a racial joke:

“(...) I replied ‘so, first of all, Africa is a continent, not a country, so it is not ‘Africa’. And there is little food anywhere, I always ate well since I was a child, but if you want you can eat the bread with chorizo’ (...)” (I1 – female, 26 years old)

Nevertheless, two participants (I11, I12) demonstrated assertiveness in trying to solve the stressor by reporting unfavourable situations to the HR department. The interviewee I12 felt wronged by a colleague and team leader who were constantly criticizing his work even when he considered it to be very positive. Thus, when reporting the situation, he obtained support from the company as well as a solution that he considered reasonable. On the other hand, after reporting several different and recurring potentially discriminatory situations to the HR department, interviewee I11 states that the situation was undervalued by HR, resulting in his resignation.

Another coping strategy identified follows the recognition that racism exists, that is considering racial jokes offensive. Two participants (I1, I3) believe it is unacceptable to allude to ethnicity in a jest way. The following example illustrates this idea, where the participant claims that people should not make jokes about Black people considering racism's history which is marked by persecution, oppression and offenses to this group:

“Because there isn't a physical and explicit racism anymore, people think that a joke doesn't offend (...) people always judge racism from their perspective which doesn't exist because White people didn't suffer a systematic racism in their history. Once I was called 'Black' and I said, 'I have a name', and they said 'yes, but it is the same as calling a White person White', no, no it is not the same thing, because the stigma of 'Black' and 'White' is completely different. I can call someone 'White' and they won't be offended because it hasn't been offending people for generations, but calling 'Black' ...” (I1 – female, 26 years old)

Consequences

Table 6

Main Theme 'Consequences of Ethnic Discrimination' and Associated Sub-themes

Consequences of ethnic discrimination	Psychological distress
	Impact of workplace climate

In this sub-theme were integrated all the mentions related to emotional and psychological well-being results of the perception of discrimination.

Psychological distress.

Feelings of sadness, frustration and embarrassment were mentioned as a result of the microaggressions experienced at work. Seven participants (I1, I2, I3, I4, I7, I11, I12) reported experiencing at least one of these emotions.

“He apologized, but he had yelled so much he wouldn't let me talk. I had never cried at work, but that week I left work and cried, I went to wash my face and went inside again.” (I1 – female, 26 years old)

“(...) there was no way I could get a job, that really got me frustrated (...)” (I2 – male, 23 years old)

“(...) it was proved that I didn’t touch her, and she was fired. I felt really embarrassed.” (I7 – male, 29 years old)

The examples cited above illustrate some examples of emotional consequences that resulted from unfavourable situations at work: a woman who received rude behaviour from her boss, which made her cry; a participant who did his best to enrich his curriculum with courses and trainings and yet he was not selected for any job, which made him frustrated because he could not figure out the reason why; a participant who felt embarrassed and upset after being accused of sexual harassment. All these situations have caused unpleasant feelings or emotions which, if becoming something recurrent, can have serious consequences for mental health. In fact, one participant felt so worn out and upset that he had to resort to sick leave: *“I couldn't take it anymore, couldn't do anything, and I stayed home for 15 days”*, participant I12 mentioned.

Impact of workplace climate.

This sub-theme corresponds to the participant’s considerations of the consequences of the organizational climate. In general, most participants feel completely comfortable at work, however, one of the participants has never felt good and is constantly under pressure to fail and to be reprimanded in an incorrect way, which is not related to ethnicity as the perpetrator treats all employees (Afro-descendants and non-Afro-descendants) the same way. Others have also experienced uncomfortable situations, having one mentioned that the way the company *“handle things make people feel really scared and afraid to try new things”* (I3 – male, 30 years old), something that may not be connected to ethnicity as well, but may lead to negative consequences.

Regarding receiving differential treatment, five participants (I1, I2, I3, I4, I6) reported feeling they need to work more than their peers to prove their worth and value. This is consistent with Wyatt and Silvester’s (2015) study whose results showed that Blacks and members of other ethnic minorities find it more difficult to access informal organizational processes, therefore depend more on formal processes, such as working more and longer to get recognition. The two following examples stood out as the participants associated this inequality with racial issues:

“I always felt it [having to work more than others], and this is awful because it’s not something you would like to feel or... say, right? It shouldn’t be this way. And just thinking about it, I think it is revealing that there is such a need to work more.” (I4 – female, 31 years old)

“(...) it turns out to be better, although it is a constant struggle, I have to work hard to get to the same level as my colleagues, and regarding tasks we do the same things, things that are not that difficult, but in fact there is an inequality in this regard. And I feel sorry that ethnicity still counts. Perhaps who looks at me, at my appearance might think ‘hum...I doubt he can have good professional skills to work in this area’, but then in practice I do deliver.” (I2 – male, 23 years old)

Although this last excerpt demonstrates the interviewee’s awareness of ethnic discrimination in the workplace, when I asked him about the company’s response to discriminatory situations, he responded the following:

“I think the company would repudiate those situations. I believe so, maybe there would be disciplinary sanctions, I assume that it would act strongly in that regard.” (I2 – male, 23 years old)

It is interesting to reflect on this participant’s realization that the company would certainly condemn discriminatory attitudes when, in fact, the company itself perpetuates them in the form of formal discrimination.

HRM practices

Table 7

Main Theme ‘HRM Practices’ and Associated Sub-themes

HRM practices	Recruitment and selection
	Development and promotion
	Diversity and inclusion
	Retention

The creation of this main theme resulted from the participants’ perspectives on Human Resource Management practices in the companies where they work / worked, the implementation or non-implementation of practices, as well as aspects to be improved to

create an inclusive environment for this ethnic minority. Organizational practices play an important role in preventing and punishing discrimination in the workplace and HRM has the power to promote practices to maintain a healthy, inviting and comfortable environment for all employees, regardless of their personal characteristics. Thus, there will be analysed the perceptions about the recruitment and selection process, development and promotion, diversity and inclusion, e retention practices.

Recruitment and selection.

The objective would be to understand if, in the participants' understanding, recruitment and selection in the current or past organizations is / was done according to a specific profile, or whether it is a welcoming process for different ethnicities and nationalities.

Six participants (I2, I3, I6, I10, I11, I12) mentioned that the company where they work today values competences regardless of ethnicity or nationality, as can be seen from the following example:

“I think they didn't have it [diversity] as a goal, I think that here in Portugal they did not have that objective like they do in other countries like London or France, but I think if you had the skills they would recruit you, there was no need to have a certain skin colour, it was more about your abilities.” (I6 – male, 28 years old)

However, one participant recognizes that ethnicity or nationality may influence the selection of a candidate in Portugal:

“[...] I think that in recruitment this can often influence whether or not you are contacted. Name, address, age, are things that I think should be removed. You apply, and you get a number, people get the number, choose you because they like your curriculum and your telephone number and e-mail appear, maybe this way people have higher possibilities. You take away the photo and the name bias. [...] Maybe if you have a different nationality, they cut you off, if you have a strange name, they cut you off [...] They don't know how the person works, I think they sin a lot.” (I6 – male, 28 years old)

Even though most of these organizations are predominantly 'White' with no cultural diversity in top management, only four participants (I6, I8, I9, I11) mentioned the need for companies to recruit a more diverse workforce. One participant also stated that in the

company where she works, they are prudent in hiring Afro-descendant employees, with the fear of Africanizing the clinic and making it an uninviting place for the dominant group, which the clinic's management considers having more economic power:

