

**EXAMINING CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN ORGANISATIONAL COMMUNICATION: A CASE STUDY  
OF WORLDWIDE INDUSTRIAL SYSTEMS ENGINEERING IN SOUTH AFRICA**

by

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submitted in accordance with the requirements for

the research proposal of

**MASTER OF ARTS**

in the subject

**Communication**

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

**Date of submission: 22 March 2026**

## DECLARATION

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## DEDICATION

*In loving memory of my late dearest mother and my late God Given Gift husband.*

### **To my late Mom Phaswane Dorcas Thongoane: 1952/05/18 – 2018/01/20**

My dearest mother, I dedicate this degree to you, because you were looking forward to seeing me complete it but God had other plans for you. In 2017 when I registered and my proposal was approved, that made you happy, and so did looking forward to see me graduate. Even though it was hard for you to see me focusing on my studies while taking care of you, you still encouraged me. In 2018, while I was busy with my dissertation, you just couldn't fight anymore and gave your last breath. I tried to continue but depression got the better of me and I had to defer my studies. Look at me now - seven years later, I managed to make it to the end. Rest in peace Mbokoto.

### **To my late God Given Gift (GGG), my Love, My Husband Mphasha Alfred Kganyago: 1987/05/14 – 2025/03/06**

This dissertation is dedicated to you, my love. Reflecting back, I recall how you signed as my witness when I submitted my proposal. It is heart breaking that you are no longer present to witness me submitting the final dissertation. Thank you for encouraging and pushing me to re-register and follow my wish of pursuing my academics. You have been such a support structure. You worked hard to make sure that my fees were paid and took care of the kids and household when I was swamped with my studies. Thank you for leaving me with such a precious gift. I will forever cherish it and you. Rest in peace "Casino, The Mpha, MphaShatadi".

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge and thank my God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and the underground gang-gang. You guys rock my world!

Secondly, this dissertation would have not been a success if not for my wonderful supervisor; Prof. Tshidzumba, Aaron Ndivhoniswani and fellow group study colleagues (my upcoming professors and doctors); Matebogo Fedile Calestina Mokhothu, Yasmin Mayanja, and Zamaqwabe Christina Sishi. Without your consistent support and guidance, I wouldn't have come this far. Even though you made me cry after our first family group meeting when giving me constructive criticisms which felt like a bash, I am truly privileged to be enriched by your patience, encouragement, and insights.

My appreciation also extends to the World-Wide Industrial Systems Engineering (WWISE) Company and Marketing Manager Gundo Mukwevho for granting me the opportunity to use their organisation as my field of study.

Furthermore, I would like to extend my gratitude to all the participants in the study and answered my e-mails and WhatsApps. They replied to someone who was not their colleague, yet readily offered their expertise and made themselves available at such short time within their busy schedules.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge my family for the sacrifices made, prayers, and support given during this journey full of emotions, fatigue, and traumas. I appreciate and love you all.

- Thank you, Daddy Dearest: Bishop T.M Thongoane you have been a support structure and blessing. May God keep you for me.
- Thank you, my lovely brothers and sisters: Nelson Thongoane "Bra Nesha", Maki Mohlabane "Maggy-Bee", Nico Thongoane "Mnicola", Ooh Nkosi'yam Metja Boledi Thongoane "The Metjas".
- Thank you, little sister, Sesi Kagiso Thongoane, you really played a big role and filled the gap with my routines and taking care of the kids. Much love and appreciation.
- Thank you, Rakgadi MK. You are a star; you rock! God bless you.
- Thank you to my babies, Mohau, Itumeleng and Kelebogile Kganyago. My bundles of joy, you have motivated me to follow through despite all odds.

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COMMUNICATION OF THE WORLDWIDE INDUSTRIAL SYSTEMS  
ENGINEERING COMPANY, SOUTH AFRICA**

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Elsie Naudé

## **ABSTRACT**

The research project examined how people from various cultural backgrounds communicate during their duties at the Worldwide Industrial Systems Engineering company in South Africa (WWISE). The primary objective was to better understand how cultural diversity influences workplace communication, what works effectively, what causes misconceptions, and how communication may be improved. Furthermore, the study examined how diverse cultures impacts organisational communication processes, with particular attention to values, language, and communication styles. Guided by Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory and Edward Hall's high-context and low-context communication theory which is a key model used to understand and interpret communication across culturally diverse teams.

The qualitative study was conducted at the company's National offices, which accommodate employees from various cultural, linguistic, and racial backgrounds. The researcher concentrated on a group of staff members from various departments (such as the marketing and human resource departments) and different levels of the business. The 15 participants included both management and general employees. The researcher used ATLAS.ti software to analyse data collected from sources such as interviews transcripts, observation notes, and the organisation's communication policies and internal and stakeholder strategies documents

To collect data, the researcher employed semi-structured open-ended interviews that allowed participants to discuss their own experiences and opinions. The researcher carefully examined the replies to discover common themes and issues associated with communication in a diverse workplace.

This study emphasises the relevance of cultural awareness in the workplace and provides practical recommendations for better communication and understanding. The findings could help WWISE and other organisations develop better training and support systems to establish stronger, more inclusive teams.

The findings revealed that while WWISE has adopted diversity and inclusion measures, these measures are not yet fully integrated throughout all levels of operations. The organisation's cultural seminars and communication trainings raised awareness but intercultural competency has not been maintained through the required ongoing management and reinforcement training.

The study made several recommendations, which WWISE should consider in order to manage cultural diversity to improve inventiveness, problem solving skills, and innovation in the organisation's teams and departments.

## KEY WORDS

Cultural diversity, Organisational communication, Organisational culture, Communication policies, Stakeholder relations, Intercultural communication, World Wide Industrial and Systems Engineering.

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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **1. Introduction and Background**

Every interaction between individuals involves methods of communication, and nothing in the professional globe can be accomplished without efficient communication with managers, staff members, and clients (Shonubi & Akintaro, 2016). As a result, the globe's most successful organisations are those that have perfected their methods of communicating.

Researchers of organisational communication have studied the mutually impacting relationship between technological advancements and human interaction, and discovered that technology is conceptualised and used in ways that both shape and are shaped by an organisation's existing communication practices and culture (McPhee, Poole & Iverson, 2014). It is clear that organisational communication plays a crucial role in the way people interact with one another in the workplace, and that there is no "one size fits all" approach when it comes to managing cultural diversity in an organisation (Bhasin 2023).

Darby (2023) defines cultural diversity as "the presence of various ethnic or cultural groups within a community". It is the basis for people's beliefs, determines their behaviour, and provides them with a feeling of being. On the other hand, Jacob, Gaikar and Paul (2020) state that cultural diversity has an impact when the productiveness of an organisation grows rapidly. Cleary (2015) acknowledged that a working environment is a setting where individuals from diverse backgrounds come together for employment and to accomplish organisational goal and strategies. As such, diverse employees and stakeholders present an organisation with unique problems relating to interaction. The current study looked into the cultural diversity of World Wide Industrial and Systems Engineers (WWISE) company in order to advise the organisation on how to cater for cultural diversity at their workplace.

WWISE organisation specialises in assisting companies with International Standard Organisation (ISO) management systems. Their core functions include consulting and implementation to help organisations implement ISO standards by aligning their management systems with the requirements of various ISO standards, auditing services, maintenance plans to ensure ongoing compliance with ISO standards, reducing the risk of suspension, training in areas like project management, finance, engineering and business, tailored towards meeting the professional

requirements of all over the world, and providing an online e-learning platform that covers various ISO standards.

WWISE ensures that each organisation has an effective ISO Management System that integrates business processes and real-time working activities so that employees can embed the principles of ISO Standards, as well as legal and other requirements in preparation for ISO conformance (World Wide Industrial and Systems Engineers Website 2024). Therefore, understanding the impact that cultural diversity has on organisations and updating their communication policies will enable organisation to compete favourably in modern competitive business environments, both locally and internationally.

The theoretical foundation of the study was formed through literature review focusing on the influence that cultural diversity has on organisational communication, and examination of WWISE's communication policies and how their policies relate to cultures of their employees internally and between the organisation and their stakeholders while managing and maintaining a healthy relationship.

In Freeman's (1984) stakeholder management framework, the three levels of analysis are the rational, the process, and the transactional levels. The "foremost viewpoint" or level is the rational, which requires understanding the organisation's stakeholders. Secondly, the process level focuses on organisational procedures, analysing the procedures used to oversee the organisation's connections with its stakeholders and understanding the culture of work that will be acceptable with regard to stakeholder management in the organisation. The final or transactional level involves the extent of communication that the organisation has with stakeholders and whether it fits both the stakeholder strategy and its internal procedures to manage stakeholders. These levels or points of discussion will not only assist WWISE but also other organisations to have an in-depth knowledge of how diverse cultures communicate, a beneficial aspect across an ever-changing globe.

The research data was collected using qualitative methodology, from a proposed sample of 15 respondents which consisted of the clients, directors, managers from the human resource and marketing department, and general employees focusing on HR, Marketing and Communication units within WWISE. The researcher used a mixed-methods approach by collecting primary data consisting of in-depth interviews, observation and open-ended interviews, and secondary data through studying the organisations' communication policies and internal and stakeholder strategies. The theoretical foundation of the study was formed by the literature review.

## **1.1 Description of the study problem**

### **1.1.1 Problem Statement**

Cultural diversity insights into cultures' communication behaviour, values, norms, gender, religion, language attitude and non-verbal communication are continuously evolving, while communication in organisations is influenced by those cultural differences experienced on a day-to-day basis. Despite the growing cultural diversity within modern workplaces, many organisations struggle to develop communication practices that effectively accommodate employees from diverse cultural backgrounds. Although WWISE has adopted diversity initiatives, it remains unclear how cultural diversity influences internal communication processes and stakeholder engagement within the organisation. This study therefore examines how cultural diversity shapes organisational communication practices at WWISE. According to Ellis and Yair (2008), a research problem is defined as "a declaration concerning an area to be concerned of, a situation to be addressed, a difficulty that must be eliminated, or an unsettling issue found in scholarly literature, theory, or practice that emphasises the importance of meaningful understanding and purposeful research". WWISE's current communication policies were studied to address the factors and barriers related to cultural diversity that can also impact the organisation's internal communication and stakeholder relations management and that may hinder their daily organisational goals and success. Understanding the importance of cultural diversity could be a crucial component of successful organisational communication among employee teams and clients.

### **1.1.2 Rationale**

The research results will be valuable for organisations that are willing to continuously refine their approaches to diversity and equity. It is essential to bear in mind that cultural diversity in work environments extends above racial beliefs. It includes an extensive variety of factors such as life experience, gender, work functions, political affiliation, and sexual orientation. The researcher investigated the factors that most often affect communication within an intercultural organisation. the factors include high-context cultures vs. low-context cultures, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion and spiritual beliefs, cultural background, physical and cognitive abilities and disabilities, personality and thinking style, and political beliefs. The study can also serve as source of information for scholars with an interest in cultural diversity. The study will also benefit South African organisations who are in the midst of cultural change and transformation.

## **1.2 Definitions of key concepts**

According to Cong Lin (2020), cultural diversity is the fact of the existence of different diverse knowledge, beliefs, artistic endeavours, ethical behaviour, legislation, customs, beliefs, spoken languages, capabilities and impairments, races, cultural backgrounds, races, nationalities, and different sexual orientations of humankind.

Bhasin (2023) defines organisational communication as “a vital aspect of any organisation that contributes an essential part in establishing a successful company, as well as an approach of transmitting and disseminating insights such as organisational objectives, strategies for accomplishing those objectives, regulations, rules, and policies, and other little-known facts”.

Milton and Bennett (2013) believe that intercultural communication involves group relations and should emphasise the respect and recognition of different cultures, seek shared change, and encourage the growth of intercultural awareness on the part of individuals and organisations to enable empathic understanding and proficient cooperation of actions across cultural differences.

## **1.3 Purpose of the study**

The study investigated cultural diversity in organisational communication with a view to providing suggestions relating to communication policies that cater for cultural diversity in an organisation, in order to improve their internal communication and stakeholder relations management. The study further aimed to identify the types of diversity in a workplace and the barriers created by cultural diversity with which an organisation can be faced. To this end, insights regarding the cultures' communication behaviour, values, norms, gender, religion, language attitude and non-verbal communication were outlined.

## **1.4 Research Objectives and Questions**

### *1.4.1 Research Questions*

The research questions of the study are:

- What is the impact of cultural diversity on organisational communication effectiveness?
- How does cultural diversity shape and inform the development and implementation of organisational communication policies?
- How do organisational communication strategies address and accommodate cultural diversity?

### *1.4.2 Research Objectives*

The objectives of the study are:

- To examine the impact of cultural diversity on organisational communication effectiveness.
- To identify how cultural diversity shapes and informs the development and implementation of organisational communication policies.
- To highlight the organisational communication strategies that address and accommodate cultural diversity.

## **1.5 Chapters outline**

**Chapter 1:** The introduction to and the orientation of the study. The chapter defined the problem statement, research questions, and objectives, and indicated the significance of the study.

**Chapter 2:** The literature review outlines the existing scholarly theories on the impact that cultural diversity has on organisational communication. The aspects that are covered identify the factors relating to cultural diversity in organisational communication, highlight how cultural diversity can create barriers to communication, and examine the importance of cultural diversity in an organisation.

**Chapter 3:** The chapter presents the research methodology, research design, sampling methods, data analysis, and data collection strategies, as well as the limitations and ethical impacts of the study.

**Chapter 4:** The results and an analysis of the findings will be presented in this chapter. An evaluation of the data collected will also feature in this chapter.

**Chapter 5:** Recommendations and conclusions of the study will be highlighted in this chapter.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Organisational communication drives productivity, quality of work, relationships, and even loyalty. To promote workplace equality, South African organisations must implement inclusive policies (Bhasin, 2023). The research to date emphasises the significance of cultural understanding and diversity. This chapter will outline the existing scholarly theories on the impact that cultural diversity has on organisational communication. The points of discussion will enable the reader to identify the factors related to cultural diversity in organisational communication, highlight how cultural diversity can create barriers to communication, and examine the importance of cultural diversity in an organisation. It is important to note that effective communication, the kind that keeps an organisation running, allows each person to bring his or her individuality as contribution.

### **2.2 Cultural diversity context in an organisation**

According to Darby (2023), cultural diversity in an organisation raises issues based on differences among people's preferences and perceptions. The understanding and managing of diversity have become vital as managers within an organisation must be able to comprehend the dynamics in workforce teams that are diverse. However, should the issues of diversity be appropriately addressed, an organisation efficiency will rise, and its employees will be more enthusiastic and devoted to their jobs and to the organisation itself.

Diversity in an organisation can have several meanings. From the perspective of Reynolds's (2019) theory, it relates to matching the mix of employees to the makeup of the clientele in order to maximise efficiency and effectiveness. Therefore, cultural diversity context in an organisation has resulted in an increasingly competitive and globalised worldwide economy shifting the public perception.

For WWISE to be able to manage diversity it needs to strive to improve on comparable opportunities and activities delivered by other organisations around the world, looking into organisational backgrounds, the variety of their consumers and stakeholders, and the makeup of country population (Migiro, 2024).

With regard to this study's objective of identifying the impact of cultural diversity on organisational communication effectiveness, Darby (2024) states that studies on cultural diversity in organisations have found that diverse workplace teams are more likely to have poor cohesiveness and

interpersonal integration, turnover, conflict, low job satisfaction, low trust, communication issues and stress than groups with more uniform characteristics. The next section will elaborate on the impact of cultural diversity dimensions.

### **2.3 The impact of cultural diversity dimensions on organisational communication**

Cultural diversity has an impact on organisational communication and presents numerous communication obstacles that could lead to challenges involving misinterpretation and misunderstanding within varied working groups (Cong Lin, 2020). Samovar, Porter, and McDaniel (2009) identify factors that most often create miscommunication and misunderstanding in culturally diverse organisations.

