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Managing The (In)visible: Reading Between the Lines of Workplace Diversity through Group Theory Lenses

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Master in Psychology of Intercultural Relations

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CIÊNCIAS SOCIAIS
E HUMANAS

Department of Social and Organizational Psychology

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Este mestrado faz parte de um momento de grande mudança em minha vida, e por isso as vivências dessa etapa foram intensas.

Às pessoas que pude dividir as gargalhadas e as lágrimas, meu muito obrigada.

Abstract

With the growing interest of companies in the topics of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, we observe a significant increase in actions taken by organizations, such as hiring individuals from minority groups and implementing training programs that promote more inclusive and less stereotypical communication. However, it is regrettable that, despite this increasing focus on the subject, Group Theory, which offers a wealth of concepts and understandings about human interactions, has been underutilized in expanding the understanding of diversity management in the business context. This study aimed to establish a connection between Group Theory and the implementation of initiatives related to diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace. To achieve this purpose, we collected responses from 84 professionals through an individual questionnaire containing four open-ended questions. Through thematic analysis, based on Braun and Clarke's methodology (2006), we were able to identify two predominant themes in the participants' discourse, relating to their perspectives on diversity, equity, and inclusion in the organizational environment. The results of this study provided significant insights into the shallowness of understanding and experience of these issues within companies. We conclude that there is a long way to go, both in terms of research and practice, for the organizational environment to become truly inclusive and diverse.

Keywords: groups, diversity, equity, inclusion, interaction, workplace

APA Classification Codes: 2840 Psychosocial & Personality Development, 3020 Group & Interpersonal Processes, 3660 Organizational Behavior

Resumo

Com o crescente interesse das empresas pelo t3pico da Diversidade, Equidade e Inclus3o, vemos um aumento not3vel das a3oes empreendidas pelas organiza33es, como a contrata33o de pessoas pertencentes a grupos minorit3rios e a implementa33o de treinamentos que promovem comunica33es mais inclusivas e menos estereotipadas. No entanto, 3 lament3vel que, apesar desse crescente foco no assunto, a Teoria de Grupos, que oferece uma riqueza de conceitos e compreens3es sobre as intera33es humanas, tenha sido subutilizada na expans3o do entendimento da gest3o da diversidade no contexto empresarial. Este estudo teve como objetivo estabelecer uma conex3o entre a Teoria dos Grupos e a implementa33o de iniciativas relacionadas 3 diversidade, equidade e inclus3o no ambiente de trabalho. Para atingir esse prop3sito, coletamos respostas de 84 profissionais por meio de um question3rio individual contendo quatro quest3es abertas. Atrav3s da an3lise tem3tica, com base na metodologia de Braun e Clarke (2006), pudemos identificar dois temas predominantes nos discursos dos participantes, que diziam respeito 3 suas perspectivas em rela33o 3 diversidade, equidade e inclus3o no ambiente organizacional. Os resultados deste estudo proporcionaram insights significativos sobre a superficialidade na compreens3o e na experi3ncia dessas quest3es dentro das empresas. Conclu3mos que h3 um longo caminho a percorrer, tanto em termos de pesquisa quanto de pr3tica, para que o ambiente organizacional se torne verdadeiramente inclusivo e diversificado.

Palavras chaves: grupos, diversidade, equidade, inclus3o, intera33o, ambiente de trabalho

C3digos de classifica33o APA: **2840** Psychosocial & Personality Development, **3020** Group & Interpersonal Processes, **3660** Organizational Behavior

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Glossary of abbreviations	
DEI – Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	
NIMBY – Not in my Backyard	

Introduction

In both Brazil and Portugal, the promotion of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in organizations still falls short of the desired level. According to data from the "Gender Equality Index" compiled by the European Institute for Gender Equality in 2022, Portugal scored 62.2 points out of a total of 100, ranking 15th in the European Union in terms of gender equality. However, this score is still 5.8 points below the EU average, indicating the need for advancements in DEI in Portugal. According to data from a 2022 study conducted by GoodHabitZ in collaboration with Markteffect, 84% of employees in Portugal believe that their organizations should pay more attention to these issues. In Brazil, a 2022 survey conducted by Blend Edu, a startup specialized in the topic, revealed that out of 117 participating companies, 81% have a budget dedicated solely to diversity and inclusion initiatives. Despite efforts to promote diversity, issues such as gender, racial, and sexual orientation inequality still persist in the workplace. This highlights that in both countries, there is a long way to go to achieve satisfactory levels of DEI in organizations, underscoring the importance of concrete actions and effective commitments to overcome this challenge.

Throughout history, organizations have been regarded as impersonal entities, where individuals interact in a functional and neutral manner to pursue economic objectives. However, challenging this management model reveals its lack of consideration for the coexistence of individuals with diverse characteristics and lifestyles within the organization. Often, to survive in this context, these individuals end up remaining silent, concealing themselves behind the impersonal façade of the professional environment (Saraiva & Irigaray, 2009).

The theme of diversity has been gaining prominence in organizational discussions, particularly due to the varied characteristics present in the workforce. Elements such as gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, and religious beliefs, for instance, indicate the presence of extensive heterogeneity (Fleury, 2000). Business narratives, operating across multiple tiers and tackling diverse aspects, propagate a fresh organizational outlook. They focus on separate yet mutually reinforcing components, crafting a perception of the individual that extends beyond their role as mere employees and of the community that transcends the confines of the company (Saraiva & Irigaray, 2009).

According to Shore et al (2009), several theories have been employed to study diversity, yet most of them stem from a micro-theoretical perspective and seek to explain behavior from an individual or workgroup standpoint. The majority of these theories originate from the fields of social psychology or cognitive psychology and are grounded in our cognitive and social need to categorize ourselves and others based on surface-level or readily

perceivable characteristics, such as race. The same authors say that these theories have frequently been used to introduce or substantiate hypotheses that have focused on negative outcomes or predictions resulting from racial/ethnic differences.

In today's tumultuous and ever-changing reality, one would expect that Lewin's groundbreaking contribution to Group Theory for understanding change would be embraced with appreciation, particularly given the high failure rate of many programs of changing (Burnes, 2004). The author believes it's regrettable Lewin's commitment to extending democratic values in society and his research in Field Theory, Group Dynamics, and Action Research, which, combined with his 3-Step model, formed an interconnected, elaborate, and robust approach to planned change, are receiving diminishing attention.

With few studies yet linking group theory to diversity management in the organizational setting, the present study aims to establish a connection between Group Theory and the practice of diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives in the workplace. It introduces some concepts and phenomena related to groups to understand the challenges that work teams face in their daily efforts to embrace inclusivity. The main objective of this work was to perform a qualitative analysis in order to understand the connection between group theory and DEI Program (diversity, equity and inclusion) at the workplace. Specifically, the aim of this study was to investigate and analyze the influence of group dynamics occurring within work teams as companies implement diversity, equity, and inclusion programs.

Despite the significant relevance that theorists like Kurt Lewin (1948) and Wilfred Bion (1975) have had throughout the history of social psychology with their studies on groups, this theory has been underutilized in understanding the context that DEI - Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, bring to groups, especially in the organizational environment. Important topics such as colorblindness, as proposed by Blaine (2007), the subtle and blatant prejudice as proposed by Pettigrew and Meerteens (1995), or the critique of company's discourse that, when raising the flag of diversity, often fails to translate into employees' daily lives with effective and transformative actions, as pointed out by Saraiva & Irigaray (2009), have not received adequate attention within this theoretical framework.

As for the structure of this present study, the introduction presents the significance of the study and outlines research question. The first chapter conducts a literature review on groups and their main theories. The concepts of diversity, equity, and inclusion are also introduced in relation to the workplace environment. Finally, there is an exploration of groups and diversity management in the workplace. The second chapter focuses on the methodology, addressing the study's sample, procedures, and the instrument used. Subsequently, the third

chapter presents the achieved results, and in the fourth chapter, the discussion is carried out, summarizing the main conclusions as well as the limitations and suggestions for future studies.