“At the reception we have my cousin who is Black and another girl who is White. When we recruit, we are careful not to recruit more Black people, precisely in order not to Africanize the clinic.” (I4 – female, 31 years old)

One woman expressed concern about the cultural homogeneity of the organizations and alerted to dynamization strategies to attract ethnic minorities:

“I am not in favour of racial quotas, because if the person gets the job it must be because of his / her qualifications, not because he / she has the nationality X, to look well. But maybe they should try to dynamize recruitment to reach to different types of people.” (I8 – female, 25 years old)

Although this woman claims to be against the imposition of racial ‘quotas’ on companies to hire individuals from ethnic minorities, she considers a diverse and inclusive work environment important, however, people should be recruited because they are competent professionals, and not because there is an obligation. Another participant alerts to the fact that the company is not recruiting enough members of minority groups and gives an alternative to the racial ‘quotas’:

“If I was selected and knew they wanted to recruit 2% of Blacks, I would think I would have been selected for that reason, and other people might know that I was selected because of the percentage and they would not give me any value. I believe that, instead, 2% of the respondents should have to be from specific ethnic groups. Maybe it would be much better than recruiting a percentage, because you're not recruiting for the skills there, you're recruiting for ethnicity and colour and it doesn't make sense.” (I6 – male, 28 years old)

In turn, another participant believes that organizations recruit ethnic minorities not because they value a diversified work environment, but because there is a shortage of labour:

“IT has been growing a lot in the past years, and even if companies don't like a certain ethnicity, the shortage of labour would make companies seek people

regardless of ethnicity. So, at this point it's a bit suspicious to say, 'okay, companies are looking for whoever because they don't really care about race and ethnicity', it's a bit early to say that, because there's a shortage of manpower in the Marketplace." (I7 – male, 29 years old)

Development and promotion.

This topic aims to understand participants' perceptions on whether employees of different ethnicities are encouraged to progress in their careers and whether injustices occur in career development plans.

Four participants (I1, I2, I6, I11) felt that it was difficult to ascend in the company's hierarchical system, noting that higher positions are filled by White Portuguese, something they consider an injustice:

"The higher you go in the hierarchical chain you see there is no one [Black]. There are no seniors, I won't go up any higher, I don't think there are any seniors. There are no seniors, there are no managers, there are no directors, much less partners, but neither in the company in Angola, there are no Black directors, they are all White, Portuguese, in Angola..." (I1 – female, 26 years old)

"About race there is no diversity. I happen to comment with my colleagues, 'I find it very strange that there are no Black supervisors, maybe they are waiting for me', making a joke." (I2 – male, 23 years old)

One of the participants (I3) noted that there are no restrictions for ethnic minority members to reach higher positions in the company, as long as they speak Portuguese, since meetings, presentations and other organizational activities are held in that language. Other participants (I5, I10, I12) stated that all employees, including Afro-descendants, have a career development plan and are encouraged to apply for several national or international functions. In general, these participants consider that there is equality between the Portuguese White workers and Afro-descendants in terms of career development and hierarchical system ascension, being the academic qualifications and technical skills an essential element, regardless of physical characteristics.

Diversity and inclusion.

This code includes the participants' perspectives on diversity management, equality, and inclusion in the companies where they work.

About nine participants (I2, I3, I5, I7, I8, I9, I10, I11, I12) consider that all employees are respected and treated equally regardless of ethnicity or other personal differences:

“Yes, I see equality between people, gender, cultures. It is really equality, I see no difference at all, there is always a great respect for personal culture, as well as for us regarding corporate culture, there is always a good balance.” (I7 – male, 29 years old)

This participant stated that there is undoubtedly equality between all workers, with great respect for each one's culture. However, there is an inconsistency in his narrative, which emerged later during the interview:

“I would say that there is no discrimination, but I think people are treated differently. (...) I have a colleague who has been my colleague for almost 2 and she resigned, (...) the company was exploiting her, treating her below what she deserved [...]” (I7 – male, 29 years old)

When asked about equality in general in the current company, the participant sustains that there is undoubtedly, however, when asked about discrimination in the current company, although mentioning that it does not exist, he told an episode that could be an example of formal discrimination. Nevertheless, the participant disclaims the company of any discriminatory attitude, justifying the outcome of the event due to the lack of his colleague's negotiation skills, blaming her in a certain way.

Similarly, another participant (I2) stated that all employees receive the same treatment, even though in another instance he mentioned that he never got to be promoted, unlike his colleagues, due to the fact that there is favouritism and selective promotion, and assuming ethnicity may play a role when promoting an employee, which is characterized as institutional bias:

“Because the evaluation didn't consider competences, in my opinion, they should look at professional competences and then value people, and I started to see that it was personal valuation instead. If a coordinator liked an assistant, he would

have more possibilities of becoming a supervisor and I have been in the company for 3 and a half years. So long and I wasn't getting any chances of being promoted... I need to go somewhere else." (I2 – male, 23 years old)

Other participants (I1, I2, I6, I7) stated that there is unequal treatment regarding Afro-descendant employees:

"I don't know if it's on purpose, but most of the Blacks there (there are about 6) are in the Africa TAX area, I don't know if it's because they specifically learned about Africa TAX or if the company simply thought they would be better off in Africa TAX... because Africa TAX is a table with Blacks only. [...] I don't know what's the reason for their selection to that position, if it was a matter of thinking their colour works better there or if it was their skills or courses they took, I do not know..." (I1 – female, 26 years old)

"(...) my colleagues used to say, 'what you went through, others would not stand' and I think so. Because when I got in they were much tougher with me than later with my colleagues." (I6 – male, 28 years old)

About seven participants (I1, I3, I6, I7, I8, I9, I11) mentioned that their work environments are not diversified in terms of nationalities, cultures and ethnicities, and only two (I3, I12) stated that there are programs or initiatives that promote / foster diversity and support staff during the integration process, especially people of different nationalities or cultures. While the overall picture is not the most favourable for diversity, in terms of the workforce, initiatives that encourage multi-ethnic groups, and regarding suppressing homogeneity at work and moving towards reducing inequalities at work, some participants do not see it as a point of improvement. In fact, they believe that it is not necessary because the companies where they work already value diversity, even though most do not have a diversified workforce and do not organize initiatives that combat the disadvantages among workers. On the other hand, a few participants believe that the company where they work should be more inclusive towards other nationalities / ethnicities and value a diverse workforce as people can learn from different cultures and perspectives, and one even referred that the recruitment and selection system should be more appealing to ethnic minorities. One participant stated that companies should look beyond appearances *"because if companies simply look at competences and look for what they really need within the organization, I think everyone would be happier; the company*

would be happier because it would have competent people and people would be happier because the company cares” (I7 – male, 29 years old).

Concerning the attitudes / responses of the companies where they currently work in relation to discriminatory events, eight participants (I2, I3, I4, I5, I7, I8, I10, I12) consider that the companies condemn discrimination and would take appropriate action against any circumstances. In contrast, the remaining participants (I1, I6, I9, I11) consider that discriminatory events would not be taken very seriously at their companies.

Note the following example:

“In a radical way, the board, if that were to be confirmed, would act radically. Because the company is based on very strong principles and is part of it ‘to be open’ - it is one of our slogans, if there was a prejudiced episode, one could be in a bad situation, yes.” (I5 – male, 38 years old)

This participant indicates that the company where he works would act ‘radically’ if events of a discriminatory nature occurred. It should be noted that the same participant assumed the possibility of racial motivations by saying that his goals were *“inflated so that I either had more difficulty to get there or not achieve it at all”*, which demonstrates an inconsistency in his perception of discrimination.