#### *2.3.1 Stereotypes*

People have the tendency to draw inferences and assess other people based on their previous experiences.

#### *2.3.2 Language*

This is a crucial barrier, as differences in language and the potential for meaning distortion during translation greatly increase the chances of misunderstanding. Another element that causes communication challenges is that certain individuals respond unfavourably to different communication styles expressed in language.

#### *2.3.3 Culture*

Culture may impact an organisation through how employees perceive their roles, work ethics, duties requirements, fashion appearance, communication style, the amount in which employees believe they should be engaged with organisational changes or decision-making, work-life balance and managing to achieve goals whether working independently or as a team (Samovar, Porter, & McDaniel, 2009).

#### *2.3.4 Religion*

Different religions impact organisational cohesion in ways such as days that employees perceive as important according to their culture and religion. For example, religions have special and different holidays, therefore should each employee request to be excused at work for a certain holiday and the requests arrive within a broad variety of times and dates annually, it might potentially pose problems for rostering or productivity in an organisation. In addition, people with different religions have different views on a range of issues which can cause conflict amongst

employees. For example, sexual orientation, habits and an appropriate way of dressing, the perceiving of marriage and the roles of men and women can be contentious issues (Samovar, Porter, & McDaniel, 2009).

### *2.3.5 Gender*

Some organisations still evidence gender-based discrimination in certain management roles. For an example, should there be a rise of females in a traditionally male dominated workforce, or vice versa, the employees tend to have a sense of discrimination towards the different gender. Some organisations still promote females participating at low levels rather than senior levels due to perceptions such as that of females being care givers in their households. The employers believe that having more females at management level than males can have an effect on the organisation's turnover rates. A number of organisations make gender assumptions such as assuming that a person who is biologically male is psychologically identified as such, which can lead to employees with different gender identities becoming isolated due to confusion and lack of understanding. A lack of consciousness about transgenderism might result in an impulsive reaction to employees who are still in the process to transition. Employers and employees must understand that not all transgender employees will choose to disclose their identify. Another impact of gender could be that of a homophobic joke. Homophobic jokes could make it uncomfortable for other personalities of non-heterosexual orientation to be open to disclose their sexual orientation or they may feel that they are bullied at work, which can affect their productivity (Samovar, Porter, & McDaniel, 2009).

### *2.3.6 Ethnicity*

Prejudice may be an issue in organisations that employ people of various races and ethnicities, possibly more so in some nations than others, and it can be difficult to deal with should it develop in employees' way of thinking. Expectations, or mistaken presumptions, could be frequently formed by employers about a potential employee or current employee based on their racial or ethnic heritage, which could result in individuals who do not meet the supposed categories associated with their race or ethnicity feeling disadvantaged. Another impact could stem from conflicts caused by historical events cherished by employees from different racial or ethnic backgrounds (Samovar, Porter, & McDaniel, 2009).

### *2.3.7 Disability*

Despite the fact that several countries have anti-discrimination legislation in place, people living with disabilities may still be discriminated against in the recruitment process, which leads to

organisations being exposed to legal actions. On the other hand, other employees or competing candidates may believe that individuals with disabilities were employed as part of quota, which could lead to an impression of indifference and those employees or candidates also feeling discriminated against (Samovar, Porter, & McDaniel, 2009).

## **2.4 Multicultural workforce within the South African organisations**

South Africa's transition from apartheid to democracy in 1994 had a profound impact on workforce composition and management. The Employment Equity Act (No. 55 of 1998) was enacted to promote equality and abolish prejudice (Republic of South Africa. 1998).

Horwitz and Jain (2011) state that a multicultural workforce in South African organisations symbolises the country's multicultural population and complex sociocultural past, especially following the apartheid era. Managing diversity has been a major issue in human resource and organisational literature, with emphasis on both the problems and advantages of multiculturalism.

According to Booysen (2007), cultural diversity in the South African workforce it is more than just a trendy topic, it is the key component of developing an innovative and competitive workforce. WWISE exhibits a rich cultural diversity, varied ideas, experiences, and backgrounds, which can bring growth to the organisation. In the highly competitive business environment of today, WWISE should always ensure that it promotes diversity to attract and retain top personnel, inspire creative thinking, and promote success. When employees are acknowledged and appreciated for their work and for who they are, they become more invested, productive, and dedicated to the organisation's success. South Africa's population is exceptionally diversified. Embracing diversity in the workplace not only promotes greater cultural principles of equality and inclusivity, but it also provides various benefits to employers (Reuters 2024).

According to a study undertaken by the Commission for Employment Equity (2024), diversity in senior management positions has improved. To really understand the importance of diversity in the South African workplace, it is necessary to evaluate existing statistics. There may be several organisations that still need to guarantee equal opportunity at all management levels.

According to Reuters (2024) in 2019, Black Africans made up 79.6% of the workforce at the lowest professional level, but only 39.8% at the highest management level. Coloured people accounted for 9.7% at the lowest level and 11% at the highest level of management. Asian individuals represented 6.8% of the lowest level and 5.9% of the upper management level. Finally, white people made up 4.0% at the lowest level and 42.2% at the highest level of management.

According to the Department of Employment and Labour Annual Report (2024), Black South Africans comprise 13.8% of top management positions while constituting 80% of the economically engaged population. White South Africans possess 62.1% of senior management jobs, although making up only 8% of the economically engaged population. Women occupy 26.5% of top management jobs, while men hold 73.5%.

To add another facet to these figures, the Spencer (2023) report states that “women occupy 35% of board positions across the Johannesburg Stock Exchange's (JSE) top 50 companies, 36% of board members are from historically disadvantaged South African (HDSA) backgrounds, and in calculation, women account for 18% of executive directors”.

These statistics demonstrate the importance of continuing to address the obstacles and prejudices that prevent people from different backgrounds from advancing to higher-level positions. It is critical for WWISE to create fair opportunities in which people are judged based on their qualifications, abilities, and potential rather than their gender, disability, religion, and race or ethnicity. Globalisation has raised the need for South African organisations to efficiently manage diverse teams, both locally and internationally.

## **2.5 The importance of organisational communication**

The importance of intercultural communication in an organisation is that it subsequently enables companies to establish collaborations with diverse perspectives and talents, hence improving innovation and generating revenue growth (Darby, 2023). To have a more comprehensive understanding of cultural diversity, organisations must acknowledge and consider several kinds of diversity, such as gender, ethnicity, the LGBT community, age, and workers' disabilities, just to mention a few.

## **2.6 Organisational communications models and approaches**

The current research aimed to highlight the organisational communication strategies that address and accommodate cultural diversity; therefore, the researcher identified organisational communication approaches and models that WWISE could consider when formulating their communication strategies to relate to their diverse employees. A detailed explanation is provided of the linear, interactional, and transactional models to better comprehend cultural diversity in the context of organisations, especially within diverse cultures such as South Africa (Wood, 2009). These models provide frameworks of how relationships are formed and communication takes place in different settings.

### *2.6.1 Linear Model*

The linear communication model explains communication that occurs in only one direction. The sending party transmits the communication and sends it to the recipient. Culture influences the way in which signals are delivered from sender to recipient, with the assumption that the culture of dominance determines the standards. In addition, a diverse linear model focuses on uniformity and adaptation, with little room for feedback or mutual impact (Wood, 2009). When addressing their communication strategies, WWISE needs to look into frequently applying diversity efforts which employees are required to adapt to based their policies. That will assist with simplifying cultural processes and not overlook mutual adaptation or the diversity of multicultural interactions.

### *2.6.2 Interactional Model*

The interactional model is a two-way process where participants take turns as sender and receiver, engaging in a cycle of exchange. The discussion is participatory when the sender delivers a message to the receiver, the message is decoded and feedback is returned, resulting in a two-way discussion (Wood, 2009). There is no interruption in communication. Cultural diversity within WWISE can be addressed by encouraging active participation, which will allow employees to engage in interactions from different cultural perspectives in the organisation. The management should also consider cultural differences and should promote intercultural communication. Furthermore, the organisation should foster respect and collaboration amongst employees through generating diversity training and inclusive leadership opportunities.

### *2.6.3 Transactional Model*

Our natural daily interactions follow the transactional model approach. This approach allows for simultaneous communication between the transmitter and receiver of information. Information is encoded and decoded in overlapping ways. In the transactional model, communication is seen as an ongoing, circular process. We are constantly affecting and are affected by those we communicate with. While the sender finishes a sentence, the receiver has begun to think about what to say next. This procedure does not imply that communicators are constantly interrupting each other during speech, which could be regarded as being rude and coming from an individual with no respect for other cultures (Barnlund, 2008). Diversity in a transactional model is considered as collaborated and dependent on the environment, that is, transforming as it evolves. WWISE cultural identities have been challenged and are not inherent within their multicultural teams. The organisation needs to continuously support and adapt to a diverse organisational culture based on accurate representation of communication with all of its stakeholders and employees.

## **2.7 Organisational culture and communication climate linkages**

The literature further highlights the important connection between organisational culture and communication climate, emphasising their combined impact on employee engagement, organisational identification, workforce culture and leadership communication; communication climate as an employment resource; organisational trust and change preparedness; work climate and organisational culture; and implications for practice (Böhm et al., 2022).

### *2.7.1 Communication climate and organisational identification*

A transparent and interactive communication climate strengthens staff engagement within the organisation, resulting in improved support for changing organisational activities. This encouraging setting promotes loyalty and participation, both of which are necessary for a change toward positive reactions among employees.

### *2.7.2 Workforce culture and leadership communication*

Effective leadership communication promotes a respectful workplace culture by encouraging both respectful participation (mutual respect among employees) and independent respect (recognition of individual efforts). This culture, in turn, enhances satisfaction with employment and well-being for workers.

### *2.7.3 Communication climate as an employment resource*

A positive communication climate has been highlighted as a valuable employment resource that boosts teamwork. Internal organisational communication is strongly associated with employee engagement, which has been defined by enthusiasm, commitment, and incorporation, according to studies in a variety of industries, including education and healthcare.

### *2.7.4 Organisational trust and change preparedness*

Organisational trust, which is built using clear and helpful communication, is an important factor in employees' willingness for change. Employees who trust their organisation are more inclined to embrace change and contribute to its effective execution.

### *2.7.5 Work climate and organisational culture*

A favourable work climate, built on assistance and gratitude, increases commitment to organisational values and cohesiveness among teams. The setting demonstrates and reinforces the fundamental organisational diversity, emphasising the significance of a positive working atmosphere in accomplishing organisational objectives.

### *2.7.6 Implications for practice*

Organisations that want to increase employee involvement and promote effective change in their operations should prioritise building an empowering communication atmosphere (Rita, 2019). This includes:

- Encouraging transparent and collaborative communication by fostering openness and involvement throughout all levels of the organisation.
- Management communicating in a polite and supportive manner to foster trust and a positive atmosphere at a workplace. It is important to bear in mind that employees spend most of their day at work.
- Building organisational trust: Management needs to develop and retain trust within an organisation by communicating honestly and consistently with other employees and stakeholder or clients.
- Improving workplace climate by establish an environment in which employees feel appreciated and encouraged while adhering to organisational standards.

WWISE should incorporate these techniques to enhance the relationship between organisational culture and communication climate in order to result in better employee performance and more efficient operations.

## **2.8 The relevance of multicultural settings within an organisation**

Communication in a multicultural organisation might be difficult when it comes to face-to-face interactions. Every culture has its own set of underlying ideas and preferences, making it difficult to get your point across effectively at times. Even without a language barrier, cultural communication may be complex (Mohammad & Abir 2023). The following section presents Mohammad and Abir's (2023) top ten suggestions for cultural communication that organisations can take into consideration when developing cultural diversity strategies that shape and inform the development and implementation of organisational communication policies.

### *2.8.1 Practice etiquette*

Cultures have various communication styles. Some cultures expect a certain level of formality at the beginning of interpersonal communication, and there are various other conventions. Each culture has a unique way of expressing politeness, for example, burping in public and not saying excuse me in western culture can be considered rather rude and not having good etiquette; most

African cultures, however, perceive it as the ancestor's communication therefore it cannot be regarded as rude when a person burps in public (Mohammad & Abir, 2023).

### *2.8.2 Avoid slang*

Management and employees should avoid slang at all costs, because even the most learned non-native English speaker may have trouble with grasping English sayings, slang, and idioms. People could comprehend the literal meaning of phrases that are being spoken, but not the context or meaning. As a result, as an individual, you risk being misinterpreted or insulting others (Mohammad & Abir, 2023).

### *2.8.3 Speak slowly*

Although English is commonly used as the primary language in diverse settings, it is not ideal to speak at your normal conversational tone and pace. Adjusting your speed, as well as speaking properly and accurately, will benefit the recipient. Divide your speech into short, distinct chunks, giving the listener time to translate and absorb what you say as you go. However, refrain from slowing down too much or it may appear overbearing. If the person you are conversing with speaks too quickly or has an accent that makes it difficult for you to hear them, don't be hesitant to politely request that they slow down the conversation (Mohammad & Abir, 2023).

### *2.8.4 Keep communication simple*

There is no reason to complicate discussions by including technical or academic jargon. As an individual you need to keep things simple. Two-syllable words are far easier to understand than three-syllable words, while one-syllable terms outperform two-syllable ones. Respond with "Please do this quickly" rather than "Please do this in an efficient manner" (Mohammad & Abir, 2023).

### *2.8.5 Exercise attentive listening*

Active listening is a highly effective method for improving communication. Repeating or recapping what the other person has said to check that you have understood them accurately and offering clarification can be a good practice as long as it is not overdone during a conversation, because it may be disturbing to the speaker. This promotes relationships and teamwork and ensures that vital information is neither overlooked nor misunderstood (Mohammad & Abir, 2023).

### *2.8.6 Take turns to talk*

To allow an interaction to flow more effortlessly, concentrate on taking turns speaking. Make a point and listen to how the other person responds. It is preferable to communicate to individuals in brief

exchanges, particularly when English is not their first language, rather than presenting a lengthy speech that the next person may struggle to follow (Mohammad & Abir, 2023).

#### *2.8.7 Write things down*

Whenever you happen to be unsure of whether the other person has understood you correctly, write down the information to be sure that they understand. This can be especially useful when discussing large figures or presenting new information (Mohammad & Abir, 2023).

#### *2.8.8 Avoid closed questions*

Do not pose a question that requires a "yes" or "no" answer. Because it is difficult or embarrassing to react negatively in many cultures, you will always receive a "yes" even if the genuine response is a "no". Rather, use open-ended inquiries requesting information as a response (Mohammad & Abir, 2023).

#### *2.8.9 Be careful of humour*

Many cultures take work and work-related conversations seriously, and they believe in always performing properly and adhering to conventions. As a result, they do not appreciate the use of jokes and puns at work. If you intend to make use of comedy, make sure it is acceptable and understood in the other culture and does not offend. Be aware that sarcasm may be negatively received (Mohammad & Abir, 2023).

#### *2.8.10 Be supportive*

Cultural communication is most effective when all sides are at ease. In every communication with a non-native English speaker, be respectful, explain properly, and encourage them when they respond. This will increase their trust and faith in you (Mohammad & Abir, 2023).

### **2.9 Cultural dimension and communication styles**

Hall (1976) introduced the theory of high-context and low-context cultures. In high context cultures like Japan, audiences depend on gestural signals and knowledge about the speaker's age, sexual orientation, education, and position to interpret implicit messages. That is regarded as a more passive form of communication. In low-context cultures, like the United States, audiences depend on verbal messages to grasp meaning. That is considered a more direct kind of communication. It is advantageous to know from what context your listener comes.

## **2.10 Hofstede cultural dimensions theory relating to South African organisational settings**

Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory is a framework that explains how cultural values are reflected in a society's behaviour, particularly in a workplace setting. It identifies six dimensions: Power Distance, Individualism vs. Collectivism, Masculinity vs. Femininity, Uncertainty Avoidance, Long-Term vs. Short-Term Orientation, and Indulgence vs. Restraint. Four of these dimensions are particularly relevant in South African organisational settings.