CHAPTER 1

Theoretical background

1.1 - Group as a Subject of Study

Being a constantly growing and changing being, throughout their life, individuals experience themselves in different situations that, regardless of the choice to live them, will contribute to the formation of their knowledge baggage. It is certain that the majority of these experiences will occur within a group context. But how to define what a group is? The group is the environment in which it is possible to reconstruct and give meaning, experience and redefine issues through the exchange of information, insights, identification, and other processes (Ribeiro, 1995).

Lewin (1975) argues that a group transcends the mere sum of its members, as it possesses its own structure, defined goals, and distinct relationships with other groups. The fundamental characteristic of a group does not lie in the similarities or differences among its members but rather in the interdependence that can range from a diffuse entity to a cohesive unit. In line with other thinkers, Lewin describes a group as a dynamic ensemble, implying that a change in the state of one of its parts leads to changes in the whole.

According to Pichón-Riviére (1983), a group forms when a set of individuals with similar needs come together around a specific activity, within a defined time and space. These individuals, initially grouped and arranged without connection among themselves, gradually unite and initiate a process of communication and collaboration to accomplish tasks. The group task execution will trigger a series of additional elements that could not have been foreseen initially; unconscious and/or unspoken aspects will come into play, sometimes contributing and sometimes hindering the group's development.

According to Bion (1975), a group is a collection of individuals who come together for a common purpose, but are also influenced by their unconscious emotional processes. Groups are seen as complex systems in which members project their anxieties, desires, and conflicts onto each other, often in ways that can be difficult to understand rationally. Bion introduced the idea that groups have a group unconscious, which is formed by the unconscious projections and fantasies of the members.

While life in groups and interactions among people have existed since the dawn of human civilization, it was only in the last century of the past millennium that scholars of human

behavior began to pay proper attention to phenomena occurring within groups. According to Osorio (2000), Gustave Le Bon played a pivotal role by publishing "The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind (1885)," which established the field of social psychology, focusing specifically on the analysis of collective behavior in large human groups. This work served as a foundation for Freud's reflections on the collective behavior of humans from a psychoanalytic perspective. Subsequently, Kurt Lewin initiated the field of group psychology, with an emphasis on small-scale groups where individuals interact in pursuit of shared objectives. The same author asserts that this discipline stood out by challenging the linear approach in sciences with circular thinking, emphasizing interpersonal interactions alongside intrapsychic processes, marking a paradigm shift in the understanding of human behavior as an interactive system.

Moscovici (2011) says the realization in anthropology that habits and customs depend on the culture in which an individual is immersed also had an impact on group dynamics understanding, what means, may be considered "abnormal" or "peculiar" in one culture can be "normal" and "common" in another. The author adds that the introduction of the concept of culture represented a significant advancement in scientific research on human groups and their influence on personality formation, one of the most fascinating areas of psychology. Furthermore, the adoption of the statistical concept of "normality" also underscored the importance of the group as an essential component for comprehending psychological and social phenomena

According to the creator of the term "group dynamics," Kurt Lewin (1890-1947), the central focus in studying small groups in their most concrete and existential dimensions involves seeking authenticity in relationships, promoting creativity, and achieving effectiveness in their objectives. To accomplish these goals, it is essential to discover which structures are more conducive, which group environment supports these objectives, which leadership style is more effective, which techniques are more functional and facilitative, and how interpersonal attraction and repulsion mechanisms occur, among other aspects (Mailhot, 1991).

Following McGrath et al (2000), in their study on the evolution of group research, often research focuses on individual cognition about groups rather than considering the group as a collective entity. While Kurt Lewin is recognized as a pioneer in group research, his emphasis on individual perceptions is seen as diverting attention away from the group as a whole. However, the same authors say research on groups in organizational contexts is highlighted for paying more attention to gender and ethnic diversity and considering the real-world context of groups compared to traditional experimental research in social psychology.

Another important theory regarding collective entities is the Social Identity Theory by Tajfel & Turner (1979, 1985). According to Doise (2002), the Social Identity Theory originated from a gestaltist approach to perception, allowing for a model that emphasized the importance of relative differences. This model expanded to address the effects of categorization on

perception and social stereotypes. Social Identity Theory represents a perspective in intergroup relations that integrates individual and interpersonal behavior with social and contextual processes to understand conflicts between groups. In this context, the concepts of categorization and social comparison are interconnected. Social identity, associated with the notion of group membership evoked by social categorization, leads to an emotional and evaluative valuation of that membership, resulting in favouritism toward the in-group at the expense of out-groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

As described by Tajfel (1981), social identity can be conceptualized as a composite of an individual's self-concept, their membership in specific groups, and the evaluation associated with that affiliation. Within this perspective, Tajfel's fundamental principle asserts that, despite the complexity of self-perception in relation to the physical and social world, certain elements of this self-perception represent a significant contribution arising from membership in particular social groups or categories.

1.2 - Phenomena of Group Dynamics

One of the primary theorists on groups is Kurt Lewin, a social psychologist, who extensively studied group phenomena over the years. He would often express that the fundamental reason for the phenomena occurring within groups can be attributed to the interdependence among their members (Lewin, 1948). He conceives a group as a dynamic totality, echoing the Gestalt principle that the whole is more than the mere sum of its parts: "any dynamic totality exhibits distinct characteristics. The whole can be symmetrical, even if the parts are asymmetrical; a whole can be unstable, despite its parts being stable" (Lewin, 1948, p. 89).

This implies understanding that the group possesses specific properties as a whole, which do not directly emerge from the individual properties of its parts. It emphasizes that it is widely accepted nowadays that a group is more than the simple sum of its members, or, to be more precise, it is different from this sum. This idea highlights that a group cannot be fully understood just by looking at the individual characteristics of its members; it has distinct characteristics as a collective entity (Lewin, 1948).

According to Burnes (2004), Lewin's focus was on resolving social conflicts, particularly those involving minorities. He also believed in the importance of infusing democratic values across all aspects of society as a means to prevent the most severe extremes of conflicts. This way of thinking influenced his understanding of human behavior in groups, as he consistently took into account the complexity of the field in a given behavior, which is shaped by specific conditions and forces.

Lewin (1948) proposes that analytically, it's possible to distinguish two types of forces related to any group member – one type of force that attracts and keeps them within the group, and another type that pushes them away from the group." This implies that if a group does not have sufficient appeal to an adequate number of individuals, it will eventually disappear. Various forces can foster feelings of loyalty and belonging; the individual might be drawn to other members of the group, influenced by fellow members, interested in the group's objective, or aligned with its ideology, or they might simply prefer being part of the group rather than being alone.

About his Field Theory, Lewin proposed that group behavior constitutes a complex network of symbolic interactions and forces that not only impact group structures but also reshape individual behavior. Consequently, individual behavior is shaped by the group's environment, referred to as the 'field' by Lewin. Therefore, any alterations in behavior arise from changes, whether minor or substantial, within the forces present in the field. Lewin defined a field as 'a collection of coexisting facts that are seen as mutually interdependent...' (Lewin, 1948, p. 240 *cit in* Burnes, 2004). Lewin believed that a field was in a constant state of adaptation, and he noted that change and constancy are concepts relative to each other; group life is never devoid of change, only variations in the extent and nature of change exist. This is why Lewin employed the term 'quasi-stationary equilibrium' to convey that while there might be a rhythm and pattern to the behavior and processes of a group, these patterns are prone to constant fluctuations due to shifts in the forces or circumstances that impact the group (Burnes, 2004).

According to Lewin (1948, p.30), "the change in an individual's situation is largely attributable to a change in the situation of the group to which they belong. (...) As a member of a group, they typically internalize the ideals and objectives of that group.

Moscovici (2003) presents the importance of adapting to change, which is based on the assumption of learning to learn, that is, developing skills and taking advantage of weaknesses. From what we can deduce, for changes to occur in individuals, there must be some internal imbalance or crisis that provides an opportunity for altered perceptions and the introduction of new ideas, feelings, attitudes, and behaviors. Development is linked to experiencing situations, interacting, and not just relying on literature for knowledge. This interactive learning approach can lead to significant changes in the emotional processes of group members. This experience can give rise to new ways of solving leadership and group participation problems.