Like the example mentioned above, situations of the same nature occurred with other participants. Although they believe that the company would strongly act against ethnic discrimination, four (I2, I3, I5, I8) out of the eight individuals reported situations of subtle discrimination in the current job, which were not detected or were undervalued. One possible reason for this may be the difficulty in recognizing subtle discriminatory events that often go unnoticed. However, these situations were not reported, and consequently there was no response from the company, thus reflecting only the impressions of the participants. In some cases, even if people report unfair treatment, the HR department does not take into account the employees’ complaint, an issue that might lead to turnover, as it will be explained in the following section.

Retention.

According to Hom, Roberson and Ellis (2008), ethnic minorities have lower retention rates than the dominant group, which is related to the difficulties of socialization of the company, such as not assigning significant projects or providing deficient guidance to members of these groups, among other reasons, which leads them to leave the company. Another reason is because in some cases complaints are not considered. For example, one participant reported several unfair or differential treatment situations, which were not taken into consideration by the HR department and the line manager, which led the individual to leave the company:

“(...) when I reported a situation, it didn't matter and it is hard to talk, if we also feel that they don't find it important and are not able to help... it was complicated.” (I11 – female, 23 years old)

The HR department is responsible to attend to the employees' needs and concerns which sometimes is not the case. Organizations have the power to adjust the processes of socialization to match the expectations of the individuals, motivating them to stay. This topic ('Retention') addresses participants' perceptions on company retention strategies as well as plans to implement to improve Afro-descendant's employee experience. All participants think that a healthy work environment is crucial, and all but two considered their workplace favourable:

“We are not treated with respect, that's the reason why a lot of people left. That's the only reason.” (I1 – female, 26 years old)

This participant mentioned several moments in which the company's partner did not adopt an appropriate position, which led to a great turnover in the company, as the employees did not feel respected. Other participant (I11) referred that the company is not used to receiving new employees. Most of the employees have been there for over 15 years and as it is unusual for interns to enter, there is a separation and an uninviting environment, one of the reasons that led the participant to resign. In the case of another interviewee, even though he considered that the company has a positive environment, he mentioned that sometimes the way supervisors face employee failures causes an environment of fear to arise:

“(...) the way they handle things make people feel really scared and afraid to try new things. It should be a ‘feel safe’ environment. So, I think that’s one thing that needs to be worked on.” (I3 – male, 30 years old)

In general, in what concerns retention practices, participants mentioned the importance of a good communication, a warm and healthy work environment, career progression opportunities, and especially a workplace where a culture of fear is not cultivated, where they are free to try new things, make mistakes and learn from it without fear of unjustified consequences.

DISCUSSION

During this chapter, the meanings of the main themes will be discussed, relating them to the research question and bridging the collected data to the relevant bibliography. The analysis of the twelve interviews led to the identification of four main themes: ‘perception of discrimination’, ‘coping strategies’, ‘consequences of ethnic discrimination’ and ‘HRM practices’. These main themes reflect the interviewees’ perceptions on their workplace experiences as a result of their ethnicity and are fundamental to understand and explain the complexity of workplace ethnic discrimination.

This study’s relevance comes from its contribution to reflect on issues like equality, inclusion, and modern discrimination in organizations. The findings have significant implications for organizations and HR practitioners. The results emphasize how crucial it is for HR practitioners and organizations to assume responsibility to act ethically and inclusively and promote diversity as well as assure equal opportunities to all employees and manage diversity in a way that fights discrimination in the workplace. It is important for HR practitioners to acknowledge the barriers Afro-descendants face in the workplace and the psychological, emotional, and physical impact they cause. Organizations should prioritize creating and maintaining a fair, egalitarian, and inclusive working environment as well as preventing and act against discriminatory events. Another practical implication of this study stems from its focus on HRM practices, as these are used in all organizations and can offer a practical solution to reduce inequalities between dominant group and ethnic minorities. Given the fact that this study explores discrimination in Portuguese

organizations from the perspective of Afro-descendant men and women, it recalls the urgency to review formal mechanisms to respond to complaints of individuals who experience discrimination to assure these issues are dealt with in an unbiased way. Some theoretical implications of this study stem from increasing the understanding about the experience of this ethnic minority in the Portuguese labour context. It advances the literature by giving voice to Afro-descendant employees in Portugal and examining how they perceive their work experiences, elucidating how they perceive, cope, and are affected emotionally, psychologically and physically by workplace discrimination. There is still a need to expand the knowledge about ethnic discrimination in Portuguese workplaces.

The originality of this study comes from filling a gap in the literature, since no qualitative study of this scope where Afro-descendants' perceptions on discrimination are studied was carried out in Portugal, as well as there is a lack of studies on high educated afro-descendants. In addition, this study also focuses on Human Resource Management practices conducted in organizations employing participants from their perspectives on the functioning, integrity and fairness of these practices, including recruitment and selection, development and promotion, diversity and inclusion, and retention practices. In the researcher's knowledge, this study is pioneering in its focus on the perspectives of Afro-descendants in the workplace with the incorporation of the HRM practices dimension.

In order to analyse the perceptions of discrimination, it was used the conceptualization of Jones, Arena, Nittrouer, Alonso and Lindsey (2017) who suggest that in order to analyse and define discrimination one must consider three dimensions where discriminatory situations vary: subtlety, formality and intentionality. In the context of intentionality, the results show that in some potentially discriminatory situations participants recognize that prejudice influences the behaviour of the perpetrator and that in other cases the situation is too subjective to attribute a cause to certain negative events. About half of the participants attributed unfavourable work situations to ethnic discrimination. This is because stigmatized groups, such as Afro-descendants in Portugal, experience obvious discriminatory attitudes towards them, are often subject to prejudice, and are therefore aware of the social stigma that affects individuals in their group (Major et al., 2002). Still, the attribution to discrimination depends on two factors: one's ethnic identity and unfair treatment of one's group compared to other groups (Major et al., 2002). If any of these

factors is not present, then it is possible that the individual does not perceive the situation as discriminatory. A few participants have suspected of racial motivations in work situations that have disadvantaged them in some way, however, because of the ambiguity involved, they do not attribute them to discrimination. Ambiguity hinders the attribution to discrimination and different individuals may have different interpretations of the same situation (Major et al., 2002), but ethnic identity has an important role here, since it guides the perceptions of minorities in the face of discrimination (Kong & Jolly, 2016), depending on the level of importance that individuals attach to their individual identities (Settles, 2004). Studies have shown that, in general, stigmatized groups are sensitive to situations where the identity of the group is highlighted and also situations where the possibility of injustice is more evident (Major et al., 2002). An individual with a strong ethnic identity is more sensitive and more alert to discrimination because he / she is more aware of the social status of his / her group and therefore more reactive to subtle or ambiguous situations (Operario & Fiske, 2001). On the other hand, individuals with a weak ethnic identity, when exposed to a very ambiguous bias situation, tend to minimize the potential for racism, and individuals with a strong ethnic identity exposed to the same situation tend to have stronger negative reactions (Operario & Fiske, 2001). The question that now emerges is: in the case of the present study, do the participants who attributed negative situations to discrimination have a stronger ethnic identity and group conscience than the participants who are undecided about assuming discrimination as an effective explanation? Concerning one of the participants, she demonstrated a centrality of her ethnic identity, a conclusion that can be drawn from her speech calling for the union of ethnic minorities to combat white privilege, from her assertive responses to discriminatory events not only at work but in daily life, and from her pro-diversity position about workplaces. Concerning another interview, the participant stated that she will not change her African hairstyle for a job, instead she will only apply to jobs where she knows her ethnicity and culture will be respected and value. This participant demonstrates giving importance to her African culture, not wanting to give it up, and only seeks employment in places where she knows that her cultural characteristics will be accepted, since she is not willing to give up something that characterizes her. We can recognize this as a trace of her ethnic identity and claim that it is something that matters to her. We can notice here a concordance with the studies mentioned above. Regarding a different interview, the participant referred to the time when he was taking his degree. In his view, the direction of the university produced a racist mentality, perpetuating several