### *2.10.1 Power Distance*

Members of high-power-distance cultures recognise that some people have more power than others, and that this is natural and expected. Those who have power are seen to deserve it, whilst those who lack authority are assumed to be in the correct place. In this society, titles such as "Sir," "Ma'am," "Officer," "Reverend," and so on are severely enforced. Those in positions of power are expected to obey their orders without question (Minkov & Hofstede 2012). In low power-distance cultures, power distribution is seen to be random and influenced by good fortune, assets, cultural heritage, or other external factors. Those in authority are significantly more likely to face criticism in a low power-distance society than in a high power-distance culture. In South African cultures, a wealthy individual is typically considered more powerful (Khlif, 2016).

### *2.10.2 Individualism*

An individualistic culture is one in which members can make decisions based on their own preferences with little consideration for others, with the exception of close family or significant ties. They can pursue their own desires and needs without worrying about meeting the demands of society. The Western culture has a very individualistic culture as compared to an African culture (Khlif, 2016). In South Africa, different organisations may have different approaches to individualism in the workplace.

### *2.10.3 Collectivism*

A collectivistic culture is known as a "we" culture. The demands of society as a whole take priority above individual wants and needs. There is tremendous pressure to conform to societal norms, and individuals do not risk social isolation and separation from family. African cultures are mostly commonly seen as very collectivistic (Khlif, 2016) and this can be reflected in the workplace.

### *2.10.4 Uncertainty avoidance*

Organisations that prioritise high uncertainty avoidance adopt firm norms, regulations, and rules of conduct. They are frequently based on absolute facts or the belief that only one truth governs all

proper behaviour. High uncertainty avoidance cultures are resistant to change and place strong emphasis on historical events, doing things the same way they have always been done, and adhering to stable cultural norms (Bansal, 2021).

Low uncertainty avoidance cultures regard change as unavoidable and normal. These kinds of cultures are more open to opposing views or beliefs. It is less demanding, and uncertainty is more tolerated. In a low uncertainty avoidance culture, all forms of innovation are valued. Organisations with management that understand cultural differences, can adapt swiftly, innovate quickly, and react promptly to market and social constraints are viewed as significantly more successful (Bansal, 2021).

### **2.11 The impact of non-verbal and verbal communication in organisations**

According to Kristiyanti (2012), organisations' dynamics depend primarily on verbal and nonverbal communication, both of which affect team cohesiveness, company culture, and leadership effectiveness.

Communication style, which includes speaking, non-verbal, and linguistic characteristics, is the distinctive manner of speaking that sets one individual apart from others (Chaganti & Bikkina, 2011). Employee job satisfaction is greatly impacted by the verbal communication strategies of individuals and groups. Interactions at work can be improved by being aware of and responsive to the many communication styles which can include aggressively passive, aggressive, and assertive (confident but not forceful) styles. While passive or aggressive communication styles can cause stress and misunderstandings, assertive communication promotes a courteous and cooperative atmosphere. It is essential to identify and adapt to these styles in order to minimize conflict and foster a healthy work environment.

Cultural differences in nonverbal communication also exercise a strong influence and can result in misconceptions. Fostering a peaceful and inclusive workplace requires an understanding of cultural variations in nonverbal communication (Kristiyanti, 2012). Body language and facial expressions are examples of nonverbal activities that significantly influence how others perceive you as an individual (Shah, 2022). Nodding and eye contact are examples of positive nonverbal cues that can enhance relationships between coworkers, resulting in higher levels of job satisfaction and productivity.

## **2.12 Barriers to effective organisational communication**

### *2.12.1 Assumptions and Misinterpretation*

According to Gitari (2025), assumptions and misinterpretation occur when individuals regard people who communicate with directness as rude, whereas indirect communicators are understood to be directive and not rude. Below are strategies that management can implement to mitigate assumptions and misunderstandings the organisations (Gitari, 2025).

- Cultural sensitivity training

It is feasible to improve comprehension and prevent misunderstandings by putting in place training programs that teach employees about cultural variations in communication styles, beliefs, and behaviours (Gitari, 2025).

- Encourage open dialogue

Improved understanding and cooperation can result from fostering an atmosphere where employees feel free to voice worries and inquire about cultural differences (Gitari, 2025).

- Adapting to communication practices

Understanding gaps between cultures can be facilitated by promoting adaptability in communication techniques, such as being aware of tone, directness, and non-verbal clues. In addition, non-native speakers may find communication easier if idioms and jargon are avoided (Gitari, 2025).

- Diverse policies and practices

A more diverse workplace can be achieved by the development of policies that support diversity, such as accommodating holiday celebrations and acknowledging the diversity of cultural customs (Gitari, 2025).

- Stereotyping and Prejudice

Lack of cultural awareness might result in damaging stereotypes. For example, a team member from a time-oriented culture may see a colleague from a flexible-time culture as "unpunctual," failing to recognise cultural variances in time perception. These misconceptions can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts (Naeem, 2023).

According to Morris (2018), prejudice and stereotyping are barriers created by cultural diversity in businesses since they lead to undesirable workplace attitudes among employees. Morris (2018)

adds that cultural stereotyping and prejudice leads to discriminatory mindsets and actions, which can substantially harm relationships in the workplace by negatively affecting inclusion and diversity, as well as creating challenges for cohesiveness among teams, productive work methods, and decreased productivity.

### *2.12.3 Language and Accent Bias*

Accent biases often unintentionally result in verbal or behavioural indignities, can reinforce stereotypes, and create a hostile work environment (Primalogik, 2024). These biases can influence how people see, interact with, and make decisions about others, frequently without their conscious knowledge. Organisations can build a more diverse, respectful, and successful workplace by recognising and addressing language barriers associated with cultural diversity.

### *2.12.4 Generational and technological gaps*

According to Gitari (2025), generational and technological gaps are becoming increasingly visible in culturally diverse organisations. These gaps can have an impact on interaction, teamwork, and overall performance at work. Baby Boomers favour in-person contacts or phone calls, whereas Generation X appreciates direct, straightforward communication and is at ease with both email and phone talks. Millennials favour instant messaging platforms, emails, and video calls for rapid and informal conversation, while Generation Z prefers real-time communication via instant messaging apps and collaboration solutions such as Microsoft Teams.

Misalignment in these characteristics can cause misunderstandings and hinder efficient teamwork. Each generation's approach to work is influenced by its life experiences and cultural background. Veterans and Baby Boomers may emphasize dedication, hard labour, and loyalty. Millennials and Generation Z place a premium on flexibility, work-life balance, and purposeful careers. These differences in objectives can occasionally cause tension, particularly in performance reviews or goal-setting methods. In today's workplace, technology both unifies and divides. Millennials and Generation Z are fast to adopt new technologies and advances. Older generations may feel overwhelmed or reluctant to accept technological development. If not successfully managed, this gap may frustrate digital transformation efforts. Employees from several cultural backgrounds may have differing levels of exposure to and familiarity with technology; younger generations typically have stronger digital literacy, whilst older generations may require additional training and help to adapt to new technologies (Naeem, 2023).

## **2.13 Stakeholder engagement theories**

Stakeholder engagement is a critical component of modern organisational strategy (Mainardes, Alves, & Raposo, 2014). There are various theories that attempt to explain how organisations interact with communities, individuals and groups who are affected by their actions. These theories give a framework for improving and understanding connections within the organisation such as strategic management, corporate governance and public relations. Freeman's (1984) stakeholder theory defined stakeholder management as a process by which an organisation involves groups, individuals or organisations that may be affected by its decisions, performance and operations. Stakeholder engagement has been defined as the method employed by an organisation to involve relevant stakeholders with the goal of achieving approved objectives (AccountAbility, 2015). According to Greenwood (2007), on the other hand, stakeholder engagements are the continuing, evolving relationships between an organisation and its stakeholders that are characterised by communication, trust, communication, interdependence, and mutual respect.

According to Freeman (1984), stakeholder management should consider the desires of every group that may influence or are impacted by its operations, not only shareholders. This approach encourages ethical decision-making and long-term value development by acknowledging the interdependence of enterprises and their stakeholders.

In order for management of multicultural firms to identify and develop a relationship with its stakeholders to achieve organisational goals, they must be able to interpret stakeholders' interests and needs. As set out in Mainardes, Alves, and Raposo's (2014) theory of stakeholders relations, a lack of understanding of the organisational culture of stakeholders has many effects that can affect stakeholders' decision of building a relationship with the organisation in question. The relations with all legitimate stakeholders should be based on ethical behaviour, legislation, intrinsic values and capabilities. Therefore, leadership must establish processes for identifying and interpreting stakeholder demands and interests. As a result of this process, partnerships can be built, and the entire process is designed around the organisation's objectives (Freeman, Harrison, & Wicks, 2007).

## **2.14 Benefits of intercultural communication competence within organisations**

### *2.14.1 Competitive advantage in global markets*

Competitive advantage in global markets refers to a company's ability to remain ahead of its competitors world-wide by providing higher quality services, whether through cost management,

distinctive offerings, or specific approaches, through practices that are feasible and receptive to the complex nature of diverse global environments (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008).

Maintaining the lowest operational expenses while retaining acceptable quality allows businesses to maintain competitive pricing in cost-sensitive global markets. WWISE, for example, offers inexpensive services around the world by leveraging economies of scale and an efficient supply network. Organisations with cultural skills can negotiate complex marketplaces, create multinational teams, and prevent misunderstandings (Cavusgil, Knight, & Riesenberger 2017).

Furthermore, organisations with good intercultural communication skills have a greater opportunity to negotiate international marketplaces and form effective relationships with partners throughout the world. Understanding the differences in culture allows organisations to customise their strategy and communications to varied audiences, thereby increasing global competitiveness (Nosratabadi, Bahrami, Palouzian, & Mosavi 2020).

#### *2.14.2 Innovation and productivity through diversity*

Innovation and productivity through diversity refers to the belief that varied teams in terms of gender, background, age, culture, and perspectives can stimulate idea development, creative problem-solving, and eventually contribute to improved organisational performance and efficiency (Page, 2007).

According to Dixon-Fyle, Hunt, Dolan, and Prince (2020), people from various cultural or professional backgrounds approach challenges in unique ways. Teams with different backgrounds are more inclined to question assumptions and investigate new ideas. Diverse groups frequently outperform homogenous groups, not because they are brighter, but because their differences contribute to better problem-solving. Diverse businesses are better able to attract top personnel and reflect a worldwide client base (Lorenzo, Tsusaka, Krentz, & Abouzahr, 2018).

Nosratabadi, Bahrami, Palouzian, and Mosavi (2020) state that a diversified workforce that is well-versed in intercultural communication can produce a wide range of solutions and ideas by supporting creativity. Being exposed to other cultural viewpoints stimulates creativity and promotes unique problem-solving approaches.

#### *2.14.3 Team cohesion and employee satisfaction*

Team cohesion and employee satisfaction are critical enablers of organisational performance, with direct implications for innovation, productivity, retention, and engagement (Mathieu et al., 2015).

Team cohesion and employee satisfaction are closely linked. Cohesive teams have higher work satisfaction, and contented employees are more inclined to contribute positively to group dynamics.

Cohesive teams offer social support, which leads to increased job satisfaction and decreased anxiety. Teams that share goals and provide psychological safety promote inherent motivation and dedication. Teams that function well foster a sense of belonging, increasing engagement (Salas, Grossman, Hughes, & Coultas, 2015).

## **2.15 Summary**

Our culture shapes how we see the world. An international team's diversified views, paired with its wide personal and professional experience, can bring fresh insights that drive employees to interpret the workplace and the world in novel ways. Although extensive research has examined cultural diversity and organisational communication in multicultural workplaces, relatively limited attention has been given to how communication practices within specific organisations are shaped by cultural diversity in the South African context. Existing studies tend to focus on diversity management at a general level rather than examining how communication policies and strategies accommodate cultural differences among employees and stakeholders within individual organisations. This study therefore seeks to address this gap by examining how cultural diversity influences organisational communication practices within Worldwide Industrial Systems Engineering (WWISE). By focusing on a specific organisational case, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of communication dynamics in culturally diverse workplaces. In this chapter, the literature study looked into cultural diversity and organisational communication, and was the source of suggestions for communication policies that accommodate cultural diversity in an organisation, allowing them to improve their internal communication and stakeholder relations management. The journey to true acceptance and diversity remains ongoing and will involve a collaborative effort from all stakeholders, including employers, employees, and society as a whole. By working together, South Africa can continue to move toward a future in which every person, regardless of background, has an equal chance to achieve fulfilment and contribute to the country's progress. The next chapter describe how the research data was collected using qualitative methodology, from a sample of 15 respondents consisting of the clients, directors, and members of management from the human resource and marketing department and general employees focusing on HR, Marketing and Communication units within WWISE.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter outlines the research methodology employed to examine cultural diversity within organisational communication of the Worldwide Industrial Systems Engineering company, South Africa. It provides a detailed explanation of the research design, data collection methods, sampling techniques, and data analysis strategies used to address the research questions presented in Chapter One.

The methodology was carefully selected to ensure the reliability, validity, and ethical integrity of the study. Given the complex and multifaceted nature of cultural diversity, organisational communication, communication policies, stakeholder relations, and intercultural communication, a qualitative methods approach was adopted to gather rich, meaningful data from relevant participants.

This chapter begins by justifying the chosen research paradigm and methodology. It then describes the population and sampling procedures, followed by an overview of the instruments and tools used for data collection. Finally, the chapter outlines the analytical techniques applied to interpret the data, along with a discussion of ethical considerations and limitations.

### **3.2 Research paradigm**

Tenny, Brannan, and Brannan (2022) define a paradigm as a world view. The paradigm of the current study is a constructivist one, as the researcher used a qualitative research approach through conducting interviews that focused on providing different perspectives from respondents (Tenny, Brannan & Brannan, 2022). The researcher sought to understand the impact that cultural diversity has when employees communicate in an organisation or with their stakeholders, and to interpret the meaning attached to the respondents' actions.

### **3.3 Research approach and design**

#### *3.3.1 Research Approach*

The study made use of a qualitative research approach to examine how cultural diversity influences organisational communication. Qualitative research provides an in-depth insight into real-world problems by gathering respondents' perceptions, behaviour, and experiences (Tenny, Brannan & Brannan, 2022). A qualitative research design was seen by the researcher to be suitable because the study seeks to understand respondents' perceptions and their interpretations of communication

within a culturally diverse workplace. The research gathered primary and secondary data. The primary data were obtained from interviews and observations, and the secondary data from analysing communication policies and internal and stakeholder strategies from the organisation because qualitative design captures the complexity and diversity of human interaction and allows these theoretical viewpoints to be utilised successfully. The chosen approach allowed the researcher to examine prior research findings as well as to carry out direct observation, document analysis, and analysis of respondents' observations during interviews using open-ended questions (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Furthermore, to look into communication dynamics in a particular organisational setting, a case study approach was used. Because it enables a thorough, context-rich investigation of complicated social phenomena, such as intercultural communication, this approach was chosen. By offering insight into actual interactions and organisational practices rather than abstract or simplified data, the case study approach directly supports the research concerns.

### *3.3.2 Research Design*

The research design provides a suitable structure for conducting the study (Sileyew, 2019). The choice of a research approach was a critical step in the research design process since it defined how relevant information for the study would be gathered. This study was conducted using an exploratory research design, which is a flexible methodology used to investigate topics that are not well-understood, to gain initial insights in order to develop a foundational understanding of a topic. The researcher gathered information using interviews and observation as primary data collection method, and analysing of WWISE policy documents as secondary data collection method. This is because the researcher aimed to gain knowledge of how cultural diversity affects organisational communication in this technology-driven evolving era, and to examine the importance of cultural diversity in an organisation (Mbaka & Isiramen, 2021).