Another highly influential theorist in the study of groups and their phenomena was the British psychoanalyst Wilfred Bion (1897 – 1979). Focusing on the emotional climate developed within group contexts, he posits the concept that humans are social animals by nature, gregarious beings who thrive in groups. This implies that mental phenomena occurring

within group settings are intrinsic to the human mind, even if not always readily apparent (Zimmerman, 1995). According to Bion (1975), when individuals are part of a group, they can both exert influence and be influenced by the group's opinions, values, and decisions in ways that are not entirely conscious, shaping their thoughts and actions without full awareness. This collective influence that subtly and not entirely consciously affects individual choices is referred to as group mentality. Following Osório (1989), when such group mentality encounters the desires of individuals, it gives rise to group culture, where three basic assumptions can be observed: dependency, fight-flight, and pairing.

In other words, these "basic assumptions" in Bion's group theory occur when a group comes together to work on a task. In accord with Osorio (2003), Bion's "basic assumptions" are essentially shared mental states the fulfillment of a task that the group initially gathered to develop. In the "dependency" basic assumption, the group acts as if it is waiting for the care and leadership of someone to accomplish its task. In the "fight-flight" basic assumption, there is a movement of confrontation or avoidance of anxiety-inducing situations, as well as resistance or rejection of emerging leadership within the group. Lastly, in the "pairing" basic assumption, there is a messianic expectation regarding solutions that can be brought by something or someone not yet present in the group, which will emerge from the interaction between two elements within the group.

Grinberg et al (1973) flag that these primitive emotional aspects are always present in any group. However, they coexist with another level of functioning known as the working group, which is different from the basic assumption group. The working group requires its members to have the ability to cooperate, exert effort, display maturity, and undergo training to participate effectively. It represents a mental state that involves dealing with reality, tolerating frustrations, and controlling emotions. The same authors say within the working group, new ideas are welcomed and not rejected or blocked as they often are in the basic assumption group. The coexistence of these two types of groups, the basic assumption group and the working group, often leads to conflicts within the group. The basic assumption group may resist new ideas, while the working group and its members face the challenge of balancing these opposing tendencies.

1.3 - Group Process and DEI Workplace

According to Van Der Zee and Paulus (2008), introducing changes within an organization can have positive effects on employee satisfaction and performance because when viewed from a motivational standpoint, involvement in new developments can be stimulating and boost intrinsic motivation. The enjoyment derived from tackling new and challenging tasks fosters

creativity, which, in turn, encourages innovative activities. Furthermore, the introduction of new tasks tends to prompt more thorough and active information processing.

Individuals' performance and productivity are significantly influenced by the social dynamics within the group. This social dynamic is a result of the interpersonal relationships among the group members. In other words, how people relate to and interact with each other within the group plays a pivotal role in achieving goals and the overall success of the group as a whole (Moscovici, 2011).

Van Der Zee & Paulus (2008) highlight the significant aspect of the evolving social landscape within which modern organizations operate pertains to the diversity of their workforce. Work units are now characterized by greater heterogeneity. The inclusion of women in managerial and professional roles has enriched the workforce, and the growing trend of people working longer due to increased life expectancies and economic demands has made age diversity a crucial factor for companies. With a wider array of perspectives available for tackling situations, there is a heightened likelihood of arriving at the most appropriate solution. Some authors also mention that diversity and changing seem to offer benefits when it comes to problem-solving and generating fresh ideas. Nevertheless, even though workgroups may require exploration of new opportunities, concepts, and products, the prevailing reality often involves a conservative approach to work and a strong resistance to changing the established order.

To better understand such resistances, it is important to comprehend how diversity, and also equity and inclusion are defined nowadays. Diversity can be defined as a set of differences among individuals in any characteristic that makes them appear different from each other. These differences can encompass a wide range of dimensions of differentiation such as gender, age, ethnicity, length of service, educational background, and functional training. Research on the subject focuses on understanding how these differences among members of a work group affect the group's functioning, performance, the attitudes of group members, and their subjective well-being (Van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007).

In the past, diversity research was primarily focused on the problems associated with diversity, such as discrimination and prejudice. However, as the field of diversity has evolved, scholars have increasingly shifted their focus towards how diversity can enhance work processes and organizational mechanisms that promote the value of diversity. They are seeking ways to integrate diverse individuals into organizations. A growing area of research is centered on creating work environments where diverse individuals feel included. This reflects a shift in emphasis from problem-focused research to research on how diversity can be an asset in organizations (Shore et al., 2011)

Kraus et al. (2020) argue that many organizations fail to fulfil their promises of diversity, equity, and inclusion due to the influence of a narrative called "racial progress." This narrative suggests that society is naturally progressing towards racial equity, leading organizations to believe they are race-neutral. However, this simplistic view creates barriers to more in-depth discussions on racial equity, results in less effective policy changes, and reduces the sense of urgency regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion goals.

Building on this idea, it is interesting to provide the definition of racism, particularly systemic racism. Dovidio et al. (2005) provide a definition of racism as a type of prejudice rooted in the belief that one's own race is superior to another. Additionally, it can be characterized as a system of social and institutional practices that create disadvantages for individuals who are not of the white race.

Kilomba (2019) explores the essential characteristics of racism, emphasizing three interconnected elements. First, she highlights the construction of racial and religious difference, where racial and ethnic identity is used to define who is considered different. Second, she points out that these differences are accompanied by hierarchical values in which racialized groups are stigmatized, devalued, and associated with negative stereotypes. Finally, the author emphasizes that both the construction of difference and hierarchy are inherently linked to power. Racism is therefore defined as white supremacy because it involves the combination of prejudice and power, manifesting in global disparities in access to valuable resources such as political representation, employment opportunities, education, housing, and healthcare, illustrating who holds control and who does not.

According to Davis (2018), racism doesn't rely on individual actors; instead, it is deeply ingrained in the structures of institutions. With a long-term perspective on how white Americans interact with and treat people of colour, Feagin (2016) asserts that the concept of systemic racism encompasses various exploitative and discriminatory practices by whites, as well as the unjust accumulation of power and resources by them. Over socio-historical development, it is argued that a powerful white racial framework has been established to reinforce and perpetuate the beliefs and practices of systemic racism.

According to Blaine (2007) the concept of diversity acknowledges that we coexist with individuals who, in turn, actively construct their social reality. In simpler terms, just as we tend to categorize others based on various aspects of social difference, other people also categorize us. These individuals may not have personal knowledge of us, but they recognize us to some extent as members of specific social groups, often based on visible attributes, about which they have preconceived notions. The version of ourselves that is recognized by others, largely determined by our social group affiliations, can sometimes starkly contrast with our own self-perception. This disparity between our self-identities and how others perceive us carries profound implications for our psychological well-being and social adaptation. One's social

identities, along with the beliefs and assumptions that others attach to those identities, carry significant implications for one's psychological self-concept and overall well-being. In essence, a psychological understanding of diversity necessitates recognizing and comprehending the experience of being distinct from others.

Diversity has been recognized as one of the most distinctive features of contemporary societies. In essence, it refers to variations among individuals in any characteristic that may result in the perception of differences between them. It can also be considered a characteristic of a social group, whether it be a collection, organization, or society, reflecting the degree of differences, both objective and subjective, present among the individuals within that collective. (Patrick & Kumar, 2012).

Diversity itself is neither inherently positive nor negative, but numerous facets of social differentiation are linked to disparities and disadvantages. Consequently, diversity is a matter of significance for individuals who advocate and work towards achieving social justice. Social justice prevails when every demographic group within a society enjoys equal rights and opportunities, and when their life outcomes are not unfairly limited by bias and discrimination. As the diversity within a community expands, the likelihood of certain groups encountering disadvantages compared to others also increases. In a socially just community, the achievements and well-being of some individuals do not come at the detriment of others. (Blaine, 2007).