discriminatory practices against its ethnic group. Faced with this situation, he started what he called a 'revolution' with his Afro-descendant colleagues, which led to the achievement of some fundamental rights on an equal footing. This participant's commitment to mobilizing his African colleagues, leading the so-called 'revolution', demonstrates social awareness and understanding of the social status of his group as a stigmatized group, which is relevant to establish his identification with this same group. In two interviews, the results were not conclusive enough to affirm or deny the relevance of ethnic identity to the self. About a few participants who stated that they considered the possibility of racial motivations behind unfavourable situations for themselves, are they less sensitive to discriminatory situations because they have a weak ethnic identity? Let us look at a few examples mentioned in the interviews, which may help to answer this question. In one interview, the participant reported having been adopted by a Portuguese family, who raised him to adulthood. Children adopted by parents of different cultures or ethnicities tend to be similar with their family members and may even relinquish any similarity with other individuals of their group. Trans-racial adoptions require efforts by the adoptive family to support and positively orient the child to their ethnic group, demonstrating acceptance of group members, maintaining an ethnically mixed environment, and encouraging socialization with other individuals in the same group. Otherwise children may minimize the importance of their racial identity (McRoy, Zurcher, Lauderdale, & Anderson, 1984). This may be a valid explanation to why this participant is not so sensitive to manifestations of discrimination. As he was adopted by White parents, his racial identity may not have developed so much, or may have been taken in lesser consideration, eventually becoming less central to the self. The participant also mentioned that his father used to make many jokes about his colour, with the purpose of preparing him for the future at school and work. The experiences of racism result in the social construction of Blacks as inferior and collide with the ethnic identity of Blacks (Tizard & Phoenix, 1989). It may be suggested that because his father adopted a 'tough love' position to protect him from racism may have affected the process of developing his ethnic identity, ending up losing relevance, while other social identities added importance.

Another participant who was reluctant to attribute discrimination to a situation because of its ambiguity, mentioned that he had adapted himself to the Portuguese culture since he moved to Portugal at 6 years old and now considers himself Portuguese. This participant stated that it was only in adulthood that he got more involved with the African

Culture, when he lived in England. Ethnic identity's development also passes through the personal exploration of ethnicity, which results from positive and significant experiences that awakens the consciousness of one's the ethnic group. This process involves an emersion in one's culture through activities such as socializing with people, participating in cultural events, among others (Phinney, 1990). At school he had no Black friends and he had never socialized much with individuals of his ethnic group, admitting that he did not have much involvement with the African culture until he was living in England. This result is consistent with Phinney's (1990) theory, since the lack of contact with individuals of the same group did not allow the development of a strong ethnic identity. We can then conclude that, according to the cited literature, the relevance of ethnic identity and the social conscience of individuals influenced their perception and attribution to discrimination.

Other participant was also undecided regarding the attribution of discrimination in the face of high ambiguity. There is no relevant evidence to support a strong or weak self-identification with her ethnic group, so we cannot consider this variable. However, according to Major and colleagues (2002), the perception and attribution to discrimination depends both on ethnic identity and the unfair treatment of its group compared to other groups. According to the authors, when any of these factors are not present, the individual will hardly attribute discrimination to the situation (Major et al., 2002). In this case, the participant mentioned that the cultural diversity in the company was limited and had no Afro descendant employees. Faced with several injustices, such as not being helped by colleagues when asking for support or not providing her a desk to work on, she started to think about whether this was race-related or if the employees are not used to have new colleagues. Thus, as this was a highly ambiguous situation and she did not have a comparative means of treatment directed at her group compared to the dominant group, the participant did not attribute this unfair treatment to race-based explanations.

Another dimension of the discrimination explored was formality, which concerns the relationship between a discriminatory event and the implications related to work or to social dynamics in general (Jones et al., 2017). In formality's spectrum emerges at one end interpersonal discrimination and at the other end formal discrimination. In this study, all forms of unequal treatment mentioned by the participants were considered, even if they appeared insignificant, since attention to evident discriminatory acts is not enough to analyse the experiences of ethnic minorities at work at a time when "*the social and*

political landscape shifts toward newer forms of racism and discrimination” (Deitch et al., 2003, p. 1300). Several manifestations of differential treatment and injustices were identified towards the participants, reflecting a subtle type of discrimination. These results of injustices towards Afro-descendants who participated in this study were conceptualized as discrimination at work, varying between interpersonal discrimination and formal discrimination, depending on their relation and implications with work or social dynamics. Also, not all these situations were attributed to discrimination by the participants because it was not easily recognized (as discussed above). The analysis showed that prejudice and ethnic discrimination manifested itself more subtly than flagrantly. There were 17 different situations of subtle discrimination in the workplace, and three occurrences were not felt in the first person, but happened to colleagues, friends or relatives. Most participants did not consider these events to be biased, attributing the reasons to other causes or just wandering about possible reasons for their differential treatment. The data revealed that two individuals have felt excluded by colleagues, one felt to be held in disregard, two heard racial jokes, and one was accused of sexual harassment. These microaggressions and racism in daily life contribute to the maintenance of institutional racism, perpetuated by practices and policies. Even if one deduces that action plans, trainings, equality policies and a system based on meritocracy will guarantee equality, the reality is that either it is not put into practice or it will not end up solving the problems and the status quo remains (Lander & Santoro, 2017), and discriminatory practices continue to be perpetuated in organizations under a cover-up. Lander & Santoro (2017) state that the *“significant gap between policy and practice is sustained through the microaggressions and invalidations that occur daily”* (Lander & Santoro, 2017, p. 1017), being supported by structural racism, which shapes narratives about disparities (Hardeman et al., 2016). In the context of discrimination directly related to work, the results showed that some participants faced obstacles in the workplace in the form of formal discrimination. Formal discrimination episodes have been reported by nine participants, such as not being able to get the job they ambition and for which they have qualifications and skills, as well as a few injustices such as being penalized in prizes or being given difficult-to-reach objectives. Not all participants associated these situations with discrimination, but when making a comparison with their non-Afro descendant colleagues, they realized that they received differential treatment. Ruggiero and Taylor (1997) established that when discrimination is ambiguous, minorities tend to minimize discrimination. The results were consistent with this finding, since the most

used coping strategies to deal with these injustices at work were focused on emotions, namely, avoidance and distancing, minimization of discrimination, and acceptance, which does not promote the resolution of the problem.

It is important to note that participants may not have reported all incidents, omitting those they consider to be of minor importance or do not attribute to discrimination (Deitch et al., 2003), even though the script was constructed in a subtle and non-intrusive way, avoiding biasing participants' answers and aiming to access their real understandings about differential treatment and discrimination. In everyday life, although is not the focus of this study, all participants experience manifestations of racism, even if they do not attribute certain attitudes and behaviours to discrimination. It should also be noted that the results showed that both men and women received microaggression, and there was insufficient evidence found in this study to affirm gender inequalities in this sense, as other studies have shown (e.g.: Basford, Offermann, & Behrend, 2014).