## **3.4 Study setting, study population, sampling and sample size**

### *3.4.1 Study Setting*

The study respondents were the clients, directors, managers from the human resource and marketing department, and general employees focusing on HR, Marketing and Communication units within WWISE.

WWISE is a company in South Africa responsible for providing Legal and Compliance Auditing related to Safety, Health, Environment and Quality (SHEQ) in aligning organisations to the best Governance Frameworks and Practices and ensuring that organisations globally follow the

International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) standards and principles. WWISE has an array of organisations as clients across South Africa, such as UNICA Iron and Steel, Universal Storage Systems, VAT IT, Vertice Healthcare, Vhalungu Beverages, etc.

The setting for collecting data was interviews conducted face to face onsite to allow observation analysis of respondents, as well as through online conferencing platforms such as Google Meets and Microsoft Team, depending on the respondent's circumstances. Data included observations of the respondents' non-verbal communication during the semi-structured open-ended interviews.

The study schedule was constructed around a particular point in time. The study was carried out from July 2024 to October 2025.

### *3.4.2 Study Population*

WWISE has 65 employees, and more than 200 clients including Eskom, Transnet, Vat IT, SEDA, and others. The company is located in Centurion, which has 235 000 inhabitants. According to Elfil and Negida (2017), a non-probability sample is a method in which the sample population is chosen in a non-systematic manner that does not ensure equal chances for all subjects in the target population. Collins and Hussey (2016), on the other hand, characterise a non-probability study as an ongoing or evolving investigation into theoretical knowledge. The respondents in the current study were chosen based on their designation and availability because not every management member and employee of WWISE were interviewed. The respondents that were interviewed came from the human resource department and marketing department. Sampling was therefore purposive.

### *3.4.3 Sampling*

Purposive sampling involves selecting participants because you believe that they might contribute something to your analysis, participants that might provide insights into your research question (Creswell, 2015).

Managers specifically were chosen based on their insight into the study subject, considering their professional backgrounds, roles, and functions within the organisation. All respondents were selected on the grounds that they could provide detailed answers to the research questions. "Purposive sampling includes choosing individuals in believing that they will add value to the findings of the study" (Creswell, 2015).

#### *3.4.4 Sampling size*

The study involved 15 respondents selected from clients, directors, managers from the human resource and marketing department, and general employees focusing on HR, Marketing and Communication units from WWISE. Respondents included members of the Board of Directors (two respondents), Executive Management (three respondents), Support Staff (six respondents), and Professional Clients (four respondents).

#### **3.5 Data collection method(s) and procedure**

According to Sharma (2022), data collection is the process of measuring, gathering, and analysing information from multiple sources in order to gain insights. Primary data were gathered by means of interviews. To minimise misinterpretations and inadequate responses, the interview questions needed to be clarified. However, because most WWISE employees work according to a "hybrid" model, splitting their time between the office and a remote location, and some only work remotely, the researcher interviewed the respondents who work remotely by means of online conferencing platforms such as Google Meets, Microsoft Team, Zoom, and Google data collection interview forms. The other respondents were interviewed at WWISE offices, which allowed for observation of non-verbal communication such as body language.

The researcher also obtained secondary data from the organisation's communication policies and internal and stakeholder strategies current documents. The literature analysis was used as the theoretical framework for the study, from which factual findings were derived.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which presented flexibility for respondents to express their experience while ensuring that they provide relevant insights related to the research questions. In preparation for the semi-structured open-ended interviews, the questions were provided to the respondents ahead of the time scheduled. Furthermore, respondents were notified and provided with consent forms that outline the procedures of the interview (Sharma, 2022).

#### **3.6 Data analysis methods**

Ashirwadani (2014) refers to data analysis as the process of combining figures and facts to address a research challenge. The researcher used ATLAS.ti software to analyse the data collected from interviews transcripts, observation notes, and the organisation's communication policies and internal and stakeholder strategies documents. ATLAS.ti is compatible with qualitative and thematic data analysis as it analyses transcripts and field notes, builds literature reviews, and generally

supports the systematic organisation, coding, and analysis of unstructured data (Friese, Soratto & Pires, 2020). This method aligns with the objective of identifying patterns and themes in communication across cultures, as it allows for analytical deeper into participants' responses and discovering fundamental meanings.

The study applied thematic analysis to modify primary data in order to better understand the cultural diversity that respondents come across on a daily basis of their work life and to identify how they overcome the challenges. Responses to the interview questions were grouped into themes according to how the respondents had primary understanding of the data. The data was analysed through repeated reading of interview transcripts, open coding to find significant textual units, and grouping of comparable codes into more general categories comprised the systematic, multi-step analytic procedure. In order to guarantee internal consistency and uniqueness, these categories were further refined into broad themes through an iterative process of comparison and assessment. The interviews were divided into Sections One and Two. Section One of the interview schedule entailed the demographic information, whereas Section Two was comprised of the interview questions. The interview questions aimed to gather comprehensive information about the respondents' perspectives, opinions, and feelings. Sekaran and Bougie (2016) describe thematic analysis as a way of examining accurate information that involves collecting and presenting data on recurring themes and interpreting patterns of meaning.

### **3.7 Ensuring rigour/ research quality criteria**

The limitations that the researcher came across during the conducting of the study was the fact that qualitative research generates a large amount of data, which could be time-consuming to examine and might not be suitable for studies with time constraints (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Despite the possible limitations, the researcher aimed to still employ qualitative methodology to interpret participants' answers to questions asked during the interviews.

The researcher ensured the credibility of the study by using secondary data from published scholarly reports and other documents related to the study. For dependability, each process in the study was detailed to enable other scholars and organisations to analyse and accomplish comparability when conducting their study. Furthermore, the researcher conducting the study was neutral when conducting the study as they had no relations with the organisation nor the respondents who were participating during the collection of data. "Neutral researcher" is defined by Gasper, Spencer, and Hu (2019) as a researcher who is not biased towards any particular set of values in the inception, design, and execution of the study, or in the interpretation of its findings,

but just produces objective facts. Therefore, it was certain that the findings will be informed by the data and not the researcher's thoughts. In addition, the data was kept confidential between the respondent and the researcher. Since cultural diversity has become a universal factor in this evolving world, the researcher ensured that the findings were transferable to other organisations that might need to cater for cultural diversity in their communication policies. This was done by ensuring that the research report provides a detailed description of research methods, findings, and recommendations. Lastly, the researcher aimed to ensure that the findings of the study were accurate from the standpoint of the participants (Chetty & Thakur, 2020).

### **3.8 Ethical considerations**

According to Bryman and Bell (2015), ethical considerations ensure research integrity and participant protection.

The researcher obtained ethical clearance from the University of South Africa, Communication Science Department. An official consent letter was written to WWISE management and their clients explaining the purpose of the study, in order to receive permission to conduct the study at their company and with their clients also.

Sharma (2022) describes ethics as the foundation on which researchers measure their decisions and actions, whereas authenticity is a guarantee that the data is trustworthy and uncontaminated throughout its entire cycle. It denotes comprehensive reliability of data, security, efficiency, and thoroughness.

The researcher explained to the respondents that participating in the study will not put them in any danger. Furthermore, the researcher took several steps to ensure that the respondents were assured that the information they provided will be kept confidential and that their identities will not be revealed in association with the responses they provided. Every respondent was provided with a consent form to sign and were notified before every interview was recorded.

### **3.9 Summary**

This chapter outlined the research methodology adopted to explore the dynamics of cultural diversity within the organisational communication practices of the Worldwide Industrial Systems Engineering Company in South Africa. The chapter began by presenting the research philosophy and design, justifying the use of a qualitative approach as the most suitable framework for addressing the study objectives.

The chosen methods of data collection and sampling were discussed in detail, highlighting how participants were selected and how data was gathered to ensure relevance and richness. Additionally, the procedures for data analysis were clearly defined to demonstrate how themes and patterns related to intercultural communication and diversity were identified and interpreted.

Furthermore, the chapter addressed ethical considerations to ensure the protection of participants' rights and the integrity of the research process. Limitations of the chosen methodology were acknowledged, with attention given to the potential impact on the study's findings and generalisability.

By establishing a rigorous and systematic research design, this chapter provides a strong foundation for the analysis and interpretation of data in chapter four, where the findings of the study are presented and explored in relation to the literature.

## **CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides an analysis and interpretation of the qualitative data collected to examine the cultural diversity in organisational communication at the Worldwide Industrial System Engineering Company (WWISE) in South Africa. The ultimate objective of this study is to discover behaviours, interpretations, perceptions, and understanding about how people from different cultural backgrounds interact, share information, and develop knowledge without discriminating in the workplace. Semi-structured interviews, observation, and document analysis were used to collect data from employees and stakeholders of the organisation, looking at cultural differences, professional departments, and hierarchical levels inside their organisations. The study was carried out using a thematic approach, dividing the interview instruments into two sections namely the demographic section and the interview section comprised of open-ended questions.

This chapter begins by outlining the data analysis method, which includes gathering data, coding methods, and finding themes that emerge. The chapter further presents the findings accompanied by direct quotations from participants, ensuring that participants' expressions, voices, and lived experiences are accurately reflected. The findings are then analysed in light of the study's research questions and objectives, and also the applicable literature on organisational communication and cultural diversity. Lastly, this chapter gives a detailed view of how different cultural backgrounds influence WWISE communication patterns, which in turn has an impact on employees' cooperation, effectiveness, and organisational integration. The insights gained from the findings of the study serve as the foundation for discussion and recommendations offered in the following chapter.

### **4.2 Overview of data and participants**

According to Bell, Bryman, and Harley (2018), data analysis refers to the method of analysing information sets in order to draw conclusions and discover patterns. Therefore, the transcripts and recordings were analysed through the software of Atlas-ti.

The data in this study were collected through semi-structured interviews that were conducted through Microsoft Teams and face-to-face meetings, and observations were also conducted during the interviews. The 15 participants, consisting of directors, executives, general staff, and stakeholders/clients from WWISE, were interviewed regarding the impact of cultural diversity on organisational communication at the workplace.

Given the time and resource constraints, the researcher included a variety of populations in order to influence the data with as much variation as possible. Furthermore, the interviews were designed in such a way that the questions would allow the researcher to gain a thorough understanding of the issue under study. The interviewees ranged in age from 25 to 55. The participants work within the fields of Human Resources, Marketing, Communication, and Administration with experience of between three to six years and more because they were relevant and suitable to participate in the study. The stakeholder was also relevant participant as they wanted to examine on whether their stakeholders are impacted by their cultural diversity and also to examine on how diverse stakeholder impact WWISE employees. The participants' demographic information, such as gender, age, designation and experience, and cultural background was explored. The following section presents charts formulated in seven themes outlining the demographic information of participants.

### *Theme 1: Age Profile*

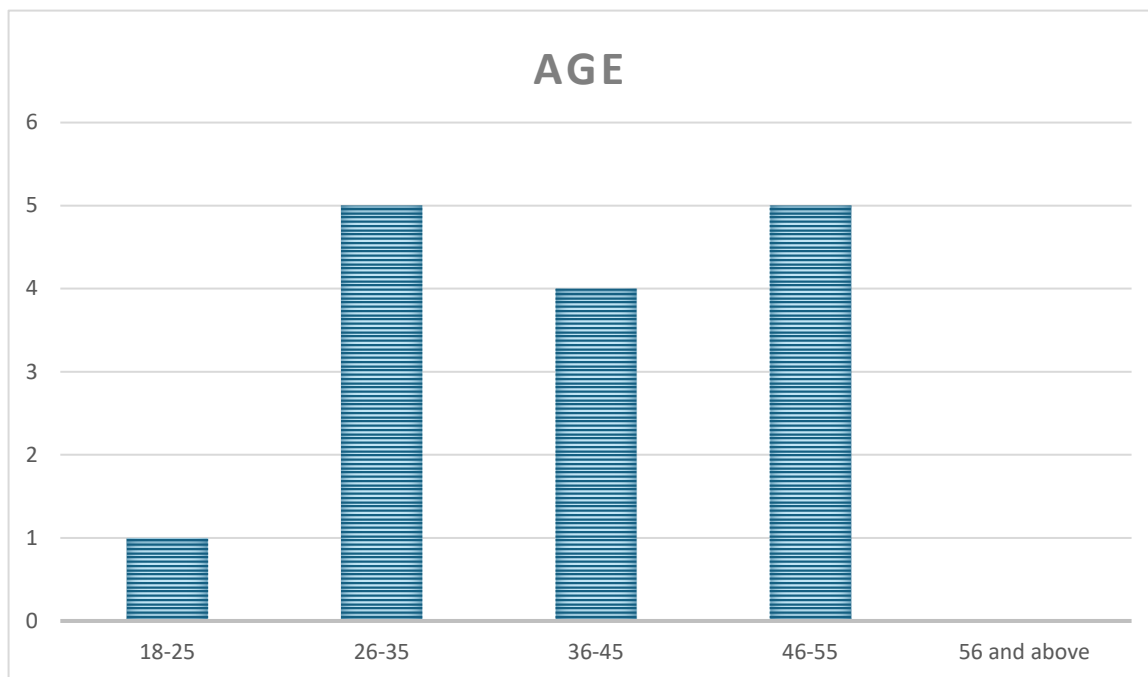


Figure 1: Age of the participants

Figure 1 demonstrates that there were no participants above the age of 56, 7% of participants were between 18 and 25 years of age, while the age groups 26-35 and 46-55-years both comprised 33%. The remaining 27% represented participants from the age 36 to 45.

## Theme 2: Gender representation

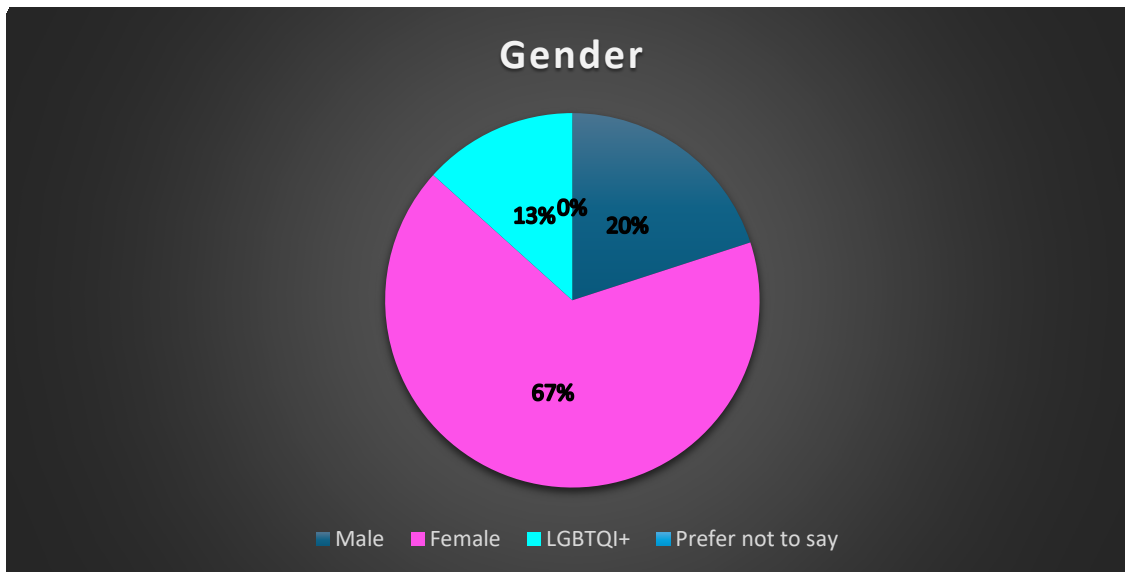


Figure 2: Gender profile of respondents

The majority of participants (67% percent) were female, whereas 20% percent represented male participants, and 13% identified as LGBTQI+. None of the participants preferred not to state their gender.