The development of diversity conceptualizations over time has resulted in various ways to describe differences among people. Current conceptualizations of diversity include social categories to which individuals may belong and potential interactions between these categories. However, the diversity literature tends to focus on a limited set of differences, failing to consider all the social categories that make up people's identities, especially those that may influence work processes. Most studies concentrate on objective attributes used as proxies for deeper differences. Therefore, expanding diversity conceptualizations can enhance our understanding of diversity (Roberson, 2019).

Regarding categories, it is relevant to consider the self-categorization theory, which, according to Turner et al. (1987), self-categorization theory is based on the idea that people's identification with a specific group influence how they deal with their membership in that group. This, in turn, determines how individuals perceive what is threatening (their social perceptions) and their responses to these threats. This dynamic concept of belonging provides a broader perspective on relationships. The same authors suggest that the way we perceive ourselves reflects our cognitive categorization, grouping ourselves with a particular class of stimuli rather

than others. This categorization can be more or less inclusive, but for the study of group behavior, social identity and personal identity are the most relevant levels.

Diversity on its own, without inclusion, can lead to issues such as mistrust and communication difficulties within groups. When diverse teams are well-integrated and promote inclusion, even if conflicts arise due to different perspectives, these conflicts can be beneficial for performance in complex and non-routine tasks (Vedres & Vasarhelyi 2023). The concept of inclusion has been explored in organizational literature in recent decades, with similar research occurring in fields such as social work and social psychology before that. Despite receiving increased attention in recent years, there is still no clear consensus on the nature of inclusion or its theoretical foundations. This lack of agreement hampers the effective use of the inclusion concept, both in theoretical and practical terms (Shore et al, 2011). Inclusion compels the public to discard many old beliefs or practices. The lack of inclusion has resulted in a shortage of exposure to different thoughts and perspectives. It is the most effective way to ensure that such individuals contribute the most to improving an organization. Diversity and Inclusion refer, thus, to the set of strategies, policies, and missions adopted by a company to create and support a comprehensive workplace that attracts a diverse team of talent from various cultural backgrounds (Raman et al., 2022).

Shore et al.(2011) affirm that the combination of uniqueness and a sense of belonging contributes to the creation of feelings of inclusion. Specifically, the central idea is that uniqueness translates into opportunities to enhance group performance when an individual with unique characteristics is accepted by the group and when the group values those unique characteristics. For example, an older employee in a workgroup may possess valuable knowledge about the company and the industry that can benefit the group. If this older employee is treated as a valuable member with essential knowledge, they will feel included, and the group may experience improved performance. According the same authors, the literature on diversity provides support for the idea that experiencing both a sense of belonging and uniqueness simultaneously can be beneficial.

According to Ferdman (2017), at its core, inclusion can appear uncomplicated and clear-cut: it involves the presence, active involvement, security, expression, fairness, and parity for a broader range of individuals spanning various identity categories.

The success of any diversity initiative is likely to be enhanced when it is accompanied by the implementation of equity measures by management. In the realm of diversity literature, equity has garnered relatively little attention, primarily due to its challenging nature when it

comes to measurement. Equity is an ongoing and crucial aspect that plays a pivotal role in fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace (O'Donovan, 2017).

According to Berry & Ward (2016), diversity without equal participation can lead to segregation, while equitable participation without diversity can result in assimilation. This understanding is connected to multiculturalism, which, according to the authors, encompasses three main elements. First, it is a demographic fact, indicating that most societies are now culturally diverse. Second, it is an ideology involving people's views on the acceptance or rejection of this diversity. Finally, it involves government policies and programs that promote the acceptance and promotion of diversity. The authors emphasize the importance of equitable participation as a crucial element of multiculturalism.

In the organizational context, equity involves treating all individuals fairly, whether they are treated the same or differently, as long as this approach is sensible and perceived as fair by the people within the organization. Equity also pertains to the support provided to all individuals in the workplace, regardless of their background, to facilitate their growth within the organization. This support can be equal for all groups or customized for specific individuals or groups, as long as it is perceived as fair by other members of the organization. The emphasis is on perceptions, ensuring that no group feels that another is receiving preferential treatment, even if the treatment differs. In summary, equity involves treating individuals fairly and ensuring that all actions are perceived as fair within the organization (Livingston, 2020).

This limited attention to equity in the diversity literature is primarily due to its inherent difficulty in quantification. Equity represents an ever-shifting perception held by individuals within the organization at any given moment, which can concurrently encompass both favorable and unfavorable viewpoints (Ferdman, 2017). Employees might perceive one aspect, such as training, as providing equitable treatment, while another, like development opportunities, may not. Equity plays a crucial role in enabling diversity to function as a valuable asset within the organization. Without equity, diversity can lead to the separation or segregation of groups (Berry, 2016). In contrast, for individuals to truly feel a sense of belonging within the organization, equity must be integrated into both inclusion and diversity efforts, ensuring the removal of barriers to contribution, opportunity, and achievement (Ferdman, 2017).

1.4 - Present Study

Moscovici (2005) asserts that interpersonal relationships within the organizational environment are profoundly shaped by the process of interaction during daily activities. These interactions trigger a wide range of emotions that can impact both the interactions themselves

and the performance of the activities in question. When a new member joins an established group, differences in perceptions and opinions about shared situations inevitably arise. How this group deals with these individual differences plays a crucial role in organizational behaviour and the effectiveness of undertaken activities. Key components influencing group functioning include goals, motivation, communication, decision-making processes, relationships, leadership, and innovation.

In this context, Cox (2001) argues that diversity plays a pivotal role. Since diversity encompasses all groups of employees at all levels of the company, the challenge is not just to have it but to create an environment where its potential as a performance barrier is minimized and its potential as a performance enhancer is maximized. According to the author, it is essential to establish an organizational culture that promotes the acceptance and inclusion of all members of the organization, regardless of factors such as gender, age, nationality, or others that are irrelevant to performance.

This research aims to provide significant contributions to the practice of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace and also seeks to incorporate group theory into the topic, which, despite being less explored in current research, has much to offer in understanding group phenomena. Roberson (2019) suggests that greater diversification in approaches to studying diversity can be useful in driving progress in the organizational diversity context. This includes developing new ways of conceptualizing diversity, employing different methodologies to explore its characteristics, adopting theoretical approaches to explain its effects, considering a variety of outcomes to understand its impact on organizations, and analysing different contexts to clarify these impacts.

Thematic analysis can be highly valuable in research conducted in underexplored areas, allowing for a rich description of the entire dataset, thereby generating initial insights into the subject matter (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This is particularly relevant in the present research, as mentioned earlier, given the substantial scarcity of studies examining diversity, equity, and inclusion through the lens of Group Theory.

Methodology

2.1 Procedure and Instrument

The data for this research was collected in August 2023, based on the administration of an individual questionnaire, developed using the Qualtrics software. Participants responded through a link made available on various social media platforms, namely: LinkedIn, WhatsApp, Instagram, and also through private messages to individuals across different types of organizations, with a focus on employees of multinational companies where a higher level of diversity is expected. The questionnaire was also directly sent via email to some personal contacts. The survey concluded with inquiries about participants' sociodemographic information and the provision of a debriefing.

According to Braun et al. (2020) citing Braun and Clarke (2013), qualitative research involves the formulation of a series of open-ended questions carefully crafted by a researcher and focused on a specific topic. This is done traditionally through interviews, but they propose the qualitative questionnaire as another suitable data collection method. These questions are presented consistently and in a fixed order to all participants, who respond by typing their own words instead of selecting predetermined response options. The authors also say this approach allows qualitative research to generate detailed and complex accounts, which are particularly valuable for qualitative researchers as they explore aspects such as participants' subjective experiences, narratives, practices, positions, and discourses.

Before beginning the questionnaire responses, participants were provided with the necessary information to give their informed consent for participating in the study. The study's objectives were explained, ensuring the anonymity and confidentiality of responses, which were entirely voluntary. After all responses were collected and the data collection phase concluded, the data was exported directly from Qualtrics for analysis and interpretation.

The questionnaire consisted of four open-ended questions, with the guidance that there were no right or wrong answers. At any point, participants could choose not to answer a specific question and proceed to the next one. The questions were:

1 - In your words, what does the set of DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion) actions mean in the day-to-day practice of a work team?