Subtle discrimination has been most clearly observed in participants' experiences and it is important to realize the danger behind attitudes that are difficult to detect, address and solve. Discrimination of this kind is highly threatening to the well-being of individuals as people and as employees, since organizational functioning can also be affected (Jones et al., 2017). The picture becomes even bleaker if these minor injustices occur frequently, which was the case, as the results showed strong evidence that participants in this study have experienced pervasive and recurrent discrimination in the form of work-related injuries and injustices. The literature demonstrates that as much as these incidents are considered minor they cannot be taken lightly because of the cumulative effect that might translate into negative results for health and well-being of the targets (Deitch et al., 2003), and although in this study the data did not reveal serious consequences (as depression or burnout), this does not mean that it does not happen in the medium to long term. In addition, as already mentioned, there are organizational consequences, since being subjected to this type of microaggression and injustice on a daily basis can lead to lack of commitment, lack of job engagement and absenteeism (Deitch et al., 2003). But before the consequences of the results are explored, a review will be made of the most commonly used coping strategies, which in turn can influence the consequences of discrimination. This study's results have shown that regarding Afro-descendants' coping strategies in face of discriminatory situations at work, there are varied ways of dealing with a potentially stressful situation to try to convert it into something positive. Participants were more likely to resort to coping strategies focused on their emotions, such as turning to

humour, seeking emotional support, acceptance, distancing, minimization of discrimination, and positive reappraisal. The use of this type of strategies results from the feeling of lack of control in the face of a stressful situation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and all twelve participants used this type of coping strategies at a certain time. It is also important to highlight that of all types of emotion-focused coping, it was more recurrent in the first place the use of strategies of avoidance and distancing, secondly the use of the strategy of minimization of discrimination, and thirdly the use of acceptance and positive reappraisal. This result is consistent with Ruggiero, Taylor e Lydon's (1997) study where they state that members of disadvantaged groups tend to use more avoidance and distancing strategies and minimization of discrimination, especially in ambiguous situations. For most participants, avoiding or distancing themselves from the source of stress seems to be the way they use to protect themselves from racism, avoiding people, jobs or situations. This appears to be a strategy of adaptation to a harmful environment, but may have a psychological and emotional impact contrary to expectations, as there may be a lack of freedom, autonomy, job satisfaction and well-being when avoiding situations, local jobs or people (Mellor, 2004). However, the results obtained were not consistent with Mellor's (2004) study, since participants who have incurred avoidance and distancing attitudes such as changing jobs or avoiding certain companies, have revealed feeling good and confident in their skin and in their jobs.

Following the most used strategies, is the minimization of discrimination, used by ethnic minorities to mitigate the effects of the pitiful reality that faces (Branscombe et al., 1999), protecting themselves from a feeling of 'self-inadequacy' (Kong & Jolly, 2016). It was noted by participants that perpetrators are not malicious or that a situation of potential ethnic discrimination was unrelated to racial issues. By opting to devalue certain negative attitudes or social situations, individuals are also opting to "*selectively devalue the unimportant aspects of the self and selectively value the important aspects of the self, thereby minimizing the threat to the important aspects of the self*" (Kong & Jolly, 2016, p. 3). Another defence strategy found is to conform to the discrimination, a result of feeling that little or nothing can be done to change this type of situation. Accepting injustices, differential treatment and biased attitudes instead of taking action against it helps individuals protect their self-esteem and deprive themselves of unnecessary and avoidable negative feelings while saving their psychological energy (Mellor, 2004). With the same objective, the reinterpretation of the event was also a used strategy, in this case considering the positive side of the situation perceived as discriminatory to limit its power

over the individual (Mellor, 2004). There was a 'distortion' of the events on the part of the participants of this study, considering discrimination an incentive for improvement to prove their value, or also considering themselves lucky in relation to other Afro-descendants, which was favourable for the well-being.

The second group of ways to cope with discrimination was the use of problem-focused strategies. Problem-focused coping consists of taking actions for the purpose of solving the problem or source of stress, rearranging or restructuring thoughts or negative assessments (cognitive reorganization), or minimizing the effects of the problem (Mellor, 2004). When feeling determination to solve the problem, the individual can obtain better psychological outcomes, than if he used coping strategies focused on emotions (Mellor, 2004). The latter, in turn, are more associated with increased suffering, since emotions can be managed at that time, but the stressor remains active, which may lead to future problems because of an 'accumulation' of negative events. The problem-focused coping strategies used were to recognize that racism still prevails and to demonstrate determination to address discriminatory attitudes. Seven participants understand that racism is real and is perpetuated daily in both their daily life and at work, realizing how they are adversely affected in terms of professional opportunities, yet not all have demonstrated determination to confront or educate perpetrators and claim the right to equality, which can result in feelings of frustration or anger (Mellor, 2004). This occurred in the case of a participant who acknowledged that he could not progress in his career because of his ethnicity. On the other hand, four participants indicated an intention to act against experiences of racism, stating that they would respond to the perpetrators or report the unfavourable situation. However, only one woman applied the theory in practice, facing a discrimination situation at work. Since the results showed that there is a great distance between 'to say' and 'to do', we cannot say that using these specific problem-focused coping mechanisms have been effectively beneficial to the participants. In fact, recognizing that racism exists, but doing nothing about it, has caused feelings of sadness and frustration. On the other hand, the emotion-focused coping strategy of acceptance also led to the same feelings.

The literature is extensive about the harm to the individual on a psychological, emotional, and physical level. Receiving negative differential treatment can cause disturbances in psychological well-being, especially if this treatment is perceived as a discriminatory practice (Schmitt et al., 2014). Results showed that seven participants experienced feelings of sadness, frustration or embarrassment as a result of work-related

microaggressions, but they were not conclusive enough to say whether it is more beneficial to use strategies focused on the emotions or on the problem to deal with discrimination. As previously mentioned, these microaggressions are recurrent in the work context of the participants, being even more frequent in daily life. Schmitt and colleagues (2014) have shown that the consequences for the individual may be more severe when discriminatory events occur frequently and in different life contexts as compared to isolated discriminatory acts. Although each small event does not appear to be relevant, being recurrent creates a cumulative impact detrimental to the well-being of employees (Deitch et al., 2003). Still, the majority said they felt completely comfortable in the workplace, but two participants reported feeling uncomfortable daily because of the constant pressure and fear of failing, as they would be wrongly and unfairly reprimanded because their bosses do not handle mistakes correctly. It is important to note that the average seniority of the participants does not reach two years, and only one participant has been in the current company for five years. This may be a reason to explain why there are no visible serious consequences of subtle discrimination they have suffered; whose impact is greater after an accumulation of situations. In addition, studies have shown that individuals who suffered discrimination of this type had more negative personal and organizational results than reported incidents of flagrant discrimination (Schneider et al., 2000). Although the emotional and psychological impact on the participants may seem insignificant, it may translate into several future psychological disorders such as anxiety, depression, burnout, stress and psychological distress (Williams & Mohammed, 2009) and lead to harmful behaviours such as the use of alcohol, tobacco and other substances, hypertension and other cardiovascular diseases (Cheung et al., 2016).