## Theme 3: Position of participants

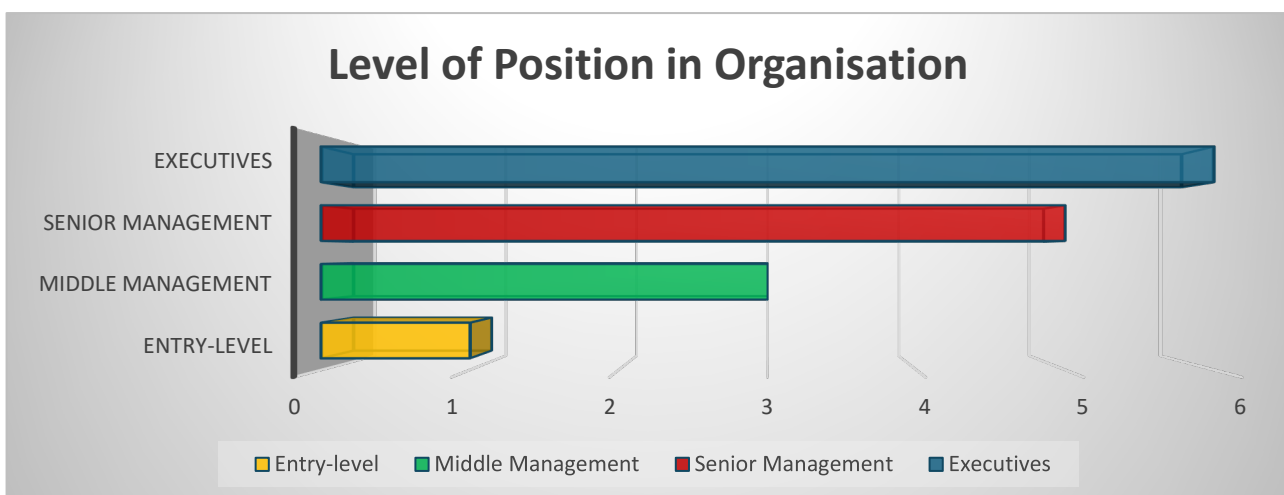


Figure 3: Level of position

A fairly high percentage of participants, 40%, are executives, followed by senior management with 33%. There were only 20% middle managers and 7% entry-level participants.

*Theme 4: Participant appointed department*

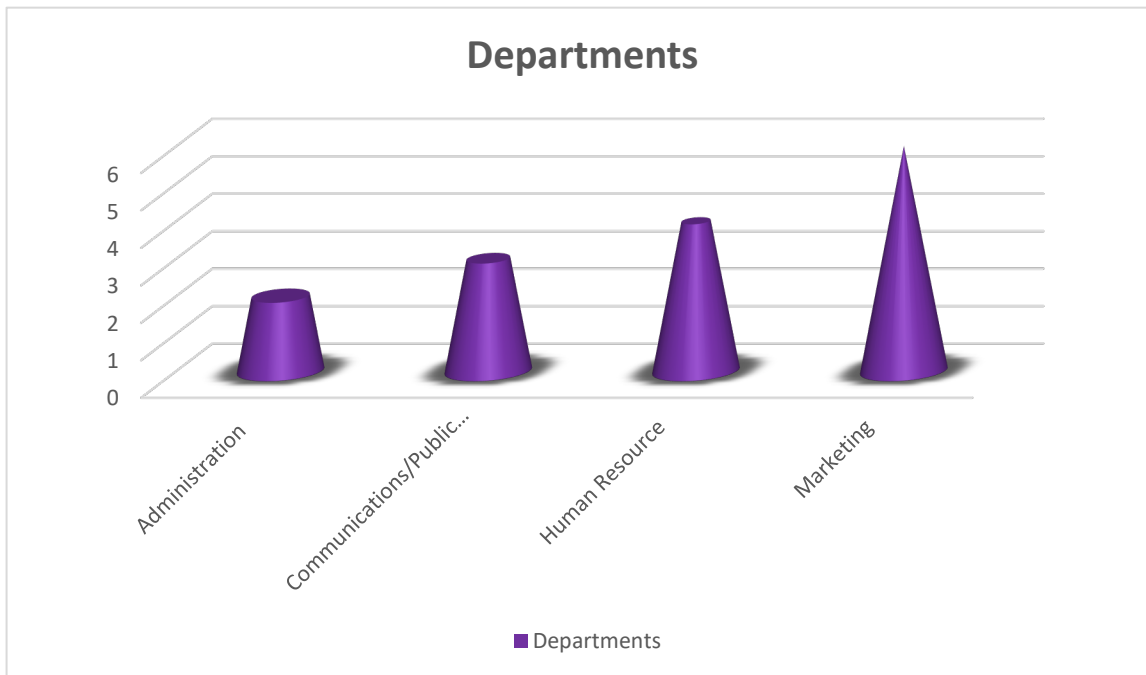


Figure 4: Designated department

Figure 4 demonstrates that 40% of participants are in the marketing department, followed by 27% of participants in the human resource department who oversee the implementation and execution of policies. The smallest percentages of participants are from the communications department - the organisation's strategy creators - (20%) and the administrators (13%).

*Theme 5: Duration of employment*

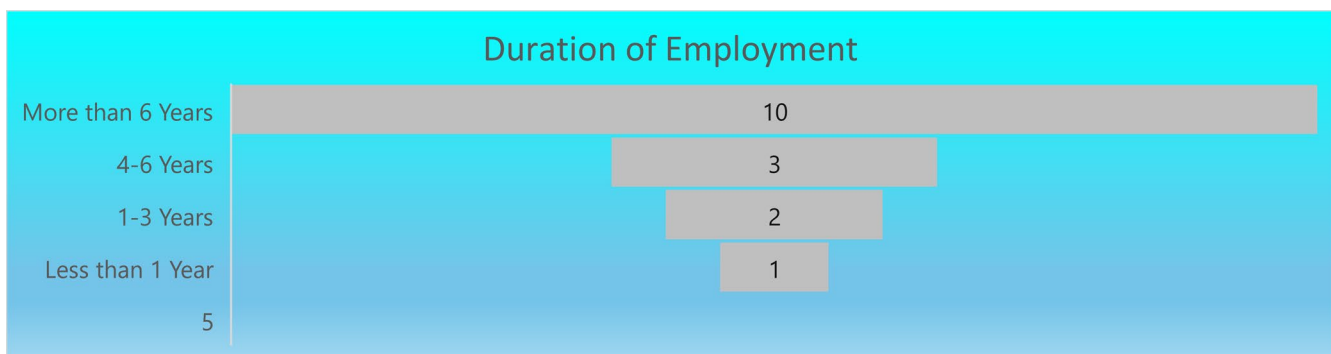


Figure 5: Participants' years of experience

Of the senior management and executives amongst WWISE employees and stakeholders, 60% have more than six years of experience. 20% of participants have four to six years of experience,

and 13% of the participants have 1-3 years of experience. Lastly, 7% have less than a year of experience.

### Theme 6: Cultural Diversity

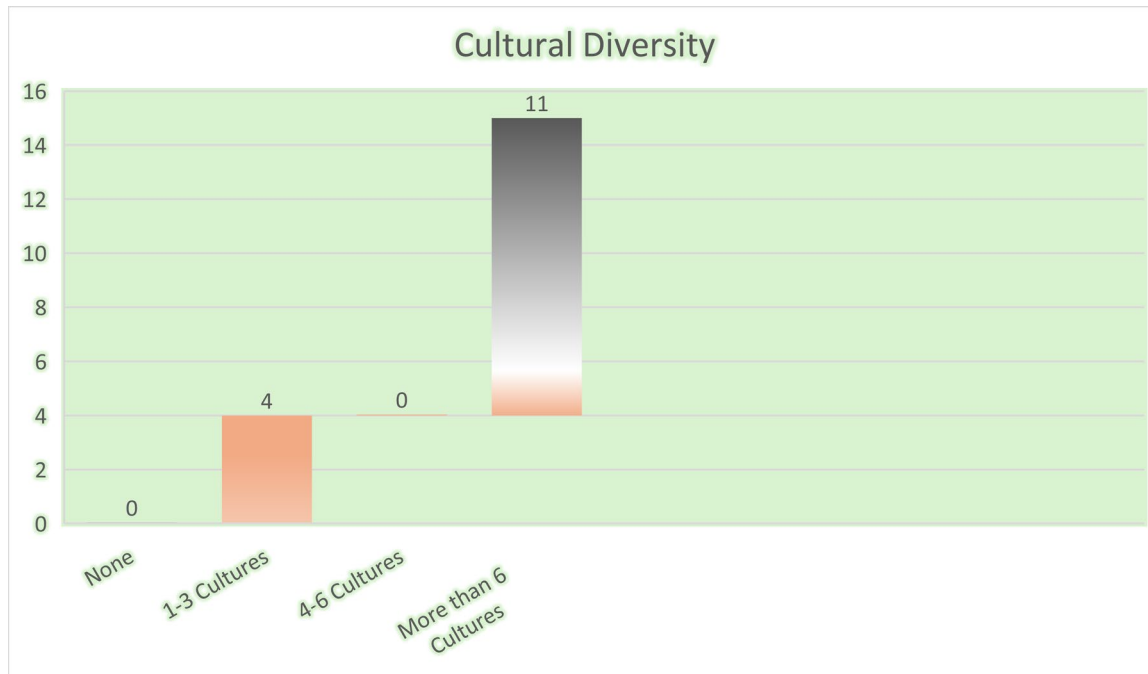


Figure 6: Number of different cultural backgrounds represented in your team/organisation

The last figure, which displays the number of different cultural backgrounds represented at WWISE which is more than six, results in 73% and the stakeholders stated that they have between 1-3 different cultures, which results in 27% of the findings.

All interviewees were asked questions based on the three main research questions. The list of semi-structured interview questions appears in Appendix C. The ensuing section presents the salient findings from the semi-structured interviews.

### 4.3 Research Question 1: Impact of cultural diversity on organisational communication effectiveness

During the open-ended interviews, the participants shared their views on the impact that diverse culture has on an organisation and communication. When they were asked whether cultural diversity enhances or hinders the communication effectiveness and the success of the organisational goals, the majority indicated that it enhances communication effectiveness when

organisations and individuals actively consider inclusivity, empathy, and cultural competence. However, other participants stated that it both enhances and hinders communication through misunderstandings and conflict.

Ten participants (Participant 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,9,12,14) indicated that cultural diversity enhances communication.

- One interviewee believes that “cultural diversity enhances organizational success by allowing individuals to communicate openly and clearly, thereby reducing misunderstandings”.
- One interviewee believes that “cultural differences enhance effective communication, allowing accommodation of various perspectives”.
- One interviewee expressed the opinion that “cultural differences in an organisation can enhance communication by bringing diverse perspectives, although they can sometimes lead to misunderstandings due to varied interpretations”.
- One interviewee believes that “cultural differences enhance communication effectiveness by promoting understanding and collaboration among employees from various backgrounds”.
- Participants agreed that “cultural diversity enhances effective communication within the organisation due to varying backgrounds and languages, providing businesses with unique advantages in client engagement”.
- One interviewee believes that “cultural diversity enhances communication effectiveness if properly supported by the organisation's policies”.
- One interviewee emphasised that “cultural diversity can enhance communication effectiveness in organisations, particularly when organisational culture is well understood”.
- One interviewee believes that “cultural diversity enhances organisational success by allowing for various communication styles and perspectives”.
- One interviewee believes that “cultural diversity enhances communication but also presents challenges, leading to misunderstandings due to varying cultural perspectives and communication styles”.

Participants 8,11,13 expressed the view that cultural diversity both enhances and hinders communication.

- One interviewee expressed the view that “cultural differences hinder communication effectiveness within organisations, mainly due to varying values and beliefs”.
- One interviewee believes “cultural diversity has both advantages and disadvantages in organisations. It can create barriers in employment opportunities based on equity regulations”.
- One interviewee believes “cultural diversity can both enhance and hinder organisational effectiveness, depending on mutual respect among team members”.

*Theme 7: Cultural Diversity*

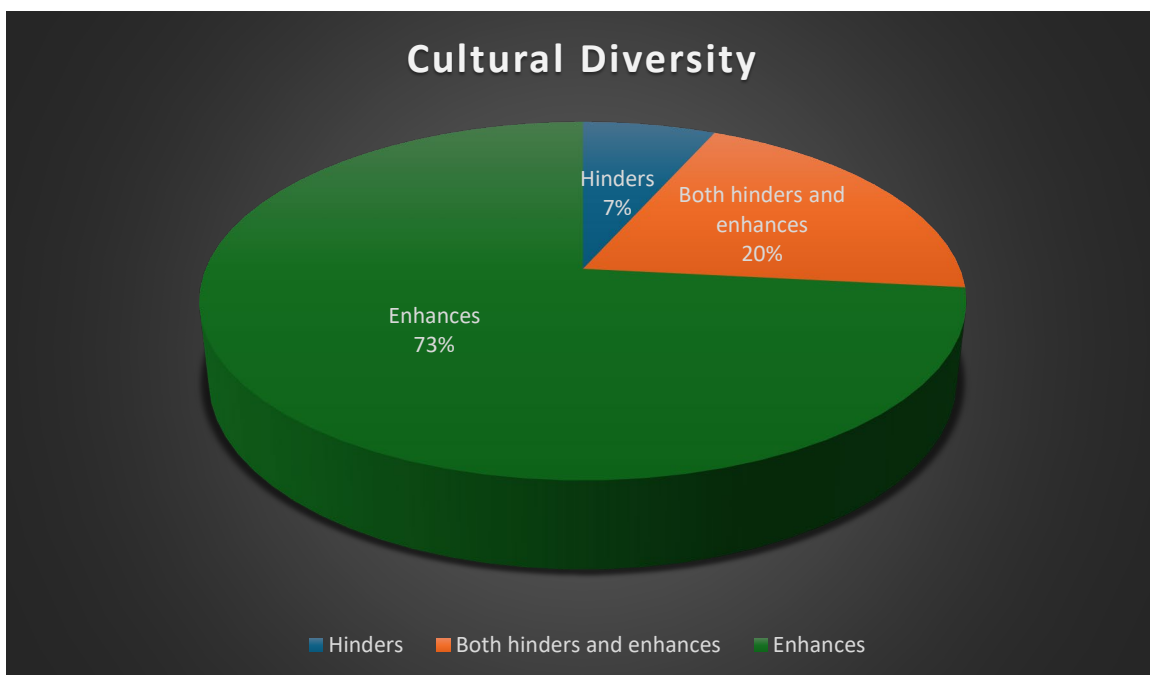


Figure 7: Cultural diversity enhances or hinders effective communication

Figure 7, which reflects whether cultural diversity enhances or hinders effective communication, shows that the majority of participants (73%) stated that it enhances communication, while 20% of the participants believe that it both enhances and hinders communication. Only 7% stated that it hinders effective communication and the prevents success of organisational goals.

*4.3.1 Language and communication barriers*

Cultural diversity in communication expectations, use of language, and the tone set by individuals during a conversation or when presenting information can bring about misunderstandings in communication. The study findings highlight how cultural and linguistic differences affect clarity in

communication among multicultural employees. The participants expressed the challenges they came across, such as tone, interpretation, communication norms, and expectations of expression amongst colleagues.

Table 1: Language and communication barriers

Theme	Representative Quotes
Misunderstanding in communication	<p>“Misunderstandings arise when individuals rigidly adhere to their backgrounds and communication styles”.</p> <p>“Misunderstandings can arise from differing individual and organisational cultures, especially when communication styles conflict”.</p>
Communication style	<p>“The organisation employs a two-way communication style, allowing for engagement between different levels of staff. This is seen as a strength, although there are weaknesses due to irregular meetings that limit opportunities for staff to voice concerns.”</p>
Language and accent barriers	<p>“Cultural stereotypes can create barriers to communication, particularly gender biases affecting authority dynamics. Language barriers and feelings of exclusion regarding employees from diverse backgrounds can impede effective communication”.</p>
Cultural communication norms	<p>“My manager is from Ghana, he is direct and calls a spade a spade when he addresses something he doesn’t agree with. In my culture, being direct seems rude”.</p> <p>“Afrikaans and Zulu colleagues’ tones are rude and that causes tension at work”.</p>

According to Hall’s (1976) high and low context communication theory, the difference in culture is in how much meaning is interpreted through language and context.