2 - When a person is hired in DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion) actions, what challenges do you believe you can experience in a work team?

3 - Considering the barriers and facilitators of implementing DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion) actions in organizations, what do you believe is most necessary for the success of such actions at the level of work teams?

4 - How to prepare for the adversities that inclusion presents to the work team? (e.g. clothing, religious customs, vocabulary...)

The demographic information asked in the questionnaire included age, the country of work, biological sex, gender identity, employment status (whether currently working and type of contract), whether the respondent has been involved in any activities related to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion programs, whether the respondent has held any leadership positions, and the size of the organization they work in terms of the number of employees.

2.2. Sample

It is a non-probabilistic convenience sample consisting of employees from various organizations. Any individual over the age of 18 who was currently employed or had previously worked in any type of organization that had undertaken Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives at some point was eligible to participate in the study. There were 131 accesses to the link, with 124 participants who agreed to participate, but 84 actually answered all the questions.

The study's sample consisted of a total of 84 participants, with ages ranging from 26 to 65 years ($M = 38.64$; $SD = 2.61$). Among them, 26 individuals identified as male (31%), and 56 identified as female (67%); the remaining 2% of participants chose not to respond to this question. In terms of the country of employment, 55 participants (65.5%) were from Brazil, 22 participants were from Portugal (26.2%), and 7 participants (8.3%) were from other countries, including Germany (4), Canada (1), England (1), and Angola (1). The majority of the sample (64%) worked in companies with more than five hundred employees, and 82% of them were under permanent employment contracts. Out of these 84 participants, 69% have held or currently hold a leadership position. Regarding the question of whether they have ever been involved in diversity, inclusion, and equity programs, 69% responded affirmatively.

2.3 Analytical Strategy

The thematic analysis, as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), was the methodology employed to analyze the questionnaire responses. Braun and Clarke's paper is considered a foundational resource for researchers using thematic analysis in psychology and other qualitative research fields. It provides a comprehensive guide for conducting this method and has been widely cited and adopted in academic research. Researchers often refer to this paper

when conducting thematic analysis to ensure methodological rigor and clarity in reporting results. The paper outlines the key principles and steps involved in thematic analysis, as:

1 - Definition of Thematic Analysis: Braun and Clarke define thematic analysis as a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within qualitative data;

2 - Flexibility: Thematic analysis is characterized by its flexibility, allowing researchers to adapt the approach to suit the research question and context;

3 - Data Preparation: The process begins with data preparation, where researchers become familiar with the data through multiple readings;

4 - Initial Coding: Researchers generate initial codes by systematically identifying interesting features in the data;

5 - Theme Development: Codes are then grouped into themes based on their shared characteristics or meanings;

6 - Theme Review: Themes are reviewed to ensure they accurately represent the dataset;

7 - Defining and Naming Themes: Each theme is defined and given a descriptive name that captures its essence;

8 - Data Extracts: Representative data extracts are selected to illustrate each theme;

9 - Report Writing: The final step involves writing the research report, including the presentation of themes, supporting data extracts, and the interpretation of findings;

10 - Reflexivity: Braun and Clarke emphasize the importance of reflexivity, where researchers acknowledge and account for their own biases and perspectives throughout the analysis process;

11 - Validity and Reliability: The authors discuss validity and reliability in thematic analysis and offer guidance on how to enhance the rigor of the analysis.

CHAPTER 3

Results and Discussion

After conducting a deductive and inductive thematic analysis of the responses from the 84 participants, two (2) comprehensive themes were identified under the group theory perspective, which were named as follows:

- Romanticized Diversity
- The Problem of Solutions

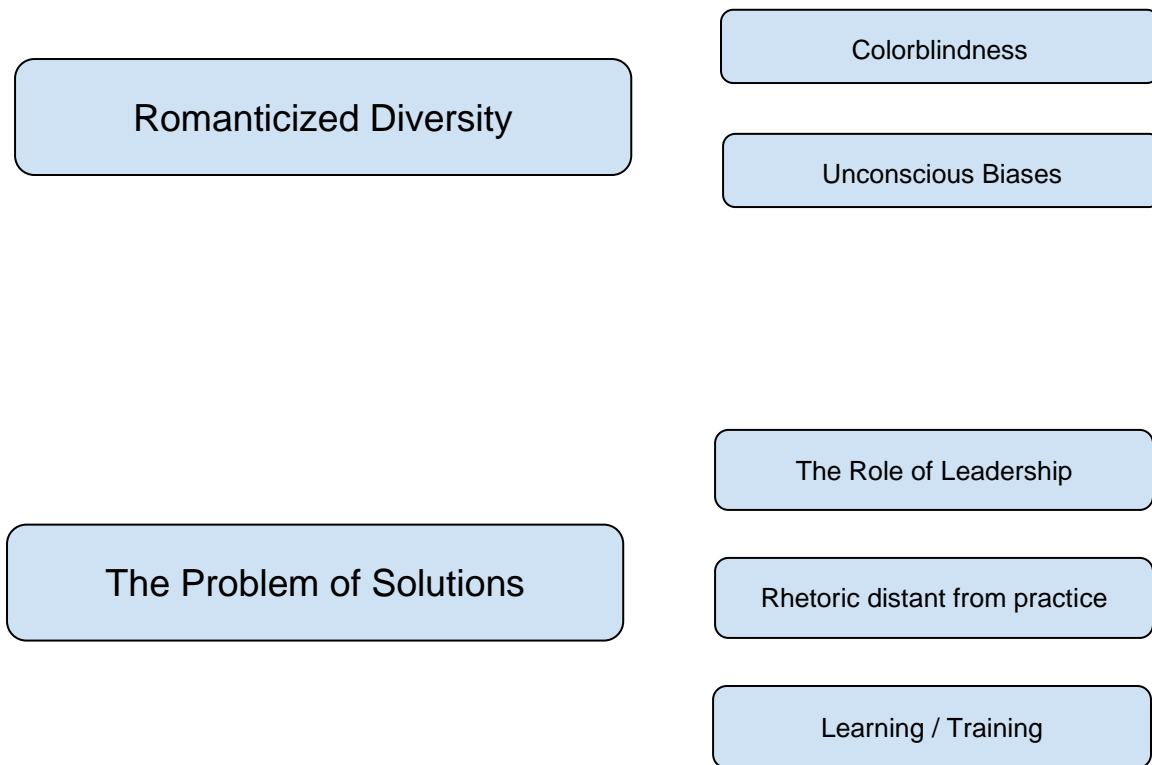


Figure 1.1. Theme and Subtheme Map

3.1 - Comprehensive Themes

3.1.1 - Romanticized Diversity

The choice of the term "romanticized" is due to the numerous responses that suggest a simplified, naive, or idealized view of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:

P 31: (...) um ambiente de trabalho respeitoso, harmônico, saudável, acolhedor e igualitário, onde todas as pessoas que compõem essa equipe será escutada em sua totalidade e também terá oportunidades de crescer e se desenvolver. [*(...) a respectful, harmonious, healthy, welcoming, and equitable work environment where every individual within this team will be heard in their entirety and also have opportunities to grow and develop*]

P50: (...) enquanto as pessoas não tiverem perfil integrador, acolhedor e de respeito a todos sem olhar às diferenças, não haverá sucesso. [*(...) until people have an integrating, welcoming, and respectful attitude towards everyone regardless of differences, there won't be success*]

P73: (...) as pessoas são aceitas e bem vindas como são. quando traduzido em ações concretas acredito que dá segurança para as pessoas atingirem seu potencial produtivo num ambiente psicologicamente seguro. . [*(...) people are accepted and welcomed as they are. When translated into concrete actions, I believe it provides a sense of security for individuals to reach their productive potential in a psychologically safe environment*]

According to Casali (2018), it is necessary to move beyond a romanticized view of diversity because it doesn't manifest through spontaneously harmonious experiences and encounters. Instead, it requires a combination of individual and collective efforts focused on overcoming stereotypes, prejudices, and cultural violence. These collective efforts are essential for dealing with conflicts, which, according to Lewin (1965), are a natural part of group dynamics, representing a tension that can arise when different perspectives and objectives collide in groups. The author emphasizes the importance of resolving them constructively, recognizing their potential to drive change.