HRM practices play a key role in limiting discrimination in organizations and in providing equal opportunity and equal treatment to all employees by establishing formalized criteria for policies and practices to eliminate prejudice (Dipboye & Colella, 2013). There will now be discussed elements of HRM practices in the organizations that employ the participants of this study, analysing whether they promote and maintain a healthy, inviting and comfortable environment for all employees, regardless of their personal characteristics, in terms of recruitment and selection, development and promotion, diversity management and inclusion and retention practices. Acker (2006) conceptualizes that in all organizations there are inequality regimes, that is, *“loosely interrelated*

practices, processes, actions, and meanings that result in and maintain class, gender, and racial inequalities within particular organizations” (Acker, 2006, p. 238). The several relationships of inequality can be found, for example, in the recruitment and selection process, in promotion opportunities, job security, benefits and compensation, among others, and HRM practices have an important role in regulating the level of discrimination or unequal treatment in companies (Dobusch, 2014). The results showed that in the process of recruitment and selection, while some organizations that employ the participants value personal competences regardless of ethnicity, others recruit more frequently ‘White’ Portuguese, which is reflected in the homogeneity of these organizations, described by the informants. This shows that ethnicity might still have a considerable weight in the hiring decision, and although several participants do not value it, a minority showed concern in that regard. Ethnic identity can influence this perspective insofar as individual behaviour in a given situation is different if the person thinks only about the self or about the collective, according to the social identity theory (Major et al., 2002). Thus, individuals who have a collective conscience reveal a greater concern in the best interests of their group. In general, the participants did not demonstrate to look at the lack of recruitment of other Afro-descendants or ethnic minorities as a problem, devaluing it. Only a few participants, who have strong evidence of a centrality of ethnic identity to the self, consider that ethnicity affects the selection of a candidate and that the company where they work should engage other nationalities and ethnicities. Participants suggested some ways to avoid bias in recruitment such as the omission of certain personal data in the *curriculum* such as name, nationality, and address, which may be the reason for not hiring someone. One participant also suggested that new innovative strategies for attracting candidates from other ethnic groups and a streamlining of the recruitment process should be done. In general, the participants did not comment on the controversial issue of racial quotas - an affirmative action to require a minimum presence of members of ethnic minorities in public and private listed companies. Two participants alluded to this subject, which has been the subject of public debate, because there is a shortage of public policies to combat racism. One of them was against this system of job vacancies’ reservation, because all employees should be recruited for their competencies and skills regardless of ethnicity or nationality but recognizes that work environments must be culturally diversified. Not only for this argument but also throughout the interview, it was clear that the participant acknowledges that there are inequalities between the dominant group and ethnic minorities, yet we realize that she does not see the imposition of racial

quotas as the solution to combat them. Another participant considers that even if companies intend to favour the dominant group, they cannot do so due to the shortage of labour in the market. Career trajectories are associated with factors such as gender, ethnicity and class (Kulich & Ryan, 2017), which will be discussed next. According Cook and Glass, (2013), ethnic minorities are generally underrepresented in leadership positions, which is due to invisible barriers hindering upward mobility. Regardless of education and work experience, ethnic minorities are less likely to occupy leadership positions compared to the dominant group. Barriers include ethnic discrimination and prejudice, racial tokenism, lack of orientation and exclusion from social networks (Cook & Glass, 2013). When members of ethnic groups or women are able to ascend in their careers, they are more likely to be placed in difficult, precarious, unstable and risky professional situations than White men. The individual is thus more exposed to the risk of failure, which can lead to psychological distress. This phenomenon is called ‘glass cliff’, in which the individual is in a high position, but under threat of falling due to stress and the risk involved (Kulich & Ryan, 2017). A key point mentioned by some participants in terms of career development and promotion was that the highest positions are occupied by the dominant group in Portugal, that is, White Portuguese. However, although invisible barriers are real, in these specific cases the origin of the problem may be related to the lack of cultural diversity in the organizations. About half of the participants stated that their work environments are not diversified in terms of nationalities, cultures and ethnicities, and only one participant stated that there are programs or initiatives to promote / encourage diversity and support staff during the integration process, especially members of ethnic minorities. According to Cheung and colleagues (2016), the most used strategy by organizations to reduce and combat interpersonal discrimination is the implementation of training programs on diversity. In the case of the organizations where the participants of this study currently work, only three organize activities of this scope, more specifically unconscious bias trainings. There are several critiques of this type of initiatives, and to diversity management in general, because they do not focus enough on racial issues, minimize the complexity of ethnicity to a simple and easy to explain construct, obscure social inequalities, and make contained and moderate choices (Wrench, 2005). This makes sense, as these organizations operate in a capitalist system and these measures’ main purpose is favouring corporate image. Behind the mask of concern for diversity and colour-blind ideologies lies an economic and social system that retains the privilege of the White man. Yet, as mentioned earlier, diversity management

can be positive and make a difference as long as its interventions are improved, by making equality measures and anti-discrimination strategies their central elements, so that they are effective in reducing discrimination at work (Wrench, 2005). Trainings of unconscious bias elicit reflection, but the probability is that only a part of the perpetrators becoming aware of their acts - the aversive racists (Noon, 2018). If we know that subtle discrimination is much more recurrent and common than blatant discrimination, is not it superficial how these trainings are organized? It is necessary to evaluate the techniques used, monitor the effects and adapt the solutions that are used today to really contribute to the solution of the problem. The multiculturalist approach of including diversity without considering inequalities, adopted by capitalism in a discourse of false moralism, must be avoided. Although this is an urgent matter, some participants do not consider the need to work to contradict what is now normal. That is, some think that the working environment is favourable enough not to require a change, others (only three) suggested that their workplaces should be more inclusive, should have a more attractive recruitment system for ethnic minorities and that organizations should look only at competencies and abstain from personal characteristics. The results also showed that four participants consider that there is differential treatment of Afro-descendant employees, derived from racial issues, but not only, there are also situations of discrimination by age or gender. The results also showed that four participants believe there is a general picture of the results companies do not invest in efforts to make work environments diverse and inclusive for ethnic minorities, or to educate employees or implement anti-discrimination measures. About half of the participants considered that, hypothetically speaking, the companies in which they currently work would respond promptly and adequately to discriminatory events, while three participants felt that such circumstances would not be taken seriously, yet all these organizations perpetuated or ignored discriminatory circumstances of a nature subtle

Participants were also asked about retention strategies that the companies that employ them use to improve the experience of Afro-descendant employees and other minorities or disadvantaged groups. Some retention strategies mentioned were a healthy work environment - important for all employees to feel comfortable and to be successful in their tasks - good communication, compensation and promotions, as well as training programs of unconscious bias. The strategies and retention rates of these organizations were not the focus of this study, so no data collection was done in that sense. Hom, Roberson and Ellis (2008), ethnic minorities have lower retention rates than the dominant

group, partly because of the difficulties of corporate socialization such as not allocating meaningful projects or providing poor guidance to members of these groups, among other reasons, which leads them to leaving the company. Organizations have the power to adjust these socialization processes to match individuals' expectations, motivating them to remain (Hom, Roberson, & Ellis, 2008).

Having this been said, everyone has the obligation to reflect on biased attitudes and behaviours they may be committing to at least reduce modern discrimination, since today it is utopian to think that it can disappear so briefly when racism permeates several spheres of our society and is so naturalized. Human resources professionals, and organizations in general, play an important role in the fight against discrimination through their policies, standards, codes of conduct, but also their leaders, which may inhibit or enable discriminatory practices in the workplace (Cortina, 2008). Although diversity courses and trainings are not an effective solution, they can alleviate discrimination (Deitch et al., 2003), if they aim to eliminate inequalities and if there is a monitoring of their impact.

STUDY LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This qualitative study added relevant knowledge about the experiences of graduate Afro-descendants, in Portuguese workplaces. Nevertheless, there are some limitations.