- High context cultures (Pedi, Tswana, Sotho, English, Swati, and Xhosa) rely on tone, non-verbal cues, situational understanding, and shared experience.

- Low context cultures (Zulu, Afrikaans, Ndebele, Tsonga, Venda) prioritises direct, clear, and detailed verbal communication.

Over 80% of the participants raised the concern that language could cause misunderstanding during communication, and 60% of participants believe that cultural norms also cause misunderstanding and lead to unclear communication amongst colleagues.

The findings that 80% of participants identified language as a challenge, and 60% identified cultural norms, align with Hall’s framework. Misunderstandings arose when low-context communicators interacted with high-context communicators, leading to contradictory expectations about politeness, directness, and the extent of contextual understanding needed for clarification. For example, participants with high context backgrounds perceived some colleagues as “rude” while those from low context backgrounds found others ‘uncertain’. This confirms Hall’s statement that miscommunication commonly arises when unspoken and clear communication styles intersect without shared awareness.

Table 2: Miscommunication

Indicator	Findings
Participants who identified language as a major challenge that causes miscommunication.	80%
Participants stated cultural norms as a cause of misunderstanding.	60%

#### 4.3.2 Inclusion, representation, and voice

According to Gitari (2025), assumptions and misinterpretations occur when individuals regard people who communicate with directness as rude, whereas indirectness is seen as being directive without being rude. The participants were asked whether they experienced being excluded or misunderstood by their fellow colleagues, which led to discrimination and a feeling that their cultures are not respected and acknowledged at their workplace. All participants responded positively that their organisation respects their culture, they feel heard, and are involved in the organisation’s communication process. However, a few participants highlighted that there are some homophobic tendencies from certain managers and colleagues based on the non-verbal communication towards employees belonging to the LGBT+ community. Only two participants witnessed discrimination from management based on their religion of being an African healer, and one was discriminated against by a male colleague because of being a female manager.

(Participant 15)

“I experienced misunderstanding with my Afrikaans-speaking colleague, she is very rude, bully, and bossy towards me and other African colleagues, especially when she addresses issues”.

(Participant 5)

“I am basically on a spiritual journey myself, so there are certain things like I wear beads to work. and my manager makes these jokes about me”.

(Participant 5)

“I would say there's still that sense of discrimination towards people from the LGBT+ community at my workplace”.

To wrap up the interview and findings on the impact that cultural diversity has on organisation's communication effectiveness, participants were requested to rate the impact that cultural diversity has in their organisation and 73% participants rated 8 out of 10 which is a high impact, 13% participants rated 7 out of 10, 7 % rated 9 out of 10 and lastly 7% rated 4.5 out of 10 which was the lowest and resulting in a low impact.

The next area of investigation was: How does cultural diversity shape and inform the development and implementation of organisational communication policies?

#### **4.4 Research Question 2: Influence of cultural diversity on policy development and implementation**

According to Gitari (2025), a more diverse workplace can be achieved by the development of policies that support diversity, such as accommodating holiday celebrations and acknowledging the diversity of cultural customs. The finding highlights that cultural differences motivate organisations to shift from uniform, top-down communication practices to interactive, flexible, and culturally sensitive approaches. The goal is to move from limiting communication to promoting understanding, empathy, and equity across cultures.

##### *4.4.1 Framing of communication policies*

Interviews with the human resource department indicate that the organisation's policies are informed by principles of respect, intercultural competence, and inclusivity. However, the participants expressed that certain aspects relating to diversity, such as accommodating different beliefs, home language communication within the organisation, and gender addition, such as the

LGBT+ community, are not outlined in policy documents, although the employees and organisation consider such diversity.

#### *4.4.2 Adaptation and flexibility*

When being interviewed, the participants highlighted that even though some of the cultural norms are not documented, the organisation tries by all means to be flexible in adapting to evolving and continuously changing cultures within the organisation and the country. Although the organisation has its own standard culture, the employees are not limited to the organisational culture, but the organisation itself accommodates their different cultures and tailors those differences to match those of the organisation. The communication policies consider different norms such as hierarchy sensitivity, directness, and preferred channels of communication amongst employees, stakeholders, and managers.

#### *4.4.3 Training and development*

During the interview, the participants highlighted that the organisation is currently providing training on communication but not on intercultural communication. The organisation is, however, looking into introducing intercultural training, as they noticed the gap from conducting mini cultural seminars during the heritage month and Heritage Day, which is a program that runs annually during September. The interviews exposed that WWISE and its stakeholders see such training as vital because it will reduce misunderstandings and stereotype mentality. Overall, the interviews highlighted the complexities and dynamics of cultural diversity in workplace communication, emphasising the need for constructive policies and training to foster better understanding and collaboration among employees from varied cultural backgrounds.

#### *4.4.4 Dialogue and feedback mechanisms*

Improved dialogue, feedback, understanding, and cooperation can result from fostering an atmosphere where employees feel free to voice worries and inquire about cultural differences (Gitari, 2025). WWISE, as a culturally diverse organisation, has institutionalised a two-way communication structure. Even though their policies and executives who participated in the study state that the organisation has a two-way communication and their policies stress the importance of listening across cultures, during the interviews junior staff highlighted that it is not actually a two-way communication. The communication is from top to bottom, and their opinions are not acknowledged.

(Participant 2, Executive participant)

“It is a two-way communication because we also have platforms where senior managers and top management engage with middle managers, but we also have a platform where we engage officials at a lower level. If officials at the lower level have concerns, they can even raise those concerns through their managers”.

(Participant 11, General staff participant)

“I mean, the reality is that in corporate it's one way, but for the organisation's sake and purpose of research, we'll say it's two-way”.

#### *4.4.5 Policy Language and Symbolic Inclusion*

Communication in a multicultural organisation might be difficult when it comes to face-to-face interactions. Every culture has its own set of underlying ideas and preferences, making it difficult to get your point across effectively at times; even without a language barrier, cultural communication may be complex (Mohammad & Abir 2023). During document analysis, when evaluating their policies and strategies, the researcher noticed that the organisation uses inclusive language in their policies by avoiding jargon, idioms, culture culture-specific metaphors that might exclude non-native speakers. Although the policies use inclusive language, the policies are written only in English for the sake of convenience and to limit misunderstandings. Furthermore, during the interviews, the participants stated that their organisation allows communication in other native languages, especially when addressing stakeholders who lack understanding of the common language, which is English.

(Participant 5, representing participant 6)

“Our organisation accommodates different cultures and languages. For example, certain clients you would know they speak this language, they have this certain culture, and you might have that individual who would be familiar with or familiar with the culture rather, and you'd rather have that person be the one engaging with the client or stakeholder. So that's how you would get the effectiveness of the communication with external clients, and obviously there will be a ripple effect of that internally as well.”

(Participant 9)

“Our organisation accommodates different cultures and languages. From what I know, we try to accommodate, for instance, we try to speak the language that people speak. We have people in

Limpopo, if we have projects in the areas, so we make sure that the team is composed of Tsonga, Pedi, and Venda speaking people, and before going there, we try to make sure that we understand the culture. There are things that you must do and then that you cannot do. So before going there, there's a stakeholder engagement we get to understand”.

As much as organisations have policies in place, the employees need to adapt to the policies, and the organisation needs to create room for change, as we live in a continuously evolving world. The employees also need to adapt to the organisation’s communication strategies involving cultural diversity by encouraging inclusivity, awareness, and flexibility to fight against discrimination and stereotypical mentality.

The next research question investigated how organisational communication strategies accommodate and address diverse cultures.

#### **4.5 Research Question 3: Organisational Communication Strategies for Accommodating Cultural Diversity**

The findings relating to this research question indicate that effective intercultural interaction requires an integrated approach that includes training, leadership, and technology. Training promotes awareness, leadership exemplifies inclusive conduct, and technology bridges linguistic and cultural barriers. Together, these characteristics contribute to a more unified, respectful, and internationally linked workplace.

Table 3: Communication strategies

<b>Category</b>	<b>Good Practices</b>	<b>Gaps/Challenges</b>
<b>Cultural Training</b>	Consistent gatherings, onboarding units	Irregular, top-level, or low-level activities.
<b>Language Support</b>	Language learning tools, translation	Overdependence on one language.
<b>Inclusive Communication</b>	Clear guidelines, feedback is encouraged	Insufficient understanding or model behaviour
<b>Cultural Awareness</b>	Celebrations and open discussions	Minimal involvement, or indifference
<b>Leadership Role</b>	Management as intermediaries promoting inclusion.	Inconsistent implementation

#### *4.5.1 How organisations adapt communication strategies to diverse employees*

- **Emphasis on cultural awareness and sensitivity**

All WWISE participants highlighted during the interviews that the organisation does not train the employees on cultural differences in communication styles (for example, high context verse low context, power distance, and direct versus indirect) except for having a cultural day during September Heritage Day, and they do not go into depth about addressing the diverse cultures within the organisation.

- **Multilingual communication practices**

The findings emphasise that WWISE supports stakeholders' cultures and often provides translation services as well as bilingual communication platforms, and they are currently working on upgrading their documents to a translation for the cultures of their database stakeholders. The organisation's human resource and communication departments believe that by doing so, the organisation will encourage its employees and stakeholders to learn their colleagues' and clients' languages to foster connection.

- **Digital inclusion and global collaboration tools**

During the conducting of the research and collecting data it was noted that the organisation has adapted to the virtual communication platforms to consider accessibility, time zones of foreign clients, and communication norms across all regions where they operate. This is because the organisation works in a hybrid form, whereby some employees work both from home and at the office. Furthermore, it enables visual aids and recorded meeting clarity for non-native employees and stakeholders.

#### *4.5.2 Discussion*

- **Culturally diverse communication awareness**

During the interviews, participants underlined the importance of intercultural communication training in raising awareness and improving understanding between employees and team members. Participants reported that during heritage month, there are internal seminars about cultural diversity, and the seminars are helpful when they engage with colleagues and stakeholders as they apply what they have learned to real-world setups. Participants highlighted that they

appreciated the seminars; however, the influence of such seminar was limited if it was not reinforced by ongoing learning opportunities or encouraged by management conduct. Overall, the qualitative findings indicate that training is viewed as a necessary first step toward inclusive communication, but it must be sustained through organisational culture and leadership support.

- **Leadership and communication modelling**

Most of the interviewed general staff participants emphasised the role of their management in developing inclusive communication practices. The participants acknowledge that most of the management demonstrate respect, openness, and empathy to their juniors and colleagues, which proves that cultural differences are recognised and valued. They provided examples such as management including junior staff in meetings and seeking their opinions, adjusting their communication techniques, and promoting fair participation. The practices are also ingrained in the organisation's policies. Two participants differed from other participants by highlighting that not all managers or executives are culturally insensitive; by raising the barriers they encountered with their management that led them to trust and engage. This finding emphasises the importance of leadership behaviour in establishing inclusive methods of communication at all levels within the organisation.

- **Technology and communication tools**

The research findings reveal that technology is a vital enhancer of intercultural communication, particularly in organisations that operate nationally or internationally. Participants 2,5,6,9,10, and 12 said that digital platforms, visual media, and translation tools improve engagement and clarity by breaking down language and location obstacles. Translation and multilingual layouts were viewed as enhancing accessibility and inclusivity. Nonetheless, some participants, such as participants 3,4,11, and 14, cautioned against overreliance on technology, pointing out that digital tools cannot totally replace nonverbal clues, empathy, and tone, all of which are essential for intercultural understanding. As a result, efficient use of technology should be considered as a supplement rather than a replacement for human interaction.

The research data collection was not limited to open-ended interviews but also included observation and secondary data from the organisation's communication policies. Internal and stakeholders' strategies, and current policy documents were analysed. The following findings will be based on the observation and document analysis.

## 4.6 Observation data analysis

The observation took place during Microsoft Teams interactions with the participants. The researcher collected the data during the first part of the interview before switching off the camera and switching to audio-recording for confidentiality when starting to record the interview. The duration of the observation was 15 minutes for each participant. The observation focused on behaviours and meaning, and interpretations. The researcher adopted a participant observation role, meaning the researcher actively participates in the environment or activities while observing. All participants were informed about the purpose of the observation and provided written and verbal informed consent. The findings are based on verbal and nonverbal communication practices and the use of language while participating and engaging during the interview.

### 4.6.1 Analytical approach

- **Observation Notes**

Observation notes were documented during the interviews to capture how WWISE employees and stakeholders communicate through their diverse cultural backgrounds. The researcher focused on capturing the participants' behaviours, interactions, and communication patterns while being interviewed. Notes were written in a descriptive and reflective way. The aim of the descriptive notes was to note down the interviewee's actions and nonverbal cues, such as body movement, use of camera view, and interruptions, whereas reflective notes looked into how the interviewees share insights and how they interpret and answer questions asked by the researcher. The researcher recorded the notes manually immediately after the observation meeting to maintain authenticity and accuracy. The analysis of the findings will be based on verbal and non-verbal communication behaviours such as body posture, tone of voice, eye contact, gesture, and levels of formality to understand how cultural norms shaped interaction dynamics.

- **Observation framework**

To support the interpretation, cultural frameworks were applied to position findings within established theoretical contexts, such as Hofstede's cultural dimensions and Hall's high and low context communication framework.

- Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions (2012):

During the research, it was evident that the power distance dimension led to understanding how hierarchical norms influenced the desire to engage. Participants in high power distance cultures likely differ according to status as junior colleagues speak only when invited, whereas those in low

power distance cultures speak more freely. Individualism versus collectivism also influenced interpretation because collectivist-oriented participants frequently raised points of unity amongst colleagues rather than forcefully expressing themselves (Minkov & Hofstede 2012).

- Hall's High and Low-Context Communication Framework (1976):

Differences in participation were related to whether the interviewees relied on signals from their surroundings or on clear spoken language. The high context interviewees expressed themselves in support or disapproval of the statements raised by the researcher by nodding and giving a facial expression, whereas low context interviewees were more direct in expressing their opinions.

Participants 3, 12, and 13 looked down while answering questions and expressing themselves. They also showed nonverbal gestures when they disagreed with the statements raised, whereas participants 2, 4, and 10 expressed their opinion vociferously and through gestures of their hands while talking.

- **Observation of language use**

During the interview, participants communicated in English; therefore, the researcher could observe comparable verbal cues while the participants were talking. All participants avoided slang at all costs while answering their questions and expressing themselves. They kept the interaction formal. To allow their interaction to flow, some also used their native languages to express themselves, such as participant 6,9, 13, and 15. On the other hand, participants 1,8,11, and 14 spoke fluently in English and in a normal conversational tone and pace. Participants 4 and 10 answered in a lengthy manner to the point that they kept on being repetitive with the context they were expressing and continually used interjections such as: "you get me", "do you follow", and "am I still on the right track?".

Table 4: Document analysis and observation analysis comparison

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>What WWISE policies say (Documents)</b>	<b>How employees reacted during the interviews (Observation)</b>	<b>Patterns / Contradictions / Gaps</b>
<b>Internal Communication</b>	Policy promotes open, two-way communication and feedback mechanisms.	The majority of participants highlighted that communication is mostly top to bottom with little upward communication.	Gap: Communication is formally open but functionally hierarchical.
<b>Employee Engagement</b>	Policies outline the importance of teamwork, innovation, and empowerment.	During the interview, participants sounded careful to contribute in-depth thoughts.	Contradiction: Empowerment is specified but not endorsed.
<b>Diversity and Inclusion</b>	Strategy highlights inclusion and zero tolerance for discrimination.	Participants highlighted the acts of discrimination amongst colleagues.	Gap: Diversity and inclusion strategy is strong on intent but weak on execution.
<b>Organisational Culture</b>	Documents describe a collaborative, transparent culture.	The interviews revealed departmental divisions through their answers about crucial organisational culture, which represented minimal team communication.	Pattern: Gap between claimed culture and actual behaviour.