. Moscovici (2005) argues that conflicts increase the group's resilience, foster learning, challenge the status quo by taking the group out of its comfort zone, enhance perception and critical thinking, stimulate creativity, and, as a result, create new opportunities.

In this way of acting, we can also see a connection to Bion's (1975) basic assumption of "fight-flight" in interpersonal relationships, where individuals tend to exhibit behaviors of

either fighting or fleeing in situations of intense anxiety or emotional conflict. Instead of constructively addressing the challenges or tensions within the group, people may engage in open conflicts (fight) or withdraw and avoid confrontation (flight). The same author argues that this tendency can impair the group's ability to function effectively, as anxiety is not dealt with in a productive manner.

When a group experiences the fight-flight dynamic, as described by Bion (1975), it is advisable to verbalize tensions, conflicts, and highlight divergent ideas and feelings, allowing each participant to express themselves in defense of their point of view, thus ensuring the uniqueness of each individual. Whenever a group finds itself in this situation, its energy becomes concentrated on the conflict, which hinders group development. The group itself needs to resolve its conflict in order to move forward. It's important to remember that being a basic assumption, this is unconscious and often runs counter to the conscious and rational opinions of the group members (Grinberg et al, 1973).

The following subthemes delve a bit deeper into this idea of romanticized diversity:

3.1.1.1 - Colorblindness

The concept of colorblindness as a framework was developed to explain how most Americans, particularly whites, could believe that the United States provided equal opportunities for all, while simultaneously witnessing the persistence of inequality along racial lines. Crucially, colorblindness does not imply that individuals fail to observe distinctions but rather underscores that our perception of race is integral to the social construction of race. In other words, it doesn't mean that people don't recognize racial differences; rather, it implies that society's perception of race is socially constructed (Doane, 2017).

According to Blaine (2007), color blindness is an ideology that advocates that race should not be a determining factor in how people are treated. In other words, individuals should be treated solely as individuals, without consideration of their race or ethnicity. Typically, it is the racial majority that holds this ideology, hoping that minorities will minimize their differences and adapt to prevailing norms.

While this idea may seem well-intentioned, its practical application disregards people's race and, consequently, the systemic and historical inequalities affecting minority racial groups. Many responses express a desire, possibly genuine, to put an end to differences and inequalities, believing that treating "everyone equally" is a solution. This way of thinking can be identified in phrases like:

P 36: (...) significa que todos os elementos da equipa são iguais e importantes independentemente das suas diferenças de cor, religião ou crenças, sexo. [:(...)]

means that all team members are equal and important regardless of their differences in color, religion, beliefs, gender]

P 44: (...) um espaço onde todos, independente de qualquer diferença tenha a possibilidade de ter autonomia, mobilidade e sinta-se integrado. *[(...) a space where everyone, regardless of any differences, has the possibility of autonomy, mobility, and feels integrated]*

P58: (...) simplesmente ignorar as diferenças e tratar todos igualmente. *[(...) simply ignoring differences and treating everyone equally.]*

P60: (...) aplicação na prática do espaço e oportunidade para todos, sem olhar para genero, raça ou outro fator. *[(...) implementing in practice a space and opportunity for everyone, without considering gender, race, or any other factor.]*

By claiming not to "see" race, these individuals often end up inadvertently perpetuating racial inequality without addressing racism. This does not mean that people fail to acknowledge racial differences, but rather underscores that society's perception of race is socially constructed. People may recognize diversity and multiculturalism, yet still not acknowledge systemic racism (Ferdman, 2017).

3.1.1.2 – Unconscious Biases

Still from a romanticized perspective of diversity, many responses addressed the issue of unconscious bias, believing that the mere acknowledgment of these biases is sufficient to solve workplace problems, such as racism and prejudice. Below are some examples of this idea:

P17: (...) Trabalhar a favor dos vieses, ou seja, entender que eles existem e existirão pra muitas coisas, mas que é possível fazer sua dessensibilização e desconstrução, entender porque nasceram e continuam existindo. Saber de onde vieram e para onde podem/precisam ir. *[(...) Working in favor of biases, that is, understanding that they exist and will exist for many things, but it is possible to desensitize and deconstruct them, understand why they were born and continue to exist. Knowing where they came from and where they can/need to go.]*

P49: (...) Todos temos os nossos preconceitos inconscientes e muitas vezes associados à nossa cultura em específico. Neste sentido, é necessário acordar as pessoas para a que estejam atentos a esses vieses inconscientes. *[(...) We all have*

our unconscious biases, often associated with our specific culture. In this sense, it is necessary to awaken people to be attentive to these unconscious biases.]

The rise of diversity and diversity initiatives in organizations has been a significant trend, but it is not without its challenges. As discussions on diversity and discrimination issues become more prominent, they can reveal blind spots, privilege, and question the meritocracy narrative. This can trigger negative reactions and feelings of anger, defensiveness, and threat, especially among high-status social groups, such as white males. Often, these conversations make them feel guilty and disadvantaged (Hebl et al 2020, citing Murray, 1993).

These negative and defensive reactions may be related to subtle forms of intergroup prejudice, as pointed out by Pettigrew & Meertens (1995). They warn that subtle prejudice, which manifests more covertly in Western societies, contributes to the maintenance of racial, ethnic, and religious stratification. This subtle prejudice involves components such as the defence of traditional values, which often blame victims and attribute unacceptable behaviour to members of the external group. Furthermore, it exaggerates cultural differences, creating harmful stereotypes, and denies positive emotional responses to the external group.

Additionally, although subtle discrimination may appear less obvious, it undeniably generates negative effects at both the individual and organizational levels (Hebl et al, 2020). This form of discrimination often persists due to resistance to change, which, according to Zimerman (1995), is a natural response when a group is confronted with the introduction of a new idea, approach, or significant change in its existing dynamics. This resistance can be motivated by various factors, such as fear of the unknown, threats to group stability, concerns about power or resource loss, among others. In summary, group theory recognizes that resistance is a natural part of the change process and addresses strategies to overcome this resistance and facilitate the transition to new ways of functioning for the group or organization (Zimerman, 1993).

According to Noon (2018), the current trend in diversity management focuses on so-called unconscious bias training. In this type of training, both managers and employees undergo online tests that mostly indicate the presence of unconscious biases. Subsequently, they are encouraged to discuss strategies to address these biases and ensure that they do not negatively influence interactions and decisions in the workplace. This approach gained prominence after the UK government announced the use of name-blind CVs for public sector recruitment, and reputable companies have also adopted similar initiatives.

3.1.2 The Problem of Solutions

Responses related to the second identified theme varied between attempts to miraculously solve the problems or approaches of evading responsibility, shifting it away from the affected individual:

P05: (...) se a organização não conseguir criar um ambiente inclusivo e acolhedor, pode ter dificuldades. . [(...) *if the organization cannot create an inclusive and welcoming environment, it may face difficulties.*]

P80: (...) a depender da cultura da empresa, não deveria ter dificuldades.
[(...) *depending on the company's culture, there shouldn't be any difficulties.*]

This notion of I want change, but I don't want to change brings to mind the term NIMBY - not in my backyard, which, according to Furst et al, (2023), originated in the 1980s in an article in the Christian Science Monitor. It reported on community groups' requests for hazardous waste treatment to be placed as far away as possible from residents, as they believed the area near the disposal site would be permanently damaged. This gave rise to the expression "NIMBY," which stands for "Not in My Backyard". According to Dear (1992), the term NIMBY represents residents' motivation to protect their space, meaning that residents often acknowledge that unwanted facilities are necessary but prefer them not to be close to their homes.

Once again, Bion's model for understanding how groups function can help comprehend the tendency of group members to seek simplistic and immediate solutions to the problems they face. He referred to this as "pairing," one of the three basic assumptions, where the group, in an attempt to avoid complex dilemmas, believes in something that will save it. Instead of dealing constructively with the issues at hand, group members may prefer to adopt simplistic or magical responses, such as unquestionably following a leader or seeking a "savior" who will solve all problems. This behavior can be a way to avoid confronting complicated realities and, instead, seek a quick solution that temporarily alleviates the group's anxiety (Zimmerman, 1995).