Although the collected narratives were rich and convincing, the interviews were limited by time, which made it impossible to explore more deeply past experiences, ending up with a focus on recent or particularly memorable experiences. It would have been beneficial to schedule a second, shorter interview to explore those past work experiences, to clarify something that the participants said which was not clear, or to ask a question that arose only during the transcription or analysis, and also to ask the participants if they agree with my interpretation of some situations (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). Unfortunately, for a matter of deadlines, it was not possible.

Another limitation of the sample was the participants' age (the average is 28 years old) and, consequently, the years of experience. If it was easier to access older participants with more seniority or more years of professional experience, then the results could have been different regarding the consequences of perceived discrimination in terms of severity and magnitude.

The results obtained in this study are also limited to the participants' work experiences, which means that only a few points of view were collected. The narratives of the experiences of discrimination are based only on perceptions, even though these perceptions are important for understanding the coping strategies and the physical, psychological and mental consequences of / for the individual. Although data saturation was reached, to cover a wider range of perceptions of Afro-descendants in Portugal, it would have been interesting to extend the analysis to other geographical areas of Portugal beyond Lisbon. However, for logistical reasons, this was not possible.

Despite the limitations above, it is sustained that this study provides relevant evidence to highlight the inadequacy of organizational policies in relation to racial equality, as well to affirm that Afro-descendants are stigmatized in organizations in Portugal.

Relevant themes that could have been considered in this study were identified. For example, the impact of the participants' occupational status (within the company) was not considered, nor was there a reflection on the role of gender insofar as the experiences of Afro-descendant women may be different because of gender and ethnicity intersectionality. Also, the study may have benefited from focus groups to identify even more types of subtle discrimination at work. These themes may be relevant to future studies in Portugal, as well as a comparative study between the experiences of Afro-descendants versus the dominant group (White Portuguese) at work, or the analysis of organizational policies (relationship between implementation and practice), or a comparative analysis of the policies and perceptions of employees in companies managed by Afro-descendants versus companies managed by the dominant group. Finally, the results showed only one case of blatant discrimination, which occurred when the participant had in a job often considered of low social status and did not require much qualifications. All other cases of discrimination have manifested themselves subtly in organizations. It would be interesting, to have explored the question of whether social class might have different results in terms of the type of discrimination.

Finally, as the interviewees of this study were individuals with white-collar jobs, they do not represent the Afro-descendant population resident in Portugal, as they have more qualifications, and have less precarious contractual and working conditions than the majority. It would be interesting for future studies to explore workplace experiences of other strata of the Afro-descendant population.

CONCLUSION

In this study, a thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews was carried out to investigate the perspectives of Afro-descendants on the work environment according to their ethnicity. The identified themes covered the perceptions of discrimination, the strategies used to deal with the discrimination, the related consequences, and the HRM practices in the organizations for the management of diversity and inclusion. The insights provided by participants reflected the reality of members of an ethnic minority in Portugal and the complexity of subtle discrimination they face daily, as well as workplace diversity. The results showed that ethnic identity at work has a guiding role of perceptions and attributions to discrimination. It was conclusive that ethnic identity and social consciousness of individuals influence their perceptions and attribution to discrimination, being that individuals with indications of a strong ethnic identity showed more easily in recognizing discriminatory events of subtle nature, than for those whose ethnic identity does not play a central role. Second, the results revealed that discrimination in the workplaces of the participants is perpetuated mainly in subtle formal and subtle interpersonal types, occurrences that have been verified in all organizations. On the other hand, as expected, there were no incidents of flagrant discrimination. In the context of subtle interpersonal discrimination, there have been several manifestations of differential treatment and injustice with regard to participants in the form of microaggressions, such as feeling excluded by colleagues, feeling people expected little from them, listening to racial jokes; microaggressions that manifest prejudice and modern racism with regard to subtle formal discrimination, events such as not being able to get the job they ambition and for which they have qualifications and skills are reported, as well as a number of injustices such as penalizing prizes or being given hard-to-reach goals. There is also evidence to state that work-related microaggressions and injustices are pervasive and recurrent in these work settings.

The narratives of these experiences of subtle discrimination are based on perceptions, important to understand coping strategies and the physical, psychological and mental consequences that may exist for the individual. About the coping strategies, the results showed that participants used emotion-focused coping more often, being more frequent the use of avoidance and distancing strategies, secondly the use of minimization of discrimination, and thirdly the use of acceptance and positive reappraisal. For most

participants, avoiding or distancing themselves from the source of stress seems to be the way they protect themselves from racism, avoiding people, jobs or situations, and those who have used those strategies revealed a better self-esteem, self-confidence and well-being in the current job. On the other hand, the problem-focused coping strategies that the participants used where recognizing that racism exists and showing determination to face the situation. Considering the results, it is not possible to argue that using these specific problem-focused coping mechanisms have benefited the participants, in fact, recognizing that racism exists, but doing nothing about it has, in some cases, caused feelings of sadness and frustration. Neither can we investigate the consequences of facing the situation, since they were not real actions, but only a determination in the face of hypothetical situations. The overall consequences were manifested in feelings of sadness, frustration or embarrassment due to microaggressions experienced at work, but the results were not conclusive enough to state whether it is more beneficial to resort to strategies focused in the emotions or in the problem to deal with subtle discrimination at work.

Regarding ethnic and cultural diversity of the organizations that employ the participants of this study, the results revealed that most are homogeneous and there are no programs or initiatives to promote and foster diversity, with few exceptions. This can be explained by the lack of recruitment of ethnic minorities, since in their perspective most of the selected candidates are members of the dominant group in Portugal. Overall, the participants did not show much concern about this issue, except those who demonstrated a more prominent ethnic identity and social awareness, who felt that ethnicity could affect the selection of a candidate. If in the recruitment process the Whites appear to be privileged, it has also occurred in leadership positions of these companies, which do not have any Afro-descendants represented. This indicates that there is an invisible barrier that hinders career advancement of this ethnic minority. The general view is that the working environment is favourable and there is no need to make changes in diversity management and make the environment more inclusive because all employees are treated in the same way and have the same opportunities. A minority disagrees with this view, saying that the workplace could be more inclusive, should have a more attractive recruitment system for ethnic minorities, and that businesses should look only at competencies and disregard personal characteristics. It was also mentioned by four participants that there is differential treatment of Afro-descendant employees, derived from racial issues. The general conclusion that can be drawn from the narratives about these organizations is that they do not invest efforts to make work environments

diversified and inclusive for ethnic minorities, to educate employees or implement anti-discrimination measures. Considering that the organizations presented in this study belong to several activities of the tertiary sector of the economy, reflect the structures of hierarchical power, and present the proportions of cultural diversity of most organizations in Portugal, it is possible to affirm that the results are generalizable and that this study provides relevant evidence to highlight the inadequacy of organizational policies in relation to racial equality and to affirm that Afro-descendants are stigmatized in organizations in Portugal.

In conclusion, this study indicates that the fight against discrimination towards Afro-descendants is still far from over and is a process hampered by the subtlety of the discriminatory events that occur every day in organizations which continue to maintain inequalities. It is crucial to increase the debate on modern forms of discrimination, to raise awareness that these are the ways that affect minorities at work and to realize how to recognize them. Workplace discrimination is a reflection of the structure of society where racism is perpetuated by the convergence of institutions, culture, history, ideology and practices, which sustain inequalities between ethnic groups (Hardeman et al., 2016). It cannot end unless there is a structural change, but HRM can alleviate the effects and consequences through appropriate policies and practices that address and are focused on the elimination of inequalities.