#### *4.6.2 Integration of document analysis and observation analysis*

The findings outline that while the organisations' policies encourage diversity, observational data show limited feedback opportunities and hierarchical communication flow. Similarly, diversity is praised in documents but overlooked in junior positions and some senior positions. The identified contradictions mean that the organisation's internal communication and inclusion efforts are more verbal than practical; therefore, the organisation needs a better implementation method and cultural reinforcement.

### **4.8 Summary**

Communication in organisations with diverse cultures is frequently influenced by cultural expectations, social norms, and beliefs. The findings show that employees from various cultural backgrounds do understand the organisation's communication practices, such as hierarchy and different cultural lenses.

In addition, the finding supported Hall and Hofstede's theories by showing that contextual communication affects clarity within teams that are diverse. Effective collaboration among cultures requires more than language fluency, it also needs a shared awareness of communication customs, cultural sensitivity, and tone interpretation.

Overall, the study reveals that communication practices are culturally established, influencing how employees interpret messages, show respect, and collaborate. Misunderstandings tend to be caused by differences in cultural understanding rather than intentions. Encouraging cultural knowledge and discussions about communication preferences can help close these gaps and promote more inclusive teamwork. Thus, inclusivity serves as both a fundamental value based on equal treatment and respect, as well as an essential capacity that improves the organisation's flexibility, growth, and integration.

The findings provided by the participants during the interview are supported by the literature provided in Chapter Two. The key findings from the data collection will form a foundation for the conclusion and recommendations presented in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This study aimed to examine how cultural diversity influences organisational communication at the WWISE Company, South Africa. The study investigated cultural diversity in organisational communication and provides recommendations for communication policies that caters to cultural diversity in an organisation but can also improve their internal communication and stakeholder relations management. The study further aimed to identify the types of diversity in a workplace and the barriers created by cultural diversity with which an organisation can be faced. Insights pertaining to the cultures' communication behaviour, values, norms, gender, religion, language attitude and non-verbal communication were outlined.

The research data was collected using qualitative methodology, from a sample of 15 respondents which consisted of the clients, directors, management from the human resource and marketing department and general employees focusing on HR, Marketing and Communication units within WWISE. Primary and secondary data were collected by the researcher. The primary data consisted of observation and open-ended interview questions and for secondary data, the researcher gathered content from the organisations' communication policies and internal and stakeholder strategies. The theoretical foundation of the study was formed by the literature review.

This chapter will present the study's key findings, conclusions, recommendations, limitations and suggestions for further research.

### **5.2 Findings from the study**

The findings of the research questions can be summarised as follows.

- **Impact of cultural diversity on organisational communication**

According to the majority of participants, WWISE's employees' communication norms are heavily influenced by their cultural backgrounds, which shape how each colleague interprets and communicates messages in a professional context. The fact that the employees and stakeholders had different cultures resulted in them frequently having different expectations about the appropriate level of directness, communication formality, and the priority of emotional expression. Such differences were reported as improving WWISE's complexity and levels of innovation, but

were also shown to have led to miscommunication and a certain measure of conflict when the top and bottom employees' expectations were not aligned.

The findings revealed that 80% of participants identify language as a challenge. The participants stated that misunderstandings arose when low context communicators interacted with high context communicators, leading to contradictory expectations about politeness, directness, and the extent of contextual understanding needed for clarification. For example, participants with high context backgrounds perceived some colleagues as "rude" while those from low context participants found others 'uncertain". This confirmed Hall's statement that miscommunication commonly arises when unspoken and clear communication styles intersect without shared awareness.

Communication style, stereotyping and prejudice, conflict and misalignment all have an impact on organisational communication. Some of the participants came across as valuing direct communication, while others preferred high-context style. Such differences in communication style can lead to frustrations and misinterpretation, and can also be regarded as disrespect amongst colleagues or team members. With diversity not being embraced positively, WWISE's open communication policy could be hindered by employees who incline toward stereotype and bias, which will lead to colleagues or team members being hesitant to share their ideas.

WWISE's organisational communication structure integrates formal hierarchical channels with informal interconnected platforms that promote cross-departmental and regional collaboration. Project management software, emails, meetings, and in-person encounter on the production line all help to facilitate communication. Despite cultural conceptions of hierarchy, technology integration and authority feedback vary among employees, influencing the understanding of messages and communication effectiveness.

Within WWISE's multicultural setting, information flow has to be a two-way process to ensure that the organisation limits the number of cases where the human resource department has to intervene between employees due to behaviours and misunderstandings. The participants highlighted that colleagues from high power distance cultures usually wait for clear instructions from management rather than taking initiative and openly question authorities to better understand instructions provided to them. Such culture views this kind of behaviour as respectful. On the other hand, participants from low power distance backgrounds have the expectation that their colleagues or team members should be able to have open brainstorming sessions and the junior staff should view their managers as mentors or facilitators rather than

seeing them as their bosses or authority figures. In turn, the managers regard or interpret their lack of response as disengagement rather than respect.

- **Gaps between policy and practice**

Across organisations, inclusion arises as the primary reason for adopting and upgrading protocols for communication. Diversity is presented not only as demographic representation, but also as a communication necessity for conscious policy design. Inclusivity motivates policy development by incorporating language accessibility, cultural understanding, and behavioural standards into formal communication frameworks. The goal is to turn communication from an impartial approach into one of participation and inclusion.

The findings relating to policy analysis show that WWISE policy statements consistently reference unbiased communication ensuring that all employees regardless of their cultural or linguistic backgrounds, positions, or department have access to organisational information. All their human resource policies are jargon free, clear and accessible to employees. The policies have further integrated the rules of employees respecting and enhancing other colleagues' cultures, and designated discrimination as an offence to the organisation which can lead to disciplinary action by the management. The policies reinforce inclusivity through mandatory intercultural communication trainings which aims to promote awareness of different communicative norms, culturally appropriate methods of feedback, and implicit bias. However, the participants mentioned that they are not satisfied with the number of cultural trainings at the organisation as the training offered is more concerned with communication effectiveness within the organisation.

In addition, while organisational policies explicitly state a commitment to inclusion and diversity, the interviews and observations indicated a significant gap between reality and policy. Some participants reported feeling excluded from critical discussions and decision-making possibilities, which indicates a lack of inclusion within the team. These discrepancies indicate that WWISE's diversity goals are not being completely implemented. Unequal leadership commitment and lack of accountability tools to track progress are all contributing concerns. As a result, employee engagement and faith in the organisation's diversity goals appear to be waning and certain groups continue to be underrepresented in the top positions.

- **Adaptation strategies**

The findings regarding adaptation strategies indicated that managers and general staff developed various kinds of informal adaptation tactics in response to gaps between inclusion policies, diversity and everyday practices. Some participants reported that they seek assistance from fellow colleagues and stakeholders to foster a sense of belonging, whilst others adapted by eliminating aspects of their individuality in order to adhere to what they thought were organisational norms. Management in turn frequently relied on their own expertise rather than on the written rules and regulations to manage diversity-related concerns, resulting in inconsistent methods across teams and departments. These actions of adaptation demonstrated both employee tolerance and a lack of formal methods to encourage inclusion in reality. While such solutions aid individuals in dealing with weaknesses in structures, they also risk reinforcing unfairness by ignoring the requirements for wider organisational transformation. In addition to the adaptation strategy, WWISE employees need to reinforce formal policies of including other native languages in their documents even though English will remain their dominant medium, so that they can accommodate employees and stakeholders who are less fluent in the dominant language.

### **5.3 Analysis of theory findings**

The analysis of the theory findings is based on the connection between the key results from the fieldwork and the literature outlined in the second chapter of the dissertation. Below is a detailed discussion of the relationship between the main conclusions from the literature review and the main conclusions from the fieldwork.

Participants were asked to define communication style in their own understanding. In that regard, some interviewees described communication style indirect and relationship-oriented type of communication, while other interviewees described communication style as a direct and explicit way of messaging. Compared to literatures, these interviewees' understanding is consistent to those of Chaganti and Bikkina (2011).

Chaganti and Bikkina (2011) defines communication style, as an indirect and a way of communicating that includes speaking, non-verbal, and linguistic characteristics.

Furthermore, participants were asked to share their views on the impact that cultural differences have on their organisation. Interview results indicate that the interviewees raised concerns of cultural differences in organisations leads to language barriers and misinterpretations amongst employees. Participants indicated that even when their common organisational language is English, cultural tones and varying levels of proficiency affected clarity and understanding. The interviewees further stated that due to language barrier, misinterpretations often arose not only from language proficiency but also from culturally embedded assumptions and norms.

Compared to literature, these findings from the interviewees corresponding to those of Gitari (2025), Naeem (2023), and Morris (2018). According to Gitari (2025), assumptions and misinterpretation occur when individuals regard people who communicate with directness as rude, whereas indirect communicators are understood to be directive and not rude. Where else, Naeem (2023) states that lack of cultural awareness might result in damaging misinterpretations and assumption. For example, a team member from a time-oriented culture may see a colleague from a flexible-time culture as "unpunctual," failing to recognise cultural variances in time perception. These misconceptions can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts. On the other hand, Morris (2018), states that barriers created by cultural diversity in businesses lead to undesirable workplace attitudes among employees. Morris (2018) adds that cultural diversity leads to discriminatory mindsets and actions, which can substantially harm relationships in the workplace by negatively affecting inclusion and diversity, as well as creating challenges for cohesiveness among teams, productive work methods, and decreased productivity.

It is clear from the response provided by the interviewees' during the interview that understanding gaps between cultures can be facilitated by promoting adaptability in communication techniques, such as being aware of tone, directness, and non-verbal clues. Their response of how effectively cultural diversity and communication workshop can be implemented is supported by various literature on the fact that improved understanding and cooperation can result from fostering an atmosphere where employees feel free to voice worries and inquire about cultural differences.

Additionally, participants were asked how leadership communicate across cultural differences within their divisions and the communication style within the teams and the broader organisation. Interviewees indicated that hierarchical structures influence communication across cultures. Participants from cultures with high power distance reported reluctance to question authority or

express disagreement, while those from low power distance cultures felt more comfortable engaging in open dialogue with management.

These findings are supported by Minkov and Hofstede (2012) and Khlif (2016) theory. Comparing to literature, Minkov and Hofstede (2012) states that employees of high-power-distance cultures recognise that some people have more power than others, and that this is natural and expected. Those who have power are seen to deserve it, whilst those who lack authority are assumed to be in the correct place. In this society, titles such as "Sir," "Ma'am," "Officer," "Reverend," and so on are severely enforced. Those in positions of power are expected to obey their orders without question. According to Khlif (2016) low power-distance cultures, power distribution is seen to be random and influenced by good fortune, assets, cultural heritage, or other external factors. Those in authority are significantly more likely to face criticism in a low power-distance society than in a high power-distance culture.

It is clear that the participants' responses during the interviews are consistent with various authors and their responses connected directly to Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory, particularly the dimension of power distance. The findings show that cultural perceptions of hierarchy significantly affect feedback processes, participation, and decision-making within diverse teams.

Over and above the analysis exposes that most of the responses provided by the interviewees during the fieldwork are consistent, congruent and supported by literature on cultural diversity and organisational communication. The key findings from this section will form a foundation and basis for the study's conclusion and recommendations.

## **5.4 Conclusions**

The study explored how cultural diversity influences organisational communication within the Worldwide Industrial Systems Engineering (WWISE) Company in South Africa. The findings revealed that cultural diversity has a significant impact on employee relationships, organisational effectiveness, and communication patterns. While the organisation promotes diversity, communication issues amongst colleagues persist due to unresolved factors. Employees employ informal tactics to demonstrate adaptability and growth but these cannot replace the organisation's commitment to diverse communication. The diversity of cultures accommodated within WWISE's internal communication is both a source of strength and a challenge. In

essence, by promoting open communication, inclusivity, and respect, WWISE can strengthen collaboration and maintain its position as a market leader in industrial system engineering in South Africa and expand abroad.

Firstly, WWISE operates in a diverse environment that reflects South Africa's wider sociocultural context. Employees come from a variety of national backgrounds, as well as different ethnic, linguistic and belief systems, which creates an opportunity for creativity while posing communication issues. Even though English is the official language, communication failures are common due to variations in accents, communication norms, and unfamiliar grammatical phrases.

Secondly, the study discovered that employees' cultural orientations, particularly hierarchy, power distance, and individualism versus collectivism, influence communication methods and feedback procedures. WWISE employees from high context cultures rely on implicit information, whereas employees from low context cultures prefer direct and explicit communication. If not managed appropriately, this gap could cause misunderstandings and conflict within the organisation.

Thirdly, the findings revealed that while WWISE has adopted diversity and inclusion measures, they are not yet fully integrated throughout all levels of operations. Their cultural seminars and communication training sessions raised awareness but did not necessarily succeed in maintaining intercultural competency. That would require ongoing management and reinforcement training. It is very clear that when managed well, cultural diversity promotes inventiveness, problem solving skills, and innovation in the organisation's teams and departments.

In conclusion, diversity of culture within WWISE is revealed to be a dual edged weapon because it creates considerable communication issues while also laying the groundwork for adaptation, global competitiveness, and organisational growth. The organisation's future success will be determined by its capacity to maintain and promote mutual respect, open communication channels, and implement inclusive communication methods.

## **5.5 Recommendations**

Cultural diversity is a defining feature of WWISE's organisational identity and an essential foundation for growth and achievement in the engineering sector. To fully realise its potential, WWISE must shift from perceiving diversity as a compliance need to seeing it as a strategic asset.

Effective communication based on empathy, cultural awareness, and adaptability will serve as the foundation of this shift.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed to support diverse cultural communication and organisational unity within WWWISE:

- **Establish intercultural mentorship programmes**

Pair employees from different cultures to encourage teamwork, mutual understanding, and learning. Such activities promote relationship building and break down barriers among employees with diverse cultures, gender and beliefs.

- **Enhance intercultural communication training**

Conduct a continuous intercultural communication workshop or seminar for employees and management. The workshops should not be conducted only around heritage month or on Heritage Day as currently done. These workshops or seminars should address empathy, cultural awareness, nonverbal communication, and conflict resolution strategies tailored to the organisation's diverse employees.

- **Promote multilingual communication support**

Provide access to translation tools such as documents that are multilingual and create internal apps that will have translation options regarding any information disseminated through their intranet communication platform. The organisation should also encourage flexible use of language during meetings or gatherings and introduce language development programmes in order to simplify communication and to reduce misunderstandings.

- **Foster a culture of intelligence**

Encourage employees to gain cultural awareness through experiential learning and cross-functional initiatives. Cultural intelligence development should be a core capability in the promotion and recruitment procedures.

- **Strengthen leadership commitment to diversity**

Management should encourage inclusive behaviour amongst employees by motivating open dialogue, creating safe space for employees to share their thoughts, and advising them to acknowledge different cultures. Diversity goals should be integrated into employees' key performance indicators.

- **Multilingual communication and bridging the policy practice gap**

WWISE organisation should invest in incorporating and integrating multilingual communication into their policies, such as including critical documents available in different dominant languages of their stakeholders and fostering bilingual internal communication teams. According to the interview data, this recommendation will improve both their employee and stakeholder engagement and trust, especially foreign stakeholders and employees working remotely or following a hybrid model.

- **Integrate diversity metrics into organisational evaluation**

Regular assessments and employee feedback surveys can help to track the impact of diversity and inclusion activities. This allows for accountability and helps to develop strategies that involve results that can be measured.

- **Mentorship and buddy programmes**

It is further recommended that WWISE employ initiatives that will improve their employees' understanding of diversity by pairing international and local employees or employees and stakeholders of difference ethnic groups.