Three subthemes were identified, each in its own way, pointing to a belief that the solution lies in others and never in oneself:

3.1.2.1 - Companies with Rhetoric distant from practice

It is well-known that many companies embrace the discourse of DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) without the expected commitment to its effectiveness in everyday organizational practice. Saraiva and Irigaray (2009) demonstrate that corporate discourses, although formalized in organizational policies, have limited effectiveness due to the deep-seated presence of biases among employees, a certain level of managerial tolerance, and the absence of a collective sense of diversity. Both minorities and majorities have exhibited mutual biases and discriminatory attitudes, highlighting difficulties in respecting their differences. The

same authors say that managers often manifest biases, whether explicit or implicit, undermining the effectiveness of these policies within these units. In other words, there is a noticeable disconnect between rhetoric and diversity-related practices.

This issue is inherently complex as it deals with a societal problem that extends into the organizational realm. However, the problem also lies in the fact that many people believe that this responsibility begins and ends with the organization. The following responses reflect such thinking:

P 15: (...) É muito difícil ver empresas que realmente pregam o que falam. Muitas vezes estamos só na esfera de ações e projetos, mas pouca prática. [*"(...) It's very difficult to see companies that truly practice what they preach. Often, we're only in the realm of actions and projects, with little practical implementation."*]

P55: (...) Onde trabalho existe uma campanha forte pela inclusão e diversidade porém não vejo ações práticas nos departamentos de engenharia. [*"(...) Where I work, there is a strong campaign for inclusion and diversity, but I do not see practical actions in the engineering departments."*]

P61: (...) Infelizmente as empresas aderem em suma maioria ao programa com o intuito de cumprir cota de exigência legal. [*"(...) Unfortunately, the vast majority of companies primarily embrace the program to meet legal requirements."*]

P09: (...) Na prática as ações não acontecem como deveriam e o tema acaba sendo banalizado [*"(...) In practice, actions do not unfold as they should, and the topic ends up being trivialized."*]

P80: (...) importante é sensibilizar e mostrar o valor da DEI e não apenas fazer marketing [*"(...) What's important is to raise awareness and demonstrate the value of DEI, not just engage in marketing."*]

P10: (...) um discurso lindo maravilhoso, porém, a realidade é totalmente contraditória. [*"(...) Beautiful and wonderful speeches, but the reality is completely contradictory."*]

3.1.2.2 - The role of Leadership

A second theme analyzed from the questionnaires is the relative importance that many people attribute to leadership in the success or failure of DEI programs:

P14: (...) ter uma liderança preparada para lidar com os desafios de ter uma equipe diversa [*"(...) having leadership prepared to deal with the challenges of having a diverse team."*]

P25: (...) Ações de DEI necessitam ter um apoio maior da empresa, ou seja, precisa ter um apoio das altas lideranças. [*"(...) DEI initiatives need more support from the company, meaning it needs support from senior leadership."*]

P65: (...) Percebo que o incentivo da alta liderança nas pautas de DEI fazem total diferença. [*"(...) I perceive that strong support from top leadership in DEI matters makes a significant difference."*]

P11: (...) As lideranças precisam estar 100% conscientes e dispostas a agir para influenciar. [*"(...) Leadership needs to be 100% aware and willing to take action to influence."*]

Thinking of the leader as a role within the group, an important contribution from Group Theory that aligns well with this theme is the concept of "roles." According to Osório (1989), the healthier an individual is, the more likely they are to perform different roles. Assuming that this phenomenon occurs with other group members, it results in a rotation of roles, facilitating an exchange of stimuli, increasing self-perception frequencies, and feeding the process of self-awareness and change.

This perspective aligns with the dialectical concept of active adaptation by Pichón-Rivière (1983), which suggests that individuals, by transforming themselves, modify their environment, and by altering their environment, they modify themselves. A group is considered operative when it can exchange roles among its members, as this enables the flow of experiences and exchanges within the group. Conversely, a group in which roles remain rigid, whether formal or informal, tends to have a high level of conflict and limited exchange.

3.1.2.3 - Learning and training

The third and final subtheme related to the "problem of solutions" is Education and Training. Just like the previous ones, even though it is an important tool for DEI, many responses attribute greater weight to it, with the desire that it will put an end to the difficulties faced. Here are some examples of this theme:

P19: (...) Educar os colaboradores sobre a importância da diversidade e inclusão, e sobre como na prática todos podem colaborar para um ambiente mais inclusivo através de treinamentos; workshops e palestras; educar a liderança sobre como contratar com um olhar de diversidade [(...) *Educate employees about the importance of diversity and inclusion, and how everyone can contribute to a more inclusive environment through training, workshops, and lectures; educate leadership on hiring with a diversity perspective.*]

P27: (...) um programa de sensibilização e treinamento que enfatize a riqueza das diferenças e o potencial de aprendizado com novas pessoas e culturas. [(...) *A sensitization and training program that emphasizes the richness of differences and the potential for learning from new people and cultures.*]

P75: (...) Devem existir treinamentos e diretrizes da empresa para que as ações de DEI possam ser efetivas. [(...) *There should be company training and guidelines in place for DEI actions to be effective.*]

The importance of education for diversity is undeniable, especially in an increasingly interconnected and multicultural world. Through education, we can build bridges between different cultures, promote respect for differences, and cultivate a deeper understanding of the experiences of diverse groups. However, it is crucial to remember that education alone is not enough to promote true inclusion and equality. It is just the first step. Real change occurs when we apply what we have learned in our daily behavior, when we value diversity in our interactions, and when we actively work to overcome prejudices and stereotypes. Therefore, education is the foundation upon which we build a culture of respect and inclusion, but practical action and ongoing commitment are essential to effectively achieve diversity and equality (Mailhiot, 1991 *cit in* Lewin, 1988).

Roberson (2019) asserts that many companies introduce diversity training without understanding the actual needs. The author emphasizes the importance of assessing the type of training and the target audience in the context of diversity initiatives. Noon (2018) also cautions that there is no compelling evidence that the long-term effects of these training programs are sustainable when it comes to people's attitudes and affective outcomes. In other words, the author argues that the benefits of diversity training may be temporary and not enduring when it comes to changing attitudes and feelings toward diversity.

According to Senge (2017), team learning is the process of aligning and developing a team's ability to create the results its members truly desire. While it involves individual skills and areas of understanding, team learning is a collective discipline that encompasses the

mastery of dialogue and discussion practices, the two distinct forms of conversation among teams. While dialogue involves the free and creative exploration of complex and subtle issues, discussion presents and defends different points of view. Dialogue and discussion are complementary, but most teams lack the ability to distinguish between them and consciously transition from one to the other.

Group Theory, according to Moscovici (2003), highlights the importance of experiential learning and interaction in promoting personal development and the evolution of individuals' emotional processes. It emphasizes that mere acquisition of knowledge from literature is not sufficient; it is crucial to experience situations and interact with others to effectively learn and grow. Furthermore, it points out that this form of learning based on interaction can lead to significant changes in how people deal with leadership and group participation challenges. In summary, learning through experience and interaction can lead to a profound transformation in personal development and problem-solving skills.

CHAPTER 4

Conclusion

The results of this study raise reflections on the superficiality that can exist in the understanding of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in companies. The romanticized view of diversity, which often treats the issue as superficial and easily solvable or seeks miraculous solutions, may be intrinsically related to the resistances encountered in teams in the workplace, as shown by Group Theory. When diversity is viewed simplistically as a problem that can be quickly resolved, it tends to minimize the understanding of the complexities involved, such as cultural, gender, and life experience differences. This, in turn, leads to a lack of preparedness to deal with the real difficulties that arise when individuals from different backgrounds and perspectives work together. Resistance within teams can arise due to a lack of awareness and the necessary skills to effectively handle diversity.