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ANNEXES

Appendix 1: Informed Consent

Introduction

In the scope of the MSc Human Resource Management and Organizational Consulting of the ISCTE Business School, I hereby invite you to participate in this study that will result in my master's Dissertation. I will make a brief introduction to the research topic, so you better understand its purpose and objective. If you have any questions or need more information, please do not hesitate to ask me questions.

Objective

This study aims to understand the experiences and perceptions of Afro-descendants at work, addressing past and present experiences. I intend to analyse how these experiences affected the participants (emotions, behaviours, self-esteem, well-being, etc.), to know about the cultural diversity at the workplace, and to know the participants insights about HR practices to ensure equality and encourage a culturally diverse workplace.

Participants:

This qualitative study involves interviews with individuals who identify themselves as Afro-descendants and who hold an academic degree (licentiate, masters, doctorate). If you agree to be part of this study, your participation will be voluntary and unpaid. You will be asked to respond to a brief sociodemographic questionnaire as well as some questions, and there is no obligation to provide justifications. Your participation is anonymous, so no personal data collected by me will be disclosed in any way.

Results:

The data collected in this study will be used in my Master Dissertation, which will later be available from the thesis and dissertation repository of ISCTE – IUL.

By signing this document, you are consenting to participate in this study voluntarily, anonymously and unpaid.

Signature of the participant:

Signature of the researcher / student:

Date: __/__/____

Appendix 2: Sociodemographic Data Questionnaire

Sociodemographic Data

1. Age

___ years old

2. Gender

- Feminine
 Masculine

3. Do you live in Portugal?

Yes

Where? _____

Have you lived in another country? Which one? _____

For how long? _____

4. Place of birth

5. Place of birth

Of the father: _____

Of the mother: _____

6. Education

Bachelor's degree

Master's degree

PhD

Other: _____

7. Profession _____

8. Sector _____

Appendix 3: Semi-structured Interview Script

Introduction

1. Do you work in a small, medium or big enterprise?
2. In what industry or sector do you work in?
3. How long have you been working for this company?
What about your last job? How long did you work there? Why did you leave?
4. Do you work alone or in a team?
How many people compose your team?
Are there different nationalities / ethnicities in your team? What about in the company?
5. What is your job position / role? Tell me about your responsibilities and tasks at your job.

Part 1

Goal: Understand if the organizational culture values and fosters diversity, and if people are treated equally regardless of their characteristics.

6. Do you think the organization where you work has a supportive and respectful culture that values different perspectives, cultures and experiences, overall diversity?
(If 'yes') Does the organization communicate regularly its position on the value of diversity? For example, does it have diversity initiatives/programs/activities?
Does your manager/supervisor's behaviour reflect those standards?
7. In your opinion, are employees treated with respect and consideration?
Do you think people are treated the same regardless of their different characteristics?
Do you remember a time when it didn't happen? Tell me about it.

8. Does your organization have a performance evaluation system?

Do you think your results are fair?

Do you remember a time when you felt they were not? Why do you think it happened?

9. In case of prejudice and discriminatory incidents, how do you think your organization would respond?

Part 2

Goal: Understand if the respondent has ever felt that he received discriminatory / prejudiced behaviour, how he dealt with it (coping) and how it affected him (consequences).

10. Do you feel comfortable and at home at your workplace? Have you ever felt uncomfortable? Why?

11. In general, how do you feel about your co-workers? Are they cooperative, supportive and nice to you?

What if you don't agree on something? How do your colleagues and supervisor / manager respond? And how do you respond?

12. Tell me about a time when you felt a work situation was unfair, in your current job or past jobs.

How did it make you feel?

How did you deal with it?

What reason, in your opinion, would explain that injustice?

Do you think your personal characteristics had influence on that situation?

13. Have you ever felt disappointed or angry at a co-worker's / supervisor behaviour or attitude? Please consider your current job or past jobs.

What happened?

Why do you think he/she acted that way?

How did it make you feel?

How did you deal with it?

14. Do you see racial/ethnic jokes as something offensive? Is it common at your work?
How would you respond if it did happen in front of you?
15. During your professional career, have you ever felt that your cultural background could be an obstacle to getting the job you want, or being promoted?
16. Do you feel you have to prove yourself by working harder than your colleagues?
Why?
17. Do your outcomes reflect the effort you have put into your work?
18. Do you feel proud and confident about yourself at work?
19. Have you ever thought about quitting your job?
Why?
What would you value if looking for another job?

PART 3

Goal: Understand organizational practices

20. (*Recruitment and selection*) What do you think are the personal characteristics your company is looking for when recruiting? Do you think there is a standard profile they are looking for?
Do you think the HR department values people with different backgrounds?
21. (*Development and Promotion*) Is there a career development path for each employee? Are employees with different backgrounds encouraged to apply for higher positions? How?
22. (*Retention practices*) What strategies does your organization apply to retain employees and maintain a culturally diverse workforce?

Or, if the organization is not diverse:

Do you think there should be an effort from the organization to be more diverse?
Why?

23. Do you think discrimination against people with different characteristics (for example, cultural background, ethnicity, gender, age) is carried out in your company?

What about past jobs, do you remember any time you felt discrimination was carried out, even if in a subtler way?

24. How could the organization improve your experience at work and create an environment that is welcoming and inclusive for people from different ethnicities or cultures?

25. I would like to thank you for your time, I have no more questions. I'd just like to ask if you'd like to add anything else or make any comments.

Appendix 4: Final Coding Template

1 Perception of discrimination

1.1 Intentionality

- Racial Motivations
- Ambiguous situation

1.2 Formality

- Interpersonal discrimination
 - Microaggressions
 - Having poor expectations
 - Feeling left out
 - Accusation
 - Racial Jokes
- Formal discrimination
 - Trust issues
 - Difficulties in getting the job
 - The organization did nothing about a discriminatory situation
 - Injustices
 - Cannot progress professionally

1.3 Subtlety

- Subtle discrimination
- Blatant discrimination

1.4 Believing discrimination does not exist at the workplace

2 Coping strategies

2.1 Emotion-focused coping

- Humour
- Avoidance and distancing
 - Seeking emotional support
 - Go away / avoid
 - Acceptance
- Minimization of discrimination
 - They do not have bad intentions
 - Racial jokes are not offensive
 - It is not a matter of race or ethnicity
- Positive reappraisal
 - Looking to the positive side of the situation
 - Feeling lucky comparing to other Afro-descendants
 - Discrimination is an opportunity to improve

2.2 Problem-focused coping

- To acknowledge that racism exists
 - Racial jokes are offensive
- Determination to fix the problem / assertiveness

3 Consequences of ethnic discrimination

3.1 Psychological distress

Sadness

Frustration

Embarrassment

3.2 Impact of workplace climate

Working more to prove her / his value

Does not feel comfortable at the workplace

Feels 'at home' in the workplace

Employees are working in fear

4 HRM practices

4.1 Recruitment and selection

Ethnicity matters

Organizations hire ethnic groups because of shortage of labour

The organization should recruit more nationalities / ethnicities

The organization values competences, regardless of ethnicity

4.2 Development and promotion

Higher job positions are occupied by Whites

Afro-descendants are encouraged to apply to higher job positions

4.3 Diversity and inclusion

There is not much or no diversity

The organization values diversity

Everyone is treated equally and with respect

People are treated differently

The organization is inclusive and organizes diversity trainings

The organization should be more inclusive

The organization repudiates discrimination

4.4 Retention

It should be a 'feel safe' environment

There is a healthy work environment

Employees just leave