## **5.6 Contribution of knowledge**

Diversity does not always impede or help communication; its influence is determined by how well people integrate their differences to achieve a common understanding. While communication issues exist, cultural variety has boosted problem solving and innovation at WWISE. Diverse perspectives contribute to stronger engineering solutions and better stakeholder relationships.

This study contributes to a better understanding of how cultural diversity interacts in the South African industrial context. It focuses on the small and sometimes ignored ways in which culture

influences communication in multicultural and multinational circumstances. The study further provides a framework for analysing communication practices using both observation and policies lenses.

In addition, the study will contribute knowledge to organisations that are continuously willing to refine their approaches to diversity and equity. It is essential to remember that cultural diversity in work environments extends above racial beliefs. The study could serve as an information source for scholars with an interest in cultural diversity and also benefit global organisations who are in the midst of cultural change and transformation. It could make these organisations understand that:

- Diversity brings new perspectives in companies;
- Diversity and inclusion drive company growth;
- Companies succeed due to how they approached workplace diversity;
- Diverse workplace includes not just other ethnicities but also different ages, sexual orientations, social standing, and abilities;
- And lastly there are great advantages to practicing diversity and inclusion because it increases talent retention, employee satisfaction, and productivity.

### **5.7 Limitations of the study**

The main limitation of the study relates to the small sample size which limits generalisability. The study involved only 15 participants. Furthermore, the research data is limited to information from the national office of WWISE, while other branches may operate differently.

A potential (though untested) limitation may be participant reticence. During the interviews some participants were hesitant to speak openly, thinking that their employer might have tapped into their laptops.

The other limitation of the study overall is that data was gathered through interviews and the use of interviews could lead to researcher bias. Lastly, the study did not cover other departments within WWISE, where other communication strategies and areas of diversity might apply.

### **5.8 Suggestions for Future Research**

Many researchers have explored the impact of diverse cultures in an organisation and a number of scholars have written papers about the issue; however, there are still elements in the subject of

diversity at a workplace that need to be investigated, as the world and cultures keep evolving especially now that the world is moving into an artificial intelligence (AI) era. These potential areas for research include:

- Quantitative research to measure the impact of communication on team and training effectiveness;
- Longitudinal studies to examine how communication practices evolve with diversity interventions;
- Comparative studies between different branches of WWISE (or globally, should the organisation expand).

Potential research questions regarding the issue are:

- How does cultural diversity influence communication styles and interaction patterns within multicultural teams?
- In what ways do language differences and communication norms affect information flow and decision-making in diverse organisations?
- What role does leadership communication play in fostering inclusion and reducing misunderstandings in culturally diverse workplaces?
- How do employees from different cultural backgrounds perceive and interpret organisational messages, policies, and feedback mechanisms?
- What role does cultural background play in shaping employees' comfort levels discussing LGBTQ+ issues at work?
- How do LGBTQ+ employees navigate communication challenges in organisations that include individuals from cultures with differing beliefs about sexuality?
- In what ways does belonging to a specific cultural or religious group shape communication experiences in organisations?

## **5.9 Final reflections**

South Africa is sometimes referred to as the “Rainbow Nation” because of its cultural variety, which includes 12 official languages and a wide range of ethnic groups. This diversity is reflected in the WWISE organisation with employees made up of various linguistic, racial, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Reflecting on this study, it becomes clear that cultural diversity has a significant impact on the organisational communication dynamics at WWISE. The study revealed how

intercultural encounters affect collaboration, employee engagement, and information flow both favourably and negatively. While diversity encourages varied viewpoints, innovation, and creativity, it also creates communication issues due to cultural misconceptions, varying communication standards, and language limitations. Furthermore, this investigation has also revealed that good leadership style and inclusive communication methods are critical for bridging cultural gaps and ensuring that diversity is used to strengthen rather than divide. Personally, undertaking this kind of study has expanded my understanding of how cultural sensitivity and awareness are critical to modern organisational performance. The findings not only add to the scholarly conversation on intercultural communication, but also provide practical advice for increasing mutual respect and inclusivity in global and South African businesses.

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## Appendix A: Permission and consent letter



08610 99473 (WWISE)  
+27 72 300 5065 (Emergency)  
admin@wwise.co.za  
www.wwise.co.za

Pretoria Head Office  
254 Hall Street  
Westend Office Park  
Building 2, Second floor  
Centurion, 0157

01 August 2024

To whom it may concern

### CONFIRMATION OF RESEARCH PERMISSION

This letter serves to confirm that Mrs Shatadi Rebecca Kganyago has support to conduct her research about examining cultural diversity within organisational communication of the World Wide Industrial and Systems Engineering company (WWISE).

The research will assist the company as it will improve its communication policies and internal and external strategies within our Human Resource and Marketing Department. The company will get to have an in-depth understanding and knowledge on how to accommodate cultural diversity between the employee teams, stakeholders and clients to ensure the company reaches its goals successfully.

Should you require more information, please do not hesitate to contact Mr. Mukwevho at Gundo@wwise.co.za.

Yours Sincerely,

Mr. Gundo Mukwevho  
Marketing Manager



The  
**ISO**  
Specialist

ACCREDITED &  
MEMBERS OF:

SABS: ISO 9001:2015 • ISO 22301:2023 • ISO 27001:2013 • SAIIE • SAQI  
• Proudly South African • Level 1 BBBEE  
FP&M SETA • PMSA • Member of the Green Building Council of SA  
Reg: 2020/129108/07 • Director: Shabaana Ali

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, Gundo Mukwevho (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree to the recording of the interview through; Google Meets/Microsoft Team/Zoom, and Google data collection interview forms.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname.....Gundo Mukwevho..... (please print)

Participant Signature.....G.Mukwevho..... Date.....06/10/2025.....

Researcher's Name & Surname...Shatadi Rebecca Kganyago..... (please print)

Researcher's signature...SR.Kganyago..... Date...06/10/2025.....

## Appendix B: Demographic information

### Part 1

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#### Section 1: Demographics

*(To understand participants' backgrounds)*

1. **Age:**
  - 18-25
  - 26-35
  - 36-45
  - 46-55
  - 56 and above
2. **Gender:**
  - Male
  - Female
  - LGBTQI+
  - Prefer not to say
3. **Position in Organisation:**
  - Entry-level
  - Middle management
  - Senior management
  - Executive
4. **Department:**
  - Marketing
  - Communications/Public Relations
  - Administration
  - Human Resource
5. **Duration of Employment:**
  - Less than 1 year
  - 1-3 years
  - 4-6 years
  - More than 6 years
6. **Number of different cultural backgrounds represented in your team/organisation:**
  - None
  - 1-3
  - 4-6
  - More than 6

## Appendix C: Interview questions used for data collection

### Section 2: Impact of Cultural Diversity on Communication Effectiveness

1. Does cultural diversity enhance the effectiveness of communication within the organisation?
2. In your experience, how does cultural diversity influence misunderstandings in communication?
3. Have you observed any positive impacts of cultural diversity on communication?

---

### **Section 3: Overall Perception**

1. In your opinion, what improvements could be made to better accommodate cultural diversity in organizational communication? (Open-ended)
2. Overall, out of 10, how would you rate the impact of cultural diversity on your organisation's communication effectiveness?

### **Part 2**

---

#### **Open-Ended Questions**

##### **Section 1: Impact of Cultural Diversity on Organisational Communication Effectiveness**

1. Can you describe how cultural diversity within your organisation influences the effectiveness of communication among employees and with external stakeholders?
2. In your experience, what are some specific examples of how cultural differences have either enhanced or hindered communication processes in your organisation?
3. What challenges have you observed or experienced regarding communication in a culturally diverse environment, and how have these challenges affected organisational outcomes?
4. How do you think cultural diversity has contributed to or detracted from the clarity and understanding of messages within your organisation?

---

##### **Section 2: Influence of Cultural Diversity on Policy Development and Implementation**

5. How has cultural diversity influenced the development of organisational policies related to communication?
6. Can you share any examples of how cultural considerations have been integrated into your organisation's communication policies?
7. What processes or consultations were involved in shaping these policies to address cultural diversity?
8. In your view, how effective are these policies in addressing the needs of a culturally diverse workforce? Why?

##### **Section 3: Organisational Strategies to Address and Accommodate Cultural Diversity**

9. What strategies or practices does your organisation use to promote inclusive and culturally sensitive communication?
10. Can you describe how these strategies have been implemented and their impact on organisational communication?
11. What successes and challenges have you encountered in implementing strategies to accommodate cultural diversity in communication?

12. In your opinion, what additional measures or approaches could be adopted to better support cultural diversity in organisational communication?

---

### **Optional: General Reflections**

13. Based on your experience, how does cultural diversity shape the overall communication climate and culture within your organisation?

14. Please share any personal experiences or insights that highlight the importance (or challenges) of managing cultural diversity in organisational communication.

### **Part 3**

#### **Interview questions**

These questions are designed to explore employees' and stakeholders' lived experiences, perceptions, and attitudes toward cultural diversity and organisational communication in your company.

#### **A. General Understanding of Organisational Communication**

1. How would you describe the communication style within your team and the broader organisation?
2. In your view, what are the strengths and weaknesses of communication in your workplace?
3. How do you think communication practices have changed with the company's global expansion?

#### **B. Cultural Diversity Experiences**

1. Can you describe a situation where cultural differences influenced communication in your team?
2. What challenges, if any, have you experienced when working with colleagues from different cultural backgrounds?
3. In what ways do you feel your cultural background is respected or acknowledged in the workplace?

#### **C. Perceptions of Inclusion and Equity**

1. How inclusive do you think the company is toward employees from different cultural or linguistic backgrounds?
2. Are there any formal policies or informal practices that support diversity and inclusion in communication?

#### **D. Suggestions for Improvement**

1. What strategies or changes would you recommend to improve communication across culturally diverse teams?
2. What support or training would help you communicate more effectively in a multicultural work environment?

#### **E. Experiences and Opinions**

1. Describe how cultural diversity is reflected in your everyday work environment.

2. What are the most common communication challenges you have experienced in a multicultural team setting?
3. How does leadership communicate across cultural differences within your division?
4. In your opinion, what practices currently work well when it comes to cross-cultural communication?
5. What could be done to better support intercultural understanding in the workplace?

## Appendix D: Observation form used for data collection

### OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

#### General Information

Observer Name: Shatadi Rebecca Kganyago

Location: MS Teams

Type of Observation: Participant Observation

Observation Focus: Behaviours and meaning and interpretations

#### Observation Schedule

Date & Time	Activity/Task Observed	Person(s) Observed	Observation Notes
05/10/2025; 07:00-07:54	Verbal and nonverbal cues and language	1, Communications Manager	Make sense of their experiences. Cheerful, make use of native language, sitting up straight, high tone
05/10/2025; 09:30-10:43	Verbal and nonverbal cues and language	1, HR Manager	Make sense of their experiences. Nervous, use of hands, lean backward, slow tone
06/10/2025; 15:00-15:30	Verbal and nonverbal cues and language	2, Marketing Manager and Director	make sense of their experiences. Smile, movement of eyebrows high and low tone
08/10/2025; 16:00-16:30	Verbal and nonverbal cues and language	1, Client	Smile, Fluent in English, leaning forward, stare, fast tone

09/10/2025; 10:30-11:00	Verbal and nonverbal cues and language	1, Staff	Frowning, make use of native language and communication not clear, continuously lick lips while talking, low tone
09/10/2025; 18:30-19:00	Verbal and nonverbal cues and language	1, Staff	Excited, Fluent in English, Sit up straight and folding hands, stare, high and low tone
10/10/2025; 06:00-06:30	Verbal and nonverbal cues and language	1, Client	Nervous, English communication not clear, leaning forward, avoid contact, fast tone
11/10/2025; 17:00-17:30	Verbal and nonverbal cues and language	1, Client	Nervous, avoid eye contact, fast tone
14/10/2025; 13:00-13:30	Verbal and nonverbal cues and language	1, Director	Make sense of their experiences. Cheerful, Sit up straight and stare, high tone
15/10/2025; 11:30-12:00	Verbal and nonverbal cues and language	1, Staff	Bored, Fluent in English, rolls eyes, leaning forward
15/10/2025; 15:00-15:30	Verbal and nonverbal cues and language	1, Staff	Disturbed, Fluent in English, stare, soft tone
15/10/2025; 17:00-17:40	Verbal and nonverbal cues and language	1, Staff	Make sense of their experiences. Stare, soft tone
15/10/2025; 20:00-20:30	Verbal and nonverbal cues and language	1, Client	Nervous, make use of native language, avoid eye contact, high tone
19/10/2025; 19:00-19:30	Verbal and nonverbal cues and language	1, Staff	Make sense of their experiences. Comfortable, talk using hands, soft tone

## Summary

Overall Impressions:

Participant 3, 12 and 13 looked down while answering questions and expressed themselves. They also showed nonverbal gestures when they disagreed with the statements raised whereas, participant 2,4 and 10 expressed their opinion with a high tone and through gestures of hands while talking. During the interview participants communicated in English therefore, the researcher observed the verbal cues while the participants were talking. All participants avoided slangs by all costs while answering their questions and expressing themselves. They kept the interaction formal. To allow their interaction to flow, some also used their native languages to express themselves such as participant 6,9, 13 and 15. On the other hand, participant 1,8,11 and 14 spoke fluently in English and in a normal conversational tone and pace. Participant 4 and 10 answered lengthy to a point that they kept on being repetitive with the context they were expressing and their key words such as:” you get me”, “do you follow” and “am I still on the right track?”.

## Appendix E: Turn it in report

Similarity Report

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<small>PAPER NAME</small> <b>Dissertation Shatadi Rebecca Kganyago 14 November 2025.docx</b>	<small>AUTHOR</small> <b>SHATADI REBECCA KGANYAGO</b>
<hr/>	
<small>WORD COUNT</small> <b>21850 Words</b>	<small>CHARACTER COUNT</small> <b>138900 Characters</b>
<small>PAGE COUNT</small> <b>82 Pages</b>	<small>FILE SIZE</small> <b>413.6KB</b>
<small>SUBMISSION DATE</small> <b>Nov 18, 2025 11:11 AM GMT+2</b>	<small>REPORT DATE</small> <b>Nov 18, 2025 11:17 AM GMT+2</b>

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**● 23% Overall Similarity**  
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- 13% Internet database
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## Appendix F: Ethical clearance letter



College of Human Sciences\_CREC

Date: 01/10/2025

Dear: Mrs Shatadi Rebecca Kganyago

**Decision: Ethics Approval from 01 October 2025 to 30 September 2026**

NHREC Registration # : (Rec-240816-052)  
Ref #: 9578  
Name: Mrs Shatadi Rebecca Kganyago  
Student #: 61936014

**Researcher:** Mrs Shatadi Rebecca Kganyago

1211 Zone 3 Seshego

Polokwane

61936014@mylife.unisa.ac.za 0678092668

**Supervisor:** Professor Ndivhoniswari Tshidzumba tshiden@unisa.ac.za

**EXAMINING CULTURAL DIVERSITY WITHIN ORGANISATIONAL COMMUNICATION OF THE WORLDWIDE INDUSTRIAL SYSTEMS ENGINEERING COMPANY, SOUTH AFRICA**

**Qualification:** MA Communication

Thank you for the application for research ethics approval by the College of Human Sciences\_CREC for the above-mentioned research study. Ethics approval is granted for **one year**.

The **low-risk application** was **reviewed** by the College of Human Sciences\_CREC on **01 October 2025** in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
2. Any adverse circumstance arising during the undertaking of the research study that may affect the ethical integrity of the study, including those involving research participants, third parties, or juristic persons, must be reported in writing to the College of Human Sciences\_CREC without delay.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that may affect study-related risks to research participants, juristic or third persons, must be reported in writing to the College of Human Sciences\_CREC, accompanied by a progress report.