After a recent literature database search, it is unfortunately notable that there is a scarcity of research employing Group Theory as a lens to analyze and provide fresh perspectives on diversity, equity, and inclusion. This theoretical approach can be crucial in shedding light on the complex dynamics surrounding these topics and can offer valuable insights for the development of more effective strategies in this domain. Therefore, it is essential that there is a greater investment in research exploring group interactions and their implications for promoting diversity and inclusion in businesses and society at large.

As Moscovici (2003) suggests, for transformations to occur in individuals, some form of internal imbalance or crisis is necessary to facilitate a change in perceptions, allowing for the introduction of new ideas, feelings, attitudes, and behaviors. Personal development is intrinsically linked to the experience of situations and interactions, going beyond mere knowledge acquired through literature. This type of learning, based on interaction, has the potential to generate significant changes in individuals' emotional processes, potentially resulting in new approaches to addressing issues related to leadership and group participation.

According to Van Der Zee & Paulus (2008), research has shown that multicultural groups tend to generate a greater number of high-quality solutions to problems and are better at establishing criteria for evaluating these alternatives compared to culturally homogeneous groups. It is easy to imagine how these advantages can be beneficial in a constantly changing world that demands continuous creativity and innovation. The same authors say it is important to recognize that, at the same time, encountering norms and values different from one's own can be perceived as threatening. Consequently, interactions among individuals with diverse norms and perspectives can lead to conflicts and tensions that can harm well-being and productivity.

This study provides several contributions. First, it offers a deeper understanding of group dynamics in the context of DEI practices. This helps clarify how group interactions influence the effectiveness of diversity and inclusion initiatives, bridging Group Theory with this increasingly prevalent theme in organizational life. Osório (2003) exemplifies effective communication as a benefit of Group Theory, where participants leave with some change in their way of thinking, acting, or feeling.

Second, it provides new insights into how the diverse composition of group members affects fundamental aspects such as cohesion, communication, leadership, and decision-making. Shore et al. (2011) discuss the advantages of belonging to a group, emphasizing that loyalty and cooperation among group members contribute to individual security.

Lastly, this study can help companies understand that there are no magical solutions to DEI-related issues. Instead, the group itself can be an instrument of change. Moscovici (2003) reminds us that it is essential to identify and discover the best way to use our resources and potential, trusting our abilities, leveraging our strengths, and dealing with our weaknesses.

The present study has some limitations that should be taken into consideration. A sample of individuals who are independent of each other, meaning they do not belong to the same group or organization, made it impossible to assess group phenomena from the same group based on their experiences, thus limiting the ability to relate the responses. It is crucial for future research to have a representative sample from the same organization.

The use of open-ended questions using an online survey offers interesting possibilities (Braun et al., 2020), but also limited the ability to probe for more detailed responses and clarify specific points, as compared with the more traditional interview format.

Future research on Diversity in the workplace from the perspective of Group Theory could investigate the long-term effects of DEI initiatives and perceived group phenomena, the impacts of exclusion, inclusion, and group belongingness. In a world that is constantly changing, understanding diversity, equity, and inclusion through group interactions and phenomena can lead to a deeper understanding of each other's realities and, consequently, greater awareness and responsibility for making diversity, equity, and inclusion not just special programs but a constant practice in every organization.

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Appendix

Questionario_mestrado

O presente estudo surge no âmbito de um projeto de investigação a decorrer no Iscte – Instituto Universitário de Lisboa, e tem por objetivo compreender a relação das Teorias de Grupo com a DEI (diversidade, equidade e inclusão) nas equipas de trabalho das organizações.

Por ser conduzido no Brasil e em Portugal, algumas perguntas utilizam termos que se aplicam a um ou outro país.

O estudo é realizado por Gerusa Roberta Martinelli de Almeida (grmaa@iscte-iul.pt), que poderá contactar caso pretenda esclarecer dúvidas ou partilhar comentários.

A sua participação no estudo, muito valorizada por contribuir para o avanço do conhecimento neste domínio da ciência, consiste em responder 4 perguntas abertas e de forma anónima, que levam em média 12 minutos ao todo. É importante que responda da forma mais honesta possível, sabendo que não há resposta certa ou errada. Não existem riscos significativos expectáveis associados à participação no estudo .

A participação é voluntária, podendo interromper em qualquer momento sem ter de prestar qualquer justificativa, além de também ser anónima e confidencial. Os dados obtidos destinam-se apenas a tratamento estatístico e nenhuma resposta será analisada ou reportada individualmente.

Aceita participar?

Não (1)

Sim (2)

Agradeço sua participação, reforçando que em seguida encontrará 4 perguntas abertas. É importante que responda da forma mais honesta possível, sabendo que não há resposta certa ou errada.

DEI 1 - EM SUAS PALAVRAS, O QUE O CONJUNTO DE AÇÕES DE DEI (DIVERSIDADE, EQUIDADE E INCLUSÃO) SIGNIFICA NA PRÁTICA DO DIA A DIA DE UMA EQUIPE DE TRABALHO ?

2 - QUANDO UMA PESSOA É CONTRATADA NAS AÇÕES DE DEI (DIVERSIDADE, EQUIDADE E INCLUSÃO), QUAIS DESAFIOS ACREDITA QUE PODE VIVENCIAR EM UMA EQUIPE DE TRABALHO?

3 – CONSIDERANDO AS BARREIRAS E FACILITADORES DE IMPLEMENTAR AÇÕES DE DEI (DIVERSIDADE, EQUIDADE E INCLUSÃO) NAS ORGANIZAÇÕES, O QUE ACREDITA SER MAIS NECESSÁRIO PARA O SUCESSO DE TAIS AÇÕES AO NÍVEL DAS EQUIPES DE TRABALHO?

4 - COMO PREPARAR-SE PARA AS ADVERSIDADES QUE A INCLUSÃO APRESENTA PARA A EQUIPE DE TRABALHO? (EX: COSTUMES DE VESTIMENTAS, RELIGIOSOS, VOCABULÁRIO...)

Em que país trabalha?

Brasil (1)

Portugal (2)

Outro. Qual? (3) _____

Qual a sua idade?

QUAL SEU SEXO BIOLÓGICO?

Masculino (1)

Feminino (2)

Intersexo (pessoas que nascem com características sexuais biológicas que não se encaixam nas categorias) (3)

Prefere não dizer (4)

Qual sua identidade de gênero?

- Cisgênero (identidade de gênero corresponde ao gênero que lhe foi atribuído no nascimento) (1)
- Transgênero (quem nasceu com determinado sexo biológico, e não se identifica com seu corpo ou gênero) (2)
- Prefere não dizer (3)
- Não é apresentada uma opção que descreva a minha identidade de gênero (por favor, especifique) (4) _____

Qual a sua situação profissional?

- Trabalho por conta própria (1)
- Trabalho por conta de outrem/Trabalho registrado (2)
- Não estou trabalhando no momento (3)
- Estou em aposentadoria/reforma (4)
- Outra situação. Qual? (5)
- _____

Exerce ou exerceu alguma atividade ligada a programas de diversidade, inclusão e equidade?

- Não (1)

Sim (2)

Exerce ou exerceu alguma posição de liderança?

Não (1)

Sim (2)

Como caracteriza a dimensão/tamanho da organização onde trabalha?
(se não está trabalhando, indique a última experiência de trabalho que teve)

até 10 colaboradores/as (1)

10-50 colaboradores/as (2)

51-250 colaboradores/as (3)

251-500 colaboradores/as (4)

mais de 500 colaboradores/as (5)

Conforme adiantado, o estudo incide sobre compreender a relação das Teorias de Grupo com a DEI (diversidade, equidade e inclusão) nas equipas de trabalho das organizações.

Reforçamos os dados de contacto que pode utilizar caso deseje colocar uma dúvida, partilhar algum comentário, ou assinalar a sua intenção de receber informação sobre os principais resultados e conclusões do estudo: Gerusa Roberta Martinelli de Almeida (grmaa@iscte-iul.pt)

Existe algo mais que queira partilhar sobre este tema? Por favor, deixe seu comentário no espaço abaixo